



A Pastoral Relationship Program
of The United Church of Canada

What are the Modules?

United Fresh Start provides materials/tools for ministry personnel and lay leaders for use in establishing healthy relationships at congregations. Each module follows a similar format to provide a group learning experience for up to three hours; modules can be used individually, as a whole set of 23, or somewhere in between. PowerPoint slides are used throughout the session along with small group conversation and individual worksheets. A trained facilitator facilitates the conversations and exercises for each Module. Theological reflection is integrated into each module.

The Modules:

1. **Church Size and Its Implications:** Remembering the basics of Church Size Theory during a time of transition can help us see our situation anew.
2. **Conflict Module 1 – Conflict Awareness:** Change in leadership, membership and mission, in and of itself, invokes conflict. Alban Institute Senior Consultant Alice Mann has said that one of the “great myths” of the church is that change is possible without conflict. Understanding the early warning signs and being clear on how we as individuals respond in conflict situations can help us navigate the transition phase.
3. **Conflict Module 2 – Conflict Management:** The purpose of this module is to deepen participant’s understanding of conflict and provide ideas and tools they can use in managing conflict effectively. (Related Modules #5, #11, #17, #18, #20 & #21).
4. **Decision Making: Style and Clarity:** A look at: Authority; Nature of decisions; Need for involvement; and Congregational culture.
5. **Dialogue – Searching for Common Ground:** An approach to living in community in spite of our differences.
6. **Diversity:** This module examines differences related to cultural expectations, power, and privilege. This module was intentionally designed to be broad in scope and focus on the implications of diversity such as race, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, finances, or ability, without focusing on any specific difference.
7. **Entering a New System:** The purpose for this module is to help participants understand that congregations are living systems and that the way new people enter the system can have a substantial impact on their ministry. This module provides some tools for new leaders and their congregations to get to know each other, and learn about the congregation’s history, culture and expectations.
8. **Exit and Entrance – Patterns, Emotions and the Wilderness:** The purpose of this module is to help participants understand that the success of a transition depends in part upon how exits and entrances are handled, to reflect on their own exits and entrances, and become more intentional about entrance into new ministry.
9. **Family and Friends – Leading an Integrated Life:** The purpose of this module is to help ministry personnel look at their lives, how they live and how they schedule their time. Participants consider the importance of balance, integration and how well they maintain relationships with family and friends.
10. **Family Systems Theory – The Congregation as a System:** A clear understanding of Family Systems Theory can help ministry personnel and congregations be more self-aware and self-differentiating; to be better equipped to identify those in the congregation with good leadership skills; and to better recognize and deal with anxiety in the system.

11. **Finances – What You Need to Know:** Responsible for the “big picture” and leading in the planning of the church’s vision, mission and core values, ministry personnel and lay leaders can look at how monies are spent as an indicator of the extent to which the congregation lives into their vision, mission and values. Facilitating faithful stewardship of the congregation’s gifts – time, talent and treasure – is a vital part of leadership.
12. **Habits, Norms and Expectations:** The purpose of this module is to explore how understanding a congregation’s routines and norms can smooth a new person’s entry into the system.
13. **History-Sharing and Understanding:** The purpose of this module is to share the history of the congregation and to explore how that history has shaped the congregation and its relationship with the wider church.
14. **Leadership for Our Times:** A look at authority and leadership styles in the context of today’s challenges.
15. **Leading Planned Change:** The purpose of this module is to have participants reflect on their readiness for change and to consider how well they are doing in following the basic steps needed for change to be effectively implemented.
16. **Organizational Systems Theory – Using Organizational Analysis in Congregations:** The purpose of this module is to provide participants with a model for analyzing the effectiveness of their congregational systems.
17. **Planning for Effective Ministry – The Discern/Plan/Do/Reflect Cycle:** Planning is a cyclical process – “Vision without action is a dream. Action without vision is simply passing the time” (Joel Barker). There must be accountability for action embedded in the cycle and every system needs feedback about how things are going and changing. Cultural relevancy is a key component when discerning the who, what, where, when, why and how of the Spirit’s leading and discerning how the church lives into the way of Christ, expressing love for God and neighbour.
18. **Polarities – Differences to be Managed:** Learning to differentiate between problems that need to be fixed and polarities that need to be managed, and a model for managing them.
19. **Power, Authority and Influence:** The purpose of this module is to help participants understand the dynamics of power, authority and influence in their congregations by conducting a power analysis and looking at dimensions of trust and agreement among those with formal and informal power.
20. **Renegotiating Roles and Expectations:** “...as we act, we not only express what is in us and help give shape to the world; we also receive what is outside us, and we reshape our inner selves. When we act, the world acts back, and we and the world are co-created.” This module equips participants with tools to negotiate roles and expectations.
21. **Role Clarity:** A clear understanding of your role in the congregation is one of the most important tools you can acquire as a church leader – minister or lay.
22. **Transition:** Understanding the difference between change and transition will help participants recognize individual and group dynamics in times of change and equip them to respond accordingly.
23. **Wellness – Caring for Self in Transition:** Spiritual, Physical, Mental, Emotional and Social Well-Being for Leaders Experiencing Change.

For more information, check the website www.unitedfreshstart.ca, or contact Adam Hanley, Program Coordinator at the General Council Office ahanley@united-church.ca. To invite a facilitator to work with your community of faith, contact Tracy Murton, Pastoral Relations Minister, at tmurton@united-church.ca.

Trained Facilitators in Saskatchewan:

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