

Small Group Ministry Evaluation Process

Richard A. Loescher, Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR

—

The Small Group Ministry (SGM) program at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene (UUCE) began in 2003. Each year the SGM groups meet for 2 hours twice a month for a specified number of sessions, which in recent years has been 10 sessions from January through May. The groups then disband and new groups are formed the following year from those who register. We get both verbal and written feedback about the sgm program. We have a monthly meeting of the sgm facilitators and steering committee and minister, which provides support and education for the facilitators. At this meeting the facilitators share their own feedback, as well as that from group participants, including comments made in session 6 where there is a specific request for a review of the sgm covenant and feedback about the facilitation and the sgm program. Also, each year at the end of the program we get written evaluation by giving an evaluation form to the SGM participants, and a separate similar but slightly different written evaluation form to the facilitators. The questions we ask have evolved some over the years. In the early years of the program we gave the evaluation forms to people during the last session and requested that the forms be filled out later and returned. Few forms were returned. In recent years our practice has been to give the evaluation forms to people during or before the next to the last session, and to ask that the forms be filled out before or during the last session and turned in to the facilitator during the last session. The facilitator then gives the completed forms to the SGM steering committee. With this practice a large majority of people, but not all, do complete and turn in the forms.

The SGM steering committee reviews and summarizes the results of the evaluation forms, and makes recommendations to consider for the next year. Usually a vast majority of people, but not all, have a favorable rating of most or all aspects of the SGM program. The feedback we receive on the evaluation forms has influenced: the choice of future SGM themes and topics; changes in the SGM program; changes in the SGM facilitator training and training manual; changes in the SGM covenant of right relations; decisions about the choice of readings for the sessions; and people to consider to ask to be a SGM facilitator and to be on the SGM steering committee. We think the questions on the evaluation forms also encourage people to think about the value and reasons for the policies and organization of the SGM program.

They can also be found on the UU SGM Network website home page www.smallgroupministry.net via links contained in a brief note on Evaluation/Assessment of Small Group Ministry. The direct links to the forms are:

[Evaluation Form for SGM Facilitators](#)

[Evaluation Form for SGM Participants](#)

Our current forms have questions that can be answered in two ways. There is a rating scale of 1 to 5 (1 very unsatisfied, 2 unsatisfied, 3 neither satisfied nor unsatisfied, 4 satisfied, 5 very satisfied) that allows people who do not like to write out answers to register some feedback, and there are spaces for written responses.

Questions on the evaluation form for participants include:

the value of the SGM covenant of right relations;

the value of reviewing the covenant and asking for feedback about the facilitation and the SGM program during the 6th session;

the value of the sharing and discussions in the group in exploring spirituality and personal growth;

the satisfaction with developing deeper connections and friendships;

the meaningfulness of the overall theme and the individual topics (which are listed as a reminder) and

what topics worked well and did not work well; suggestions for topics and themes for future sessions; the level of satisfaction with the facilitation and what you appreciate about the facilitation and any suggestions for changes (this question was added in the past few years and the comments are later sent to each facilitator individually); your level of satisfaction with your own participation in the group (this question was added this year for the first time); the value of the service project to the recipients of the service; the value to you and the group in planning and doing the service project; recommendations regarding future service project plans; whether or not you would recommend participation in a SGM group to others and why; and any additional thoughts, feelings, and suggestions.

The evaluation form for the facilitators has the same rating scale and many of the same questions. We ask some additional questions of the facilitators, including: rate the effectiveness of the SGM facilitator training, the SGM facilitator training manual, and the monthly meetings of the SGM facilitators and steering committee and minister, and any suggestions for changes; whether or not you would consider being a SGM facilitator again and why; recommendations of people to consider to ask to be a SGM facilitator (from your group or anyone else); recommendations of people to consider to be on the SGM steering committee, including yourself; and any additional thoughts, feelings, and suggestions.

We hope this information is of interest and use. We would be happy to communicate with others about any questions they may have, and to learn about what has worked well for others regarding the evaluation process in their SGM programs.

Richard A. Loescher, chair Small Group Ministry steering committee, Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene (UUCE), richardloescher@q.com, 541-485-1157