

# 2010 Fairview Lenten Covenant Group Discussion Guide

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“Holy Conferencing” is a process of discerning “how is it with your soul.” The purposes of sharing our faith together in a small group are four:

- 1) YOU hear what THEY feel and think deeply
- 2) THEY hear what THEY feel and think deeply
- 3) YOU hear what YOU feel and think deeply
- 4) together you discern how to live faithfully in community

The process of “holy conferencing” asks each person to agree:

- 1) to be interested
- 2) to ask probing questions gently and wisely
- 3) to listen attentively and discerningly
- 4) to help others speak their truth and listen attentively to others
- 5) to empower persons to form communities
- 6) to practice living in the divine life more fully
- 7) to accept others where they are in the faith journey, with grace and love
- 8) to keep the confidences of what is shared, so that all may share safely

## STEPS FOR FORMING YOUR COVENANT GROUP

Before Ash Wednesday, February 17, identify 3-5 persons with whom you will meet once a week. Meet together to decide the time and place for your first “holy conferencing.”

- + Set a mutually acceptable time for the group to meet. Possibilities include morning coffee, lunch, afternoons, evenings. The time is yours, and can be changed to meet the needs of the group, as the group decides.
- + Agree on a mutually acceptable place to meet together. Possibilities include in homes, at the church, in a coffee shop, or wherever there is some expectation for a private conversation.
- + Agree to be in worship every week you are in town and healthy. Working on your relationship with God can not be done apart from being with God, and holding each other accountable in love is a vital part of “holy conferencing.”

For the six weeks of Lent 2010, it is recommended that you use the provided guide – your time together is about “holy conferencing,” learning and experiencing your faith, rather than learning what some teacher wants you to learn. Allow one hour for your time together, and begin and end at the agreed upon time – this helps build trust and accountability within the group.

At the end of Lent, with the celebration of Easter, each member of the group is free to choose to continue meeting together, or to seek another group, without judgment from the others. Those who choose to continue can continue to practice holy conferencing, study the tenets of the faith, and/or choose a mission to work together on.

## **Session 1: Spiritual Vitality**

*How are you spiritually engaged, challenged, energized?*

Suggested scripture to share: Ephesians 1:3-23

### Questions

- 1) When do you feel that God is near? What are you doing, where are you, who are you with?
- 2) When do you feel most spiritually engaged? What are you doing, where are you, who are you with?
- 3) When do you feel most spiritually energized, uplifted, filled up? What are you doing, where are you, who are you with?
- 4) When do you feel most spiritually challenged, convicted, when you are questioned. Troubled about something in yourself or a situation, when you are called to do something different?
- 5) Where do you find/experience the most spiritual vitality and energy in this congregation?

## **Session 2: Gathering**

*Gathering, welcoming, hospitality, incorporating everyone*

Suggested scripture to share: Colossians 3:12-17

### General Questions (any group, place, community)

- 1) What group or community gives you the greatest sense of belonging? How does that happen?
- 2) What group or community supports you the most, helps you the most, loves and nurtures you the most? How does that happen?
- 3) How have we received help through the years? When did we receive the most support? How did we feel the most nurture and love?

### Congregational Questions

- 1) Where and when in this congregation do we feel most in community with others? What do we do that generates that feeling?
- 2) When have you felt the best incorporated (woven into the fabric of) the congregation? Where was it? How did it happen? What did people do to help you feel that way?
- 3) When have you in this group felt most welcome, most accepted? When was our feeling of belonging at its peak? What do we do in this group that is accepting and involving for you?

## **Session 3: Receiving**

*receiving love, nurture, kindness, support, challenge, help for the journey*

Suggested scripture to share: Romans 12:9-21

General questions (any group, place, community)

- 1) How have you received help through the years that made a significant difference in your life?
- 2) When were you 'fed' when you were most spiritually hungry? Where were you? How were you 'fed'?
- 3) Where and when did you feel the most nurture and love? What was given to you that helped you feel nurtured and loved?
- 4) Where are you and what are you doing when you 'recharge'?

Congregational questions

- 1) How have individuals in this congregation made a significant impact in your life?
- 2) How has this congregation 'fed' your spiritual hunger? How does it feed you? Where are you and who is involved?
- 3) In what context do you feel most nurtured and loved in this congregation? How does that nurture and love help you? What does it help you do, to become?
- 4) Finish this sentence: In this congregation, I receive most spiritually when \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Session 4: Giving**

*my gifts and talents, help others, nourish others, my offering is accepted*

Suggested scripture to share: Titus 3:1-8

General questions (any group, place, community)

- 1) What are some of the ways that you contribute to the lives of others?
- 2) What has been the most meaningful experience when you contributed to others, when you gave of yourself, and when what you gave made a difference for someone else?
- 3) What is most meaningful to you about giving, helping, contributing?

Congregational questions

- 1) How has this congregation involved you in giving to others?
- 2) What is most meaningful to you about those experiences?
- 3) In which group do you feel that you contribute the most, that you have something vital to give, that people benefit the most from you? How does that happen?
- 4) If you were to start a ministry that would help the members of our congregation give more of themselves, what kind of ministry would that be, what would it do?
- 5) Finish the sentence: I give most, and get the most out of it, when \_\_\_\_\_.

## **Session 5: Sharing**

*sharing our lives, becoming a family with each other, giving as receiving, receiving as giving, generating a common life, becoming the body of Christ*

Suggested scripture to share: Acts 2:43-47

General questions (any group, place, community)

- 1) What do we do in our families that help you all to feel most like family?
- 2) In what contexts do you have relationships that feel most like family, in which you feel that you have a lot to contribute and that you receive most?
- 3) In what community/group do you feel that you are all are most interdependent? In what community do you feel the participants, including yourself, are most authentic, most real?

Congregational questions

- 1) When and where in the congregational life have you been part of a group that feels most like -- or better than --family? In which each person contributes and each person receives?
- 2) Following Question #1: be as specific as possible about what happens in the group, what people give to each other, what people receive from each other, such that they feel that they belong and that their contributions make a difference?
- 3) What do you need/want in the congregation that will help you share your life with others more fully? That will help you be more vulnerable and receive help or care? That will help you give and care for others?

## **Session 6: Extending**

*extending communion to those outside our community, bringing others into greater communion, extending communion within the congregation into the other areas of your life*

Suggested scripture to share: I Corinthians 12:1-11

General questions (any group, place, community)

- 1) What communities are you a member of that reaches out to others outside the community? Why do they do it? What do they hope to gain?
- 2) Think about a community in which you were/are active, that felt like family, that you were able to give and receive among others the most. Did something happen in that context that was so wonderful that you told everyone you met?

Congregational questions

- 1) What does this mean to you: We should take the church out into the world beyond the four walls of Fairview United Methodist Church?
- 2) How do you live your faith every day? How do you proclaim the good news?
- 3) How are you involved meaningfully in the church's mission in the world?
- 4) When have you reached out to others who were not part of our regular group? When have you brought people who were different into our close community? If so, was your activity accepted by other congregation members? Was your activity affirmed?