

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
**Getting Acquainted, SGM Program and Covenant Review** 6 sessions  
Small Group Ministry Program, Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR, **November 2008**

**Chalice or candle lighting or sound a chime** (3 to 5 minutes for this, silence and opening words)

**Moment of silence**

**Opening words**

"Each of us brings a separate truth here,  
We bring the truth of our own life, our own story.  
We don't come as empty vessels,  
But rather we come as full people, people who have our own story and our own truth. We seek  
to add to our truths and add to our stories.  
This room is rich with truth, rich with experience.  
All manner of people are here: needy, joyful, frightened, anxious, bored.  
We all bring our truth with us.  
May we all recognize the truth and the story in everyone's life.  
And may we hear and honor the truths that we all bring as we gather together.  
Together we have truths.  
Together we have a story.  
Together we are a community."  
*Penny Hackett-Evans*

**Check-in** (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person, without interruption: name, how long associated with UUCE and Unitarian Universalism, prior SGM experience, and how you are feeling at present)

**Welcome and review of the SGM program** (25 minutes)

- Structure and format of the groups (as described in the SGM pamphlet and/or training manual).
- Hand out and review the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship with Why a Covenant on the back.
  - Mention that the background of this covenant is that it was developed by the SGM steering committee in 2007 based on our experience with the SGM program here, information from other churches and SGM workshops, the UU SGM network, and other resources. We attempted to come up with a "best practice" covenant, realizing that there may be modifications in the future. We received strong feedback from the SGM groups last year that using this covenant was appreciated and was more successful than having each SGM individual group come up with their own covenant starting from scratch.
  - Consider having each person read a line of the covenant and then ask for questions and comment at the end of each section. In particular, it is important to discuss confidentiality and what that means to people and to get agreement about this.
- Mention of the service project.

**Break**-optional (5 min)

**Topic and sharing** (45 to 50 minutes including reading, questions and sharing)

## Reading

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.

We need one another when we are in trouble and afraid.

We need one another when we are in despair, in temptation, and need to be recalled to our best selves again.

We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose, and cannot do it alone.

We need one another in the hour of success, when we look for someone to share our triumphs.

We need one another in the hour of defeat, when with encouragement we might endure, and stand again.

We need one another when we come to die, and would have gentle hands prepare us for the journey.

All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.

George E. Odell

**Questions** (Give a piece of paper and writing implement to each person and allow a few minutes for people to make notes before sharing)

- What would you like to share about yourself with the group, including if you wish, where you are on your life journey and what is particularly important to you at this time?
- What questions are you facing in your life?
- What do you want to get from being in the group and what do you want to offer to the group?

**Sharing** (up to 3 to 6 minutes each, without interruption, depending on how many are present and the time available) If the group wishes to, there can be discussion after all have shared.

**Administrative matters (service project, future meeting dates and topics, etc.)** (5-10 minutes)

- Confirm future meeting dates, time, and place.
- Ask people if they want the lesson plans for subsequent sessions, if available, sent to them ahead of time (electronically or by paper mail) for reflection. Ask those with e-mail access if they can open attachments or if they need all information sent in the body of the e-mail.
- Ask people to review the contact list for any corrections needed. If agreeable to group members arrange to provide a list of group members and their contact information to each person by handing out a list and/or sending it by e-mail or paper mail (today or at the next session).

**Likes** (celebrations, gratitudes, thank you, appreciation for needs met) **and wishes** (mournings, requests, please, acknowledgement of needs not met)/**check-out** (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

**Closing words** (2 minutes for this and closing listed below)

We give thanks for the gifts of each other's sharing. We say "Thank you for risking your story. Thank you for creating a place of safety. Thank you for listening with appreciation as we deepen our knowing of one another through the weeks to come." Adapted from "Gatherings" by Tony Bushman and Bill Hamilton-Holway.

**Extinguish the chalice or candle or sound a chime** (option of some additional closing ritual per group agreement such as holding hands, group hug, bow to each other, hum or sing, or other ritual)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring: the SGM training manual; a copy of the SGM pamphlet; copies of the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship with Why a Covenant on the back to give to each person; blank paper and writing implements for each person; a copy of the list of group members with contact information; and your date book.)

Lesson plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry Steering Committee curriculum subcommittee (Rev. Steve Landale, Dick Loescher, Leora White) 11/22/08

## **Getting Acquainted. SGM Program and Covenant Review**

Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, Oregon, **January 2011**

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING OR SOUND A CHIME (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

Let our sharing together provide a place where memories are rooted, where mysteries are pondered, where dreams are nourished, where love is freely given, where failures are owned and accepted, where sorrows are transformed, where our lives are deepened, challenged, and uplifted. Let this be such a time and place.

-Adapted from Rev. David E. Bumbaugh

CHECK-IN (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person, without interruption: name, how long associated with UUCE and Unitarian Universalism, prior SGM experience, and how you are feeling at present)

WELCOME AND REVIEW OF THE SGM PROGRAM (25 minutes)

-Structure and format of the groups (as described in the SGM pamphlet and training manual).

-Hand out and review the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship with Why a Covenant on the back. The background of this covenant is that it was developed by the SGM steering committee in 2007, and has been updated several times since then. It is based on our experience with the SGM program here, information from other churches and SGM workshops, the UU SGM network, and other resources. Consider having each person read a line of the covenant and then ask for questions and comment at the end of each section. In particular, it is important to discuss confidentiality and what that means to people and to get agreement about this.

-Mention of the service project.

BREAK-optional (5 minutes)

TOPIC AND SHARING (45 to 50 minutes including the reading, the questions, the sharing, and optional open discussion at the end if the group agrees)

READING

The overall theme for the Small Group Ministry program this church year is transitions. The following brief summary gives some perspective and framework for our sessions, in which we will be sharing about personal and group transitions, including some that are occurring in our church.

William Bridges, the author of “Transitions Making Sense of Life’s Transitions” and “Managing Transitions Making the Most of Change” points out the difference between “changes”, which he calls the external events which occur marking the end and start of a situation, and “transitions”, which he describes as an internal psychological process, which may take much longer than the external changes. He describes three phases or processes in the transition process, and indicates that these may overlap, and may take varying lengths of time for different people and situations.

The first phase or process is “ending”, letting go of what was, dealing with loss. This stage may involve many emotions including fear, anxiety, anger, grief, relief, excitement, and others.

The second phase or process he calls “the neutral zone”, which he describes as a psychological “no-man’s-land” between the old reality and the new one, limbo, between “was” and “will be”. He calls it “both a dangerous and an opportune place”. People may feel a variety of emotions including discomfort, confusion, loneliness, and anxiety. However, it also is a time for reorientation, redefinition, psychological realignment, and repatterning, and can be a time for great creativity and innovation.

The third phase he calls a “new beginning”, when people develop a new identity, experience new energy, and a new sense of purpose.

-Small Group Ministry steering committee (Laura Adams; Dick Loescher, chair; Sandy Moses; Leora White) and Rev. Alicia Forsey.

QUESTIONS (Give a piece of paper and writing implement to each person and allow a few minutes for people to make notes before sharing)

1. What would you like to share about yourself with the group, including if you wish, where you are on your life journey, and any transitions that are prominent for you at this time?
2. What do you hope to gain from being in the group; what do you hope to offer to the group?

SHARING (up to 3 to 6 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with optional open discussion at the end after all have shared)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (service project, meeting dates and topics, etc.) (5-10 minutes)

-Confirm future meeting dates, time, and place.

-Ask people if they want the lesson plans for subsequent sessions, if available, sent to them ahead of time (electronically or by paper mail) for reflection. Ask those with e-mail access if they can open attachments or if they need all information sent in the body of the e-mail.

-Ask people to review the contact list for any corrections needed. If agreeable to group members arrange to provide a list of group members and their contact information to each person by handing out a list and/or sending it by e-mail or paper mail (today or at the next session).

LIKES (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and WISHES (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)/CHECK-OUT (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

CLOSING WORDS (2 minutes for this and closing listed below)

We give thanks for the gifts of each other’s sharing. We say “Thank you for risking your story. Thank you for creating a place of safety. Thank you for listening with appreciation as we deepen our knowing of one another through the weeks to come.”

(Adapted from “Gatherings”, by Tony Bushman and Bill Hamilton-Holway)

EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE OR CANDLE OR SOUND A CHIME (option of some additional closing ritual per group agreement such as holding hands, group hug, bow to each other, hum or sing, or other ritual)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring: the SGM Facilitator Training Manual; a copy of the SGM pamphlet; copies of the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship with Why a Covenant on the back to give to each person; blank paper and writing implements for each person; a copy of the list of group members with contact information; and your calendar/date book.)

Lesson plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Laura Adams; Dick Loescher, chair; Sandy Moses; Leora White), and Rev. Alicia Forsey. 12/6/10

## **Getting Acquainted. SGM Program and Covenant Review**

Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR **January 2013**

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING OR SOUND A CHIME (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

Let us listen...Just for a while let us silence our minds and open our hearts. Just for a while let us listen from within not to gain knowledge or formulate questions, rather to chance upon sacred bonds and profound wisdom. Let us not rouse the intellect, but embrace the spirit. If thoughts cloud the brain may we let them pass. If replies tingle on the tongue let us breathe them away silently, return to them later. But here...in his precious time of sharing let us listen...let the words wash over us and seep into a still quiet pool. Let us listen.

-Adapted from Mary-Elizabeth Cotton

CHECK-IN (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person, without interruption: name, how long associated with UUCE and Unitarian Universalism, prior SGM experience, and how you are feeling at present)

WELCOME AND REVIEW OF THE SGM PROGRAM (25 minutes)

-Review structure and format of the groups (as described in the SGM pamphlet and training manual).

-Hand out and review the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship with Why a Covenant and the UUCE mission statement and the UUCE Covenant of right relations and the 7 UU principles on the back.

Consider having each person read a line of the SGM covenant and then ask for questions and comments at the end of each section. In particular, it is important to discuss confidentiality and what that means to people and to get agreement about this.

-Mention the service project.

BREAK-optional (5 minutes)

TOPIC AND SHARING (45 to 50 minutes including the readings, the questions, the sharing, and optional open discussion at the end if the group agrees)

READINGS

The overall theme for the SGM program this year is the UUCE Mission Statement: "Empowered by love, we transform ourselves and serve our world". The topics of the subsequent SGM sessions will relate to this theme. The SGM program is part of the lifespan faith (or spiritual) development program of our church.

QUESTIONS (Give a piece of paper and writing implement to each person and allow a few minutes for people to make notes before sharing)

1. What would you like to share about yourself with the group, including if you wish, where you are on your life journey, and what aspects of your life are particularly important at this time?

## 2. What do you hope to gain from and offer to this SGM group?

SHARING (up to 3 to 6 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with the option of time at the end after all have shared for open discussion)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (service project, future meeting dates and topics and location, etc.) (5-10 minutes)

-Confirm future meeting dates, time, place, and topic.

-Ask people if they want the lesson plans for subsequent sessions, if available, sent to them ahead of time (electronically or by paper mail) for reflection. Ask those with e-mail access if they can open attachments or if they need all information sent in the body of the e-mail.

-Ask people to review the contact list for any corrections needed. If agreeable to group members arrange to provide a list of group members and their contact information to each person by handing out a list and/or sending it by e-mail or paper mail (today or at the next session).

LIKES (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and WISHES (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)/CHECK-OUT (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

CLOSING WORDS (2 minutes for this and closing listed below)

We give thanks for the gifts of each other's sharing. We say "Thank you for risking your story. Thank you for creating a place of safety. Thank you for listening with appreciation as we deepen our knowing of one another through the weeks to come."

(Adapted from "Gatherings", by Tony Bushman and Bill Hamilton-Holway)

EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE OR CANDLE OR SOUND A CHIME (option of some additional closing ritual per group agreement such as holding hands, group hug, bow to each other, hum or sing, or other ritual)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring: the SGM Facilitator Training Manual; a copy of the SGM pamphlet; copies of the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship with Why a Covenant and the UUCE mission statement and the UUCE Covenant of right relations and the 7 UU principles on the back on the back to give to each person; blank paper and writing implements for each person; a copy of the list of group members with contact information; and your calendar/date book.)

Lesson plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Lyn Fischrup; Bonnie Koenig; Dick Loesch, chair; Leora White), December 1, 2012

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Small Group Ministry  
**Getting Acquainted. SGM Program and Covenant Review**  
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR, Oct.2013

NOTE: Need paper and writing implements for each participant for the questions.

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING OR SOUND A CHIME (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)

MOMENT OF SILENCE

OPENING WORDS

We are really alive when we listen to each other, to the silences of each other as well as to the words and what lies behind the words.

-Frederick Buechner

CHECK-IN (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person, without interruption: name, how long associated with UUCE and Unitarian Universalism, prior SGM experience, and how you are feeling at present)

WELCOME AND REVIEW OF THE SGM PROGRAM (25 minutes)

-Review structure and format of the groups (as described in the SGM pamphlet and SGM Facilitator Training Manual).

-Hand out and review the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship with Why a Covenant and the UUCE mission statement and the UUCE Covenant of right relations and the 7 UU principles on the back. Consider having each person read a line of the SGM covenant and then ask for questions and comments at the end of each section. In particular, it is important to discuss confidentiality and what that means to people and to get agreement about this.

-Mention that some of the quotes used in the session plans were selected to provide a diversity of viewpoints to stimulate reflection and sharing. The quotes do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the SGM steering committee or UUCE, and selection of a quote does not imply that it necessarily is considered to be truth. Also, some quotes may contain gender or other references that were used by the author of the quote, and may not be considered to be inclusive or politically correct by contemporary standards.

-Mention the service project.

BREAK optional (5 minutes)

TOPIC AND SHARING (45 to 50 minutes including the readings, the questions, the sharing, and optional open discussion at the end if the group agrees)

READINGS

The overall theme for the SGM program this year is Milestones of Life. All people share in common many experiences: we have been born and will die; we have had experiences with family, varying amounts of resources, varying physical and health condition, joy, sorrow, meeting and parting from others, and other aspects of life. In upcoming sessions we will explore some of these milestones and share our experiences and learning. The SGM program is part of the lifespan faith (or spiritual) development program of our church.



QUESTIONS (Give a piece of paper and writing implement to each person and allow a few minutes for people to make notes before sharing)

1. What would you like to share about yourself with the group, including if you wish, where you are on your life journey, and what aspects of your life are particularly important at this time?

2. What do you hope to gain from and offer to this SGM group?

SHARING (up to 3 to 6 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with the option of time at the end after all have shared for open discussion)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (up to 5-10 minutes).

-Confirm future meeting dates, time, place, and topic.

-Ask people if they want the lesson plans for subsequent sessions, if available, sent to them ahead of time (electronically or by paper mail) for reflection. Ask those with e-mail access if they can open attachments, and what kind (.doc, pdf, other), or if they need all information sent in the body of the e-mail.

-Ask people to review the contact list for any corrections needed. If agreeable to group members arrange to provide a list of group members and their contact information to each person by handing out a list and/or sending it by e-mail or paper mail (today or at the next session).

-Other

LIKES (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and WISHES (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)/CHECK-OUT (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

CLOSING WORDS (2 minutes for words, and closing)

We give thanks for the gifts of each other's sharing. We say "Thank you for risking your story. Thank you for creating a place of safety. Thank you for listening with appreciation as we deepen our knowing of one another through the weeks to come."

(Adapted from "Gatherings", by Tony Bushman and Bill Hamilton-Holway)

EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE OR CANDLE OR SOUND A CHIME (and additional optional closing ritual if agreed to)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring: the SGM Facilitator Training Manual; a copy of the SGM pamphlet; copies of the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship with Why a Covenant and the UUCE mission statement and the UUCE Covenant of right relations and the 7 UU principles on the back on the back to give to each person; blank paper and writing implements for each person; a copy of the list of group members with contact information; and your calendar/date book.)

Session plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Lyn Fischrup; Bonnie Koenig; Al Landy; Dick Loescher, chair).

October 19, 2013

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Small Group Ministry  
**Getting Acquainted. SGM Program and Covenant Review**  
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR, January 2015

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING OR SOUND A CHIME. (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)  
MOMENT OF SILENCE

**OPENING WORDS**

We come seeking the opportunity to build community with deeper connections and friendships, to nurture our personal and spiritual growth and exploration, and to enrich the lives of others and ourselves by providing service. May our time together in this place be a safe container for careful listening, for respectful honest sharing to the extent that we choose, and for increased understanding of others and ourselves.

CHECK-IN (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person, without interruption: name, how long associated with UUCE and Unitarian Universalism, prior SGM experience, and how you are feeling at present)

**WELCOME AND REVIEW OF THE SGM PROGRAM (25 minutes)**

Review the structure and format of the groups (as described in the SGM pamphlet and SGM Facilitator Training Manual).

Hand out and review the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship, which has on the back: “Why a Covenant?”; the “UUCE Mission Statement”; the “UUCE Covenant of Right Relations”; and the “Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association.” Consider having each person read a line of the SGM covenant and then ask for questions and comments at the end of each section. In particular, it is important to discuss confidentiality and what that means to people and to get agreement about this.

Some of the quotes used in the session plans were selected to provide a diversity of viewpoints to stimulate reflection and sharing. The quotes do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the SGM steering committee or UUCE, and selection of a quote does not imply that it necessarily is considered to be truth. Also, some quotes may contain gender or other references that were used by the author of the quote, and may not be considered to be inclusive or politically correct by contemporary standards.

A service project is part of the SGM program.

BREAK, optional (5 minutes)

TOPIC AND SHARING (45 to 50 minutes including the readings, the questions, the sharing, and optional open discussion at the end if the group agrees)

**READINGS**

The overall theme for the SGM program this year relates to concepts from the Recessional for Children and youth. “May your mind be open to new learning. May your lips bring truth into the world. May your heart know love, and your hands do the work of justice, as you go your way in peace, as you go your way in peace.”

QUESTIONS (Give a piece of paper and writing implement to each person and allow a few minutes for people to make notes before sharing.)

1. What would you like to share about yourself with the group, including if you wish, where you are on your life journey, and what aspects of your life are particularly important at this time?
2. What do you hope to gain from and offer to this SGM group?

SHARING (up to 3 to 6 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with the option of time at the end after all have shared for open discussion)

ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS (up to 5-10 minutes)

Confirm future meeting dates, time, place, and topic.

Ask people if they want the session plans for subsequent sessions, if available, sent to them ahead of time (electronically or by paper mail) for reflection. Ask those with e-mail access if they can open attachments, and what kind (.doc, pdf, other), or if they need all information sent in the body of the e-mail.

Ask people to review the contact list for any corrections needed. If agreeable to group members arrange to provide a list of group members and their contact information to each person by handing out a list and/or sending it by e-mail or paper mail (today or at the next session).

Other.

LIKES (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and WISHES (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)/CHECK-OUT (a few words or phrases from each who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

CLOSING WORDS. (2 minutes for words, and closing).

We give thanks for the gifts of each other's sharing. We say, "Thank you for risking your story. Thank you for creating a place of safety. Thank you for listening with appreciation as we deepen our knowing of one another through the weeks to come."

(Adapted from "Gatherings", by Tony Bushman and Bill Hamilton-Holway)

EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE OR CANDLE OR SOUND A CHIME (and additional optional closing ritual if agreed to)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring: the SGM Facilitator Training Manual; a copy of the SGM pamphlet; copies of the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship, which has on the back "Why a Covenant?," the "UUCE Mission Statement," the "UUCE Covenant of Right Relations," and the "Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association" to give to each person; blank paper and writing implements for each person; a copy of the list of group members with contact information; the session plan; and your calendar/date book.)

Session plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee (Lyn Fischrup; Bonnie Koenig; Al Landy; Dick Loescher, chair).

November 14, 2014

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website  
Small Group Ministry Program  
**Getting Acquainted. SGM Program and Covenant Review**  
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR, **January 2016**

CHALICE OR CANDLE LIGHTING OR SOUND A CHIME (2 to 3 minutes for this and silence and opening words)  
MOMENT OF SILENCE

**OPENING WORDS**

We come seeking the opportunity to build community with deeper connections and friendships, to nurture our personal and spiritual growth and exploration, and to enrich the lives of others and ourselves by providing service. As we gather here may we create a haven for careful listening, for respectful honest sharing to the extent that we choose, and for increased understanding of others and ourselves.

CHECK-IN (up to 20 to 30 minutes total with up to 2 to 3 minutes per person, without interruption: name, what pronoun [she, he, they, other] you would like used when referring to you, how long associated with UUCE and Unitarian Universalism, prior SGM experience, and how you feel now)

**WELCOME AND REVIEW OF THE SGM PROGRAM (25 minutes)**

Review the structure and format of the groups (as described in the SGM pamphlet and SGM Facilitator Training Manual).

Hand out and review the SGM Covenant of Right Relationship, which has on the back: “Why a Covenant?”; the “UUCE Mission Statement”; the “UUCE Covenant of Right Relations”; and the “Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association.” Consider having each person read a line of the SGM covenant and then ask for questions and comments at the end of each section. In particular, it is important to discuss confidentiality and what that means to people and to get agreement about this. Also, hand out the article “Small Group Ministry as a Spiritual Practice” by Rev. Nathan Ryan, for people to take home and read.

The quotes used in the session plans are selected to provide a diversity of viewpoints to stimulate reflection and sharing. We attempt to have a balance of quotes from female and male authors, but the balance may not be exactly equal in each session or overall. The quotes do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the SGM steering committee or UUCE, and selection of a quote does not imply that it necessarily is considered to be truth. Also, some quotes may contain gender or other references that were used by the author of the quote, and may not be considered to be inclusive or politically correct by contemporary standards.

A service project chosen by the group is part of the SGM program.

BREAK, optional (5 minutes)

TOPIC AND SHARING (45 to 50 minutes including the readings, the questions, the sharing, and optional open discussion at the end if the group agrees)

## READINGS

The topics of the subsequent individual sessions for the SGM program this year will be inspired by our overall theme, which is our UUCE Aspirations: As a people of faith, grounded in our principles, we cultivate lives of meaning, reverence, and depth; we create sanctuary where all hands are held; together we work toward justice, healing, and sustainability.

Nurture beginnings, let us nourish beginnings. Not all things are blest, but the seeds of all things are blest. The blessing is in the seed.

-Muriel Rukeyser, American poet

There is a power in storytelling that can transform our lives...Our own life stories can be tools for making us whole; they gather up the parts of us and put them together in a way that gives our lives greater meaning than they had before we told our story...In some mysterious, amazing way our stories and our lives are all tied together.

-<http://usm.maine.edu/lifestorycenter/why.html>

**QUESTIONS AND REQUESTS** (Give a piece of paper and writing implement to each person and allow a few minutes for people to make notes, if they wish, before sharing.)

1. Please share what would you like the group to know to about you, including if you wish, where you are on your life journey, and what aspects of your life are particularly important at this time.
2. What do you hope to gain from and offer to this SGM group?

**SHARING** (up to 3 to 6 minutes each without interruption, depending on the time available, with the option of time at the end for open discussion after all have shared)

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS** (up to 5-10 minutes).

Confirm future meeting dates, time, place, and topic.

Ask people if they want the session plans for subsequent sessions, if available, sent to them ahead of time (electronically or by paper mail) for reflection. Ask those with e-mail access if they can open attachments, and what kind (.doc, pdf, other), or if they need all information sent in the body of the e-mail. Also ask if they can print the session plans, or will access them electronically during the meeting, or want a printed copy.

Ask people to review the contact list for any corrections needed. If agreeable to group members arrange to provide a list of group members and their contact information to each person by handing out a list and/or sending it by e-mail or paper mail (today or at the next session).

**LIKES** (celebrations, gratitudes, appreciations for needs met) and **WISHES** (mournings, requests, acknowledgements of needs not met)/**CHECK-OUT** (a few words or phrases from each person who wants to share, up to 5 minutes total)

**CLOSING WORDS** (2 minutes for words, and closing)

We give thanks for the gifts of each other's sharing. We say, "Thank you for risking your story. Thank you for creating a place of safety. Thank you for listening with appreciation as we deepen our knowing of one another through the weeks to come."

-Adapted from Rev. Tony Bushman and Rev. Bill Hamilton-Holway, UU Ministers, in *Gatherings*.

**EXTINGUISH THE CHALICE OR CANDLE OR SOUND A CHIME** (and additional optional closing ritual if agreed to)

(Preparation for the facilitator. Please bring: the SGM Facilitator Training Manual binder; enough copies of the session plan for your group; a candle or chime; a timekeeping device; and your calendar/date book.)

Session plan prepared by the Small Group Ministry steering committee 2015-2016 (Bonnie Koenig; Dick Loescher, chair; Connie Newman). November 23, 2015