

# **Guide for Facilitators**

## **Small Group Ministry**

### **Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville**

#### **Where**

All Small Group Ministry (SGM) groups will meet at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Rockville in the room assigned to your group by the Congregational Administrator. The room should be unlocked when you arrive, but you may receive a key upon request. You may wish to give yourself a few minutes of extra time for arranging the room – turning on the lamps, making an appropriately sized circle of seats for the number of participants you are expecting, checking for an easel and markers, etc.

Be sure to choose a seat for yourself that includes a clear view of the clock. Please do not use a cell phone as your timepiece, as we want everyone to forget about electronic devices during the circle (except to silence them!).

#### **Curriculum and supplies**

The session plan for each month will be created by the Assistant Minister and posted on the Small Group Ministry page on the UUCR website by the last Thursday of the month. Hardcopies of the session plans will be in a folder in the Small Group Ministry mailbox in the Work Room (room with the copier). Any music CDs or videos required for the session will be in the folder. If required, the SGM Leadership will arrange to have a CD player in the room as part of the custodial setup.

Also in the SGM folder: Name tag stickers for participants who do not have their permanent ones.

Tissues are generally available in the room; if you happen to notice that there are none, please grab a box from elsewhere in the building if possible.

The rooms should have a chalice and matches in the closets. Please notify the SGM Leadership by email at least a week in advance if there are any materials or equipment that you require.

Please return all SGM items to the designated box, as the room may be used by other groups throughout the week.

#### **Communication with and among participants**

Most communication for SGM groups is done by email. Please be aware if someone in your group does not use email, as you may need to be in touch with such participants by

phone. SGM participants may want to be in touch with each other by email, so please facilitate that when possible.

## **Socializing**

SGM participants are encouraged to get to know each other outside of official meeting times. For example, your group may want to organize a coffee shop outing during one of the weeks between meetings. If you as the facilitator are aware of such “bonus” gatherings, here are a couple of things to keep in mind:

Inclusion: If it’s a gathering of the SGM group (and not just a couple of people), encourage the organizers to make sure every participant knows about it.

Confidentiality: Remind participants that issues raised in the SGM groups are off-limits as discussion topics in social settings unless the participant herself/himself brings up the issue outside the group. This can be challenging, as we like to express concern and support, but in order to feel safe in the group setting, participants need to know that they themselves get to decide what from their own lives will be brought up later.

## **Support and self-care**

Facilitating a small group can be a very fulfilling experience, as you are creating a special environment in which participants learn and grow (and you will be growing yourself). It can also be challenging to listen to stories of heartbreak and to monitor and redirect participants so that the format is followed. It’s a bit like trying to control a river – you want to keep it flowing, but you also want it to stay within its banks! You may notice that, even though you are mostly sitting quietly and listening, it takes more energy to be a facilitator than a participant. A few ideas to smooth the journey:

- Take the time to read that week’s session plan through before arriving for your group’s meeting. It’s more relaxing if you know exactly what you have to do.
- Give yourself room for mistakes; that’s how we learn to be better facilitators.
- After the group meeting, take a few minutes with your facilitator partner to reflect on moments of joy or realization that you experienced or witnessed.
- If you are and your facilitator partner agree to co-facilitate a meeting, decide who is going to do what and divide tasks equally.
- Reach out to the SGM Leadership as needed.