

**LIFE House Meeting Script: 1 hour 15 minutes**

(Note: Timing is approximate, and is based on a meeting of 10 people)

<p><b>5 minutes</b></p>	<p><b>Welcome, Opening Prayer, and Introductions</b></p>
<p>Welcome to our House Meeting! Let's open in prayer. <i>(You can lead this or ask someone else to.)</i></p> <p>We're here today to share stories, get to know each other better, and build our Justice Ministry Network. So first, let's go around the room and introduce ourselves. <i>(Everyone introduces themselves.)</i> _____ will be our Recorder and _____ will be our Timekeeper today.</p>	
<p><b>5 minutes</b></p>	<p><b>Icebreaker</b></p>
<p>First, let's get to know each other better by <b>sharing a story—any story—about something that's going on in your family or with any of your loved ones right now</b>—something funny, someone you're excited for or proud of, someone you're asking for prayers for, anything. I'll start <i>(share your story)...</i> <i>[Depending on number of people, you can ask people to pair up or just go around the room.]</i></p>	
<p><b>20 Minutes: 2 minutes intro 1 minutes to think 17 minutes to share</b></p>	<p><b>Discussion Question 1</b></p>
<p>We're here tonight to share stories about community problems that affect us and our loved ones, because we know that we can't do anything about those problems if we don't name the problems first. <u>This is not the time to talk about LIFE issues, or weigh in on any political issues.</u> Please just share a story about something you're worried about personally, even if you don't see it as a "justice issue."</p> <p>You might be worried about crime in your neighborhood, or how your kids or grandkids are doing in school. You might be worried about credit card debt, or the challenges of supporting your family, or loved ones who are unemployed. You might be worried about your own physical or mental health, or the health of one of your family members.</p> <p>Please be as specific as you can, but if it makes you more comfortable to leave out names or certain details, that is absolutely fine. We're all here with stories to share, and we'll all support one another.</p> <p><b>So again, this first question is: What keeps you up at night personally, in terms of worry or stress?</b> If you don't literally stay up at night worrying, what is something that worries you (either right now, or recently)? Remember, I'm asking each of us to share a story about something that going on in our own lives right now, whether or not it's related to a LIFE issue.</p> <p>We'll all go around and share for one minute. I'll go first <i>(share your story)</i>.</p> <p>Let's take a minute to think, and then we'll go around the circle and share. <i>(give them a minute to think)</i></p> <p><b>TIPS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model a strong, personal story</li> <li>• Ask everyone individually to share, going around the circle to each person, one-by-one</li> <li>• If a story is vague or impersonal, ask <b>"How does that personally affect you?"</b> If it doesn't, ask them to share a story that <u>does</u> affect them personally.</li> <li>• Ask follow-up questions (who, when, where, etc.) if necessary.</li> </ul>	

**20 Minutes:  
1 minute intro  
1 minute to think  
17 minutes to share**

### **KOKO Discussion Questions**

Thank you, everyone, for sharing your stories. Our next question is: **how have You, or one of your friends or family members, been personally affected by LIFE's ongoing issues?**

- Civil Citations, juvenile arrest
- Fair Chance hiring/ Ban the Box
- Unsolved murders/cold cases

**20 minutes**

### **Invitation to be a Member of our Congregation's Justice Ministry Network**

Thank you all for sharing your stories. As people of faith, we're called to respond to stories like these, and to do justice in our community.

Unitarian Universalists use sacred texts from a variety of traditions. We have especially cherished the prophetic books of the Bible. In addition to Micah and Nehemiah, we look to Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and other prophets who dared to speak critical words of love to the powerful, for justice for the oppressed. As Unitarian Universalists we commonly draw our beliefs from more than one religious or philosophical tradition. We look to the words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love.

Justice means holding systems accountable to solve these problems: for example, mercy is helping build a home with Habitat for Humanity, justice is holding our officials accountable to provide affordable housing for thousands of people.

And though we're required to do justice, we don't do it as well, because we can't do it alone. We need power to do justice—power in large numbers of organized people.

So we work with congregations across the county through the organization LIFE to organize an annual Nehemiah Action Assembly. It's named after the prophet Nehemiah, who held a Great Assembly to win justice for the people in Jerusalem who were being exploited by moneylenders.

Over the past 5 years, we've invited officials to that assembly and received commitments for better schools, justice for juvenile offenders, and better mental health services for children. Last year, we won the assignment of a SAO member and two full-time FMPD officers to work on the backlog of murder cold cases in Fort Myers.

But there's still so much to be done. So our congregation has a vision to one day turn out our Average Worship Attendance to the Nehemiah Action. Because if we can bring \_\_\_\_\_ (your congregation's average worship attendance) people together 52 times a year to practice faithfulness, that same number can come out once a year for justice.

Our tool to reach that vision is our Justice Ministry Network. Justice Ministry Network Members commit to do the following things.

- First, bring 3+ people with you to the Nehemiah Action on Tuesday, March 28 of next year
- Second, come to these LIFE events throughout the coming year
  - Community Problems Assembly – coming up this/next month on Monday, October

- 17, where we will vote for a new problem to address,
- Rally on March 13th of next year, where we'll here an update on the research done on that problem and prepare for the Nehemiah Action, and
- Justice Ministry Celebration on May 22<sup>nd</sup> of next year
- Consider investing \$200.
- Attend two network meetings at our own congregation

And if you want to go above and beyond, and work on a research committee, please let me know!

Before I ask each of you to join me in being a Network Member, I want to tell you a story about a time I was inspired by this work.

**Tell a personal story about a time that you were inspired by this work—a conversation, an action, an issue victory, etc.:**

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I choose to go above and beyond the basic commitment. But again, being a Network Member means four assemblies a year, and bringing 3+ to the Nehemiah Action.

**Ask each person individually, starting with current Network Members:**

- “Will you be a Network Member?”
- “Will you come to the Community Problems Assembly on October 17th at Mount Hermon Ministries?”

#### **Possible Responses to “Will you be a Network Member?”**

<b>Can't make all the meetings...</b>	“I understand that sometimes life happens, but can you make it a priority? I'll remind you before each meeting.”
<b>Too busy...</b>	“I understand—I'm busy, too! But this is a valuable use of my time because _____. And I know this matters to you because _____. I know you're busy, but can you make it a priority?”
<b>Money issue (\$200)...</b>	“Investing \$200 is not a requirement, and you won't be asked until the beginning of next year. I'll follow up with you about that then. Leaving aside the money issue, <u>will you be a Network Member?</u> ”
<b>Don't know who to bring...</b>	We'll get together in February to pick names of people in the congregation to invite, and I'll remind you about that. <u>Will you be a Network Member?</u> ”
<b>Unsure about LIFE?/...</b>	“Can you come to the Community Problems Assembly on Oct. 17th and check it out?”
<b>Not interested...</b>	

<b>No...</b>	“Can you share why that is? Do you have any questions I can answer today?”
<b>3 minutes</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>
<p>This is one of over 40 House Meetings that are happening all across the city this month. And at the Community Problems Assembly on October 17, over 200 people from all the different House Meetings will come together in one big assembly to vote on the problem area for the new year.</p> <p>We may also decide that prior issues should receive our full attention including a strong presence in the statewide issue for Civil Citation allowing our leaders more time to travel to Tallahassee and to see other decision makers throughout this county, or as an example see the expansion of Ban the Box to Cape Coral. Finally, we may also want to fully engage the new Fort Myers, Chief of Police and other decision makers in the commitment to decrease the number of unsolved murders.</p> <p>Each Network Member has one vote, so please be there!</p> <p><i>(Closing Remarks)</i></p>	
<b>2 minutes</b>	<b>Closing Meditation and Adjourn</b>
<p><i>(You can lead this or ask some else to).</i></p>	

What has LIFE accomplished?

#### 2016 Unsolved Murders

In April 2016 L.I.F.E.'s efforts resulted in an enhanced collaborative effort between the State's Attorney's Office and the Ft. Myers police department along with commitments to hire an additional prosecutor and to hire/assign additional detectives to work solely on unsolved murders.

#### 2015 Fair Chance Hiring

On March 28, 2015, 1211 people of faith gathered at the Harborside Event Center and secured an agreement from Mayor Randall Henderson to form a committee to research implementing a Fair Chance Hiring Policy in the city's own hiring. A Fair Chance Hiring policy will give individuals trying to reintegrate post-incarceration more opportunities to interview for open positions. The City of Fort Myers has agreed to implement this policy. LIFE Leaders have met with Cape Coral Officials and continue to work to secure their commitment to the issue.

#### "LIFE Action Assembly 2014"

On April 07, 2014 1189 Lee County residents packed the Harborside Event Center asking our public officials to increase the use of juvenile Civil Citations. Civil Citations are a state diversion program allowing juvenile, first time misdemeanor offenders, an alternative to arrest. Civil Citations have been cited by Florida Department of Juvenile Justice officials with greatly reducing the cost to tax payers and recidivism rates. LIFE successfully garnered the support of local representatives of law enforcement, the judiciary, and DJJ to increase the use of the program in Lee County.





## ***House Meeting Tips***

### **BEFORE:**

Invitations – calling as member of your congregation’s Justice Ministry.

*“ We’re holding a series of house meetings over the next few weeks to discuss community problems that affect us and to build our Justice Ministry. I want to make sure we get your input, as we begin to look at what problems the Ministry might work to address. I’m holding one of these house meetings and was hoping you would attend. It will be on (Date/time/place). Will you be able to attend?”*

### **PREPARATIONS:**

- Know who is coming by getting commitments and making reminder calls.
- Plan your set-up ahead of time. Provide enough (but not too many) chairs.
- Decide whether you will have refreshments.
- Recruit a recorder. Share Tips and go over the sample House Meeting Agenda with them before the meeting.
- Familiarize yourself with the discussion questions and the format for the discussion.
- Review the Vision Statement you will give, so you’re familiar with it, even though you are reading from the script provided.

### **DURING:**

- Begin on time!
- Give clear instructions for the introduction and discussion.
- Be sure to call on everyone to share. Don’t let any one person dominate the discussion.
- Proposition each person individually to commit to being a Justice Ministry Network Member. Don’t be apologetic about asking; this work is important and grounded in our faith! Start with sharing why you’re excited and have committed.
- Follow the agenda; read the script provided in your packet.
- Thank people for their time; let them know you will follow-up with them before the Annual Assembly at Mount Hermon Ministries on October 17<sup>th</sup>

### **AFTER:**

- Reflect with recorder to summarize results and fill out House Meeting Reporting Form
- Follow-up Team Meeting - Team Leaders report on their House Meeting to report on community problems what common problems and KOKO issues are surfaced in your congregation’s House Meetings
- Attend Team Assembly on September 26, at All Faiths Unitarian Congregation for the vote to narrow down problem areas for Annual Assembly





# JUSTICE MINISTRY NETWORK TRACKING FORM

Congregation: \_\_\_\_\_

Year: 2013 - 2014

Justice Ministry TEAM Member			
CPA	Rally	Action	Investment
			JMN Mtg.
Participants to invite to Action:			
1			Attended?
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			

Prospective Justice Ministry Network Members:

Attended House Meeting?

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Attended House Meeting?

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Attended House Meeting?

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