

## UUWF-UUWR: Listening to Our Voices Listening Circle Guide

The UUWR-UUWF Listening Workgroup has created this Listening Circle Guide as part of our current campaign to "Listen to Our Voices" so that you can hold conversations with other women. You can use it in your women's group, in a scheduled gathering at your congregation, or simply sitting down with another UU woman with a cup of tea. The guide covers all the same topics as the one-on-one conversation, and links to a survey so that you can share everything you learn with us. We will be using a similar format at GA 2020 at various workshops and events.

### Background

UU Women's Federation and UU Women and Religion are in the process of merging, reorganizing, and re-visioning. To that end, we're very interested in hearing what UU women want in their national UU women's organization.

### Purpose

We've created a survey to ask that important question and to gather some information about you, your congregation, and any UU women's groups you may belong to.

### Intent

It is our intention to listen to a wide variety of UU women at the grassroots level.

### Request

We hope you will gather with other UU women in a Listening Circle format, asking each other the questions – in the main group, in pairs or small groups.

### Effects

The merged organization of UU Women will use the results to guide our trajectory for the future.

### Gratitude

Thank you for participating in this web of connection!

### Preparation

- Read **Facilitator Tips** (at the end of this document).
- Read **Guidelines for an enjoyable group** (at the end of this document). Decide what guidelines you'd like to propose for your group, to help create a healthy setting for conversation.
- Find a volunteer to take notes during the meeting.
- Review the Facilitators' Survey first. Links are on the back page.
- Publicize.
- Prepare meeting materials: large paper for notes, printed surveys and pens, snacks...

## Outline for your gathering

(Feel free to adapt to suit your group needs and preferences.)

**Opening reading** and/or chalice lighting of your choice

**Read aloud** the Background, Purpose, Intent, Request, Effects, and Gratitude above. Let everybody know that the questions asked today are all in a survey, which they will be asked to fill out later. The UUWF and UUWR want to hear your individual voices, but we're also excited that you are gathered together and can hear each other.

**Check-in.** Ask each person to say their name and a brief answer to a check-in prompt. Prompt suggestions (choose one): What does "feminism" mean to you? Who is your favorite feminist forebear? How is Unitarian Universalism (or your congregation) a feminist community and faith? (Or make up your own prompt.)

**Guidelines.** Read aloud the **Guidelines** you'd like to propose, and invite feedback or suggestions.

**Pairwise discussion.** Invite people to break up into pairs and ask each other the survey questions. Either hand out paper versions or ensure that everybody has access to a digital device. If they are using the electronic survey, ask them to wait before clicking "done" at the end, because some of their answers might change after the large group discussion. Encourage participants to record each other's answers (filling their partner's information into the survey), and to allow conversation to flow naturally. Give them 15 minutes, with a five minute notice. At the end of 15 minutes, gather again as a large group.

**Large group discussion.** Ask the following questions:

1. What do you want from a congregational women's group?
  - a. Ask people to raise their hands for the ones that are top priorities for them, and look around. (Take note of which items at least half of the group raised their hand for.
    - Connection to UU Women
    - Friendship
    - Intellectual Stimulation
    - Self-awareness / Personal Growth
    - Social Justice Awareness / Action
    - Spiritual Growth
  - b. What other things in this list are important to you, if not top priorities?
  - c. Are there other things not on this list?
  - d. How do we do these things well here, and do you have new ideas?
2. Who is very familiar with the UUWF? UU Women and Religion?
  - a. If people raise their hands, ask them to share their understanding.
  - b. Supplement with information at the end of this document.
3. What would you want most from a national organization for UU women?

- a. Ask people to raise their hands for the ones that are top priorities for them, and look around. (Take note of which items at least half of the group raised their hand for.)
    - Advocacy for women at the national UU level
    - Assistance with establishing/maintaining congregational women's groups
    - Connections with national advocacy efforts for women
    - Connections with other UU women
    - Establishment of, or assistance with, regional retreats/workshops for women and girls
    - Funding for UU Women religious professionals (ordained ministry, music, religious education, women preparing for these roles, etc.)
    - National women's retreat/conference
    - Political advocacy for women in the U.S.A.
    - Political advocacy for women internationally
    - Resources: spiritual, theological, educational, social justice, organizational
    - Visibility of UU women and women's issues within the UUA
  - b. What other things in this list are important to you, even if they are not top priorities?
  - c. Are there other things not on this list?
  - d. Invite people to describe ways they have been involved in these activities, both within and beyond this group.
4. Is there anything else you'd like to share with the UUWF and UUWR?

**Update surveys** in pairs (3-5 minutes). Ask the pairs to turn again to each other and update their surveys. Submit them electronically, or hand them in to the facilitators.

**Closing reading** of your choice.

## Completion

Thank you for facilitating! Make sure you fill out your own survey if you didn't get a chance to do so during the gathering.

Individual Survey, electronic: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/BNGZHND](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BNGZHND)

Individual Survey, printable version: [www.uuwf.org/survey](http://www.uuwf.org/survey)

Facilitators' Survey, electronic: [www.surveymonkey.com/r/STMV286](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/STMV286)

Facilitators' Survey, printable version: [www.uuwf.org/survey](http://www.uuwf.org/survey)

If your group used paper surveys, please mail them to:  
 UU Women's Federation  
 3322 N. 92nd Street, Milwaukee, WI 53222

You may also scan paper surveys and email them to: [info@uuwr.org](mailto:info@uuwr.org)

## Background on the UU Women's Federation

[www.uuwf.org](http://www.uuwf.org)

**UUWF Mission:** *Advancing justice for women and girls and promoting their spiritual growth*

### Advocacy

We strive to amplify the voices of Unitarian Universalist women in the areas of justice, equity, and spiritual growth. We keep an eye out for initiatives to which we can add our weight, such as amicus briefs and letters to legislators. We then share our efforts through social media and a quarterly newsletter. We are enthusiastically exploring ways to engage more stakeholders in our activities, and would be eager to hear about your advocacy and ways we can boost your impact. Let us know what you're up to and how we can help.

### Funding Programs

The UUWF funds programs that advance equity and justice for women and girls in both action and theology, through Equity & Justice and Margaret Fuller Grants, respectively. Additionally we are stewards of the Marjorie Bowens-Wheatley Scholarship program. These programs are made possible by the endowment bestowed upon us by generations of powerful women as well as contemporary Unitarian Universalist women and women's groups across the country.

## Background on UU Women and Religion

[www.uuwr.org](http://www.uuwr.org)

The Women and Religion Movement is alive and well in the 21st Century. A grassroots project started by lay leaders in the 1970s as an effort to promote examination of religious roots of sexism and patriarchy within the UUA and beyond, UU Women and Religion officially began as a task force following the unanimously-passed WOMEN AND RELIGION RESOLUTION at the 1977 UUA General Assembly. Although the Task Force was eventually sunsetted, the movement still exists in UU Districts that hold Women & Religion programs and woman-focused gatherings. It exists at General Assembly, where UUW&R has an annual gathering and a booth in the display area. And it lives in the hearts and lives of women and men who have been touched by the many changes inspired by this movement. "We do not want a piece of the pie. It is still a patriarchal pie. We want to change the recipe!" -- *Rosemary Matson*

### Resources

UUW&R maintains an online and in-person feminist Store, featuring classic and new curricula, books, music and other resources by and for UU women.

Here are a few tips for making a group event work well:

## **Facilitator Tips**

**condensed from Cakes for the Queen of Heaven 2007 ed.**

Decide if you will be the sole facilitator or if you will work with a co-facilitator... It allows each facilitator to also be a participant in the process, much more so than if you are facilitating on your own.

Decide whether or not you want to have refreshments.

Participants may want to participate in planning and leading the opening and closing ... It is important to provide a sense of closure and accomplishment, an opportunity to celebrate your shared experience and learnings.

As everyone knows who has ever led a curriculum or small group, there is no guaranteed process by which facilitators and groups create an environment that is supportive, open, and growth-producing. There are processes, however, that have been used effectively in a variety of settings. Here are some guidelines out of the collective experience of facilitators we hope will be helpful to you.

Plan to arrive before the participants and have all equipment and materials ready for the session. This helps participants to feel comfortable and contributes to an organized, relaxed flow in the ... process.

Arrange for a comfortable, attractive meeting space appropriate to the size of the group. The physical setting can contribute greatly to harmonious interactions among participants.

Begin and end the [session] on time.

Know the material.

Get to know participants and help participants get to know one another. Taking time to build group rapport and trust is an essential component... It can be helpful at the beginning ... to invite participants to relate a personal observation they wish to share with the group.

Listen to the group and encourage clarification. Try to hear the questions behind the one posed.

Respect each participant's contribution or right to keep silent and remind the group to do likewise. Guarantee the right to PASS.

Support group trust by having participants agree to keep personal confidences that have been shared within the group. No one wants their story retold elsewhere.

Strive to keep an individual or small group from dominating the discussion. What is happening? Has the topic released an issue of great concern? Are there individuals who feel threatened and are using this means to keep control? Uncovering a hidden agenda can be a key to new understanding.

*Courtesy of Rev. Shirley A. Ranck*

## **Guidelines for an enjoyable group**

1. Speak only for yourself. Use “I” messages.
2. Share what is comfortable.  
Do not pressure others to share.
3. Feel free to pass.
4. Do not give advice.
5. Tell your own story.
6. Be open-minded and nonjudgmental.
7. Wait until the person speaking has finished before you speak (pass the rattle as necessary).
8. Ask for what you need.
9. Hold the stories from the circle sacred and close to your heart. What is said in the circle stays in the circle.
10. Avoid chit-chat and dig deep!

*Courtesy of Molly Remer, <http://www.brigidsgrove.com>*

## **UUA Facilitator Resources:**

Accessibility for Workshop Presenters:

<https://www.uua.org/re/tapestry/adults/accessibility-guidelines>

Group Facilitation:

<https://www.uua.org/re/adults/group-facilitation>

**Questions? Please contact us**

[uuwf@uuwf.org](mailto:uuwf@uuwf.org) or [info@uuwr.org](mailto:info@uuwr.org)

UU Women’s Federation

3322 N. 92nd Street, Milwaukee, WI 53222

Tel: 414-750-4404 FAX: 414-255-3615