

**Stakeholder Meetings on Healthy Process—Facilitator Guide**  
**June 28, July 25, and August 23, 2019**  
**First Unitarian Church of Des Moines**

*Informally greet and introduce participants as they enter*

**Chalice Lighting & Opening Words by Rumi:**

Some [travelers] have an elephant to show.  
No one here has ever seen an elephant.  
They bring it at night to a dark room.

One by one, we go in the dark and come out  
saying how we experience the animal.  
One of us happens to touch the trunk.  
A water-pipe kind of creature.

Another, the ear. A very strong, always moving  
back and forth, fan-animal. Another, the leg.  
I find it still, like a column on a temple.

Another touches the curved back.  
A leathery throne. Another the cleverest,  
feels the tusk. A rounded sword made of porcelain.  
He is proud of his description.

Each of us touches one place  
and understands the whole that way.  
The palm and the fingers feeling in the dark  
are how the senses explore the reality of the elephant.

If each of us held a candle there,  
and if we went in together, we could see it.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this stakeholder meeting is so that you can share with one another your ideas about what makes for a healthy decision-making or discernment process—a process that, like Rumi’s tale of the elephant, lets each of us hold a candle and go in together to see what we make of whatever is before us.

**Names and connection.** Let’s begin by each saying our name and how we feel connected to this congregation.

**Introduce format and ground rules and ask for agreement (this is a covenant).**

- For this circle we’re using a format that has been shown to promote open communication about the topic under discussion. We’ll begin with three questions, which each of you will have a chance to answer in turn. As you answer, speak only for yourself, not for others.
- Before we begin, I ask each of you to agree to our ground rules:
- Listen attentively, with your heart, as each person speaks.
- Don’t interrupt or comment on what is said; listen as carefully as you can. When someone is speaking, try to concentrate fully on their words rather than about what you might say.
- We’ll pause in silence after each person finishes, breathing deeply and slowly, to let what was said sink in. During the silence, pay attention to the thoughts that bubble up; you may discover more clearly what you wish to share.
- Do you agree to these ground rules (look at each person for a nod or a yes). Thank you...this is our covenant with one another for this circle.
- Is everyone ready to begin?

## Questions

1. Recalling your involvement with First Unitarian, please share an experience when you felt respected and trusted.
2. Name some aspects of process that make it “healthy” or “good.”

3. In a minute we'll break into groups of [three]. Please make sure that you share the time fairly and hear from each person and decide who will share your ideas with the group. Here's the question for you to discuss: As you consider the list of things that support good process, identify 1-2 actions that might undermine good process.
4. Next for you to discuss in your groups is this question: Thinking about our congregational life, what are the decisions that need a *congregational* process? (An example might be the budget forums.) If you like, "compare and contrast" them to decisions that don't need a full congregational process.
5. As we begin to wrap up this conversation, what steps would you like to see congregational leaders (Board and Ministers) take next to embed healthy process in congregational life?
6. The last question: before our closing words: how do you feel? We won't comment on anyone's answer; instead, let's hold each person in love as they respond.

**Closing Words** Frank Holmes: "Life does not call us merely to do over and over again what we have already done; nor does it call us to act out, as puppets, parts already assigned to us. No. In the midst of a situation which is itself ever changing, we are free to bring into realization new relationships of understanding and good-will, and new acts of courage."