

Covenant Group News is a free electronic newsletter on Small Group Ministry and Covenant Groups read by 1237 forward-looking Unitarian Universalists. Created by the Rev. Bob Hill, CGNews is edited by Peter Bowden and distributed by the UU Small Group Ministry Network.

→ Spread the news. Share the event announcements in this issue with small group leaders and participants.

## In this Issue

**Small Groups at GA** Our annual spotlight on Small Group Ministry and Covenant Groups at General Assembly 2006.

**UU Small Group Ministry Network Summer Institute at Ferry Beach!** Get ready for year #2 of our full week program at the Ferry Beach conference center in Sacco, ME. If you love small groups this is your dream week!

**Resource Spotlight** This month's spotlight features something old, something new, and something not at all UU...

## About our network

The UU Small Group Ministry Network is an Independent Affiliate Organization of the Unitarian Universalist Association. The purpose of our network is to support small group ministry, covenant groups and related shared ministry models in Unitarian Universalist congregations through the development of new resources, networking, and various learning opportunities.

The UU SGM Network has a membership program which funds our work and ministry. Members of our network receive our print journal, the SGM Quarterly, in the mail four times per year. All back issues are available to members via the member area of our website.

Learn more about this program at the end of this issue of CGNews.

## CGNews Experiment

Dear Friends,

Late this Fall I took a non-scientific poll - a la CNN - of CGNews readers and asked what would make this free e-newsletter more useful. There was a call for more news, less news, weekly free small group sessions (of course), and a format that is easier to share.

This month I am experimenting with the "easier to share" format. Instead of having the regular long, text CGNews email I've also placed the contents in this newsletter format.

It is my hope that you will find this more appealing to share with your leadership. So, how best to share CGNews? Try this on for size.

- ❖ Forward this document to others via email
- ❖ Review the information at related meetings
- ❖ Print it, photocopy pages of interest and hand out
- ❖ Post pages of interest on bulletin boards

Once you take a moment to print, save and share this issue of CGNews, there is one more thing you can do to help with this Big Bold CGNews Experiment...

### **Tell me what you think.**

Do you like this format? Did you find you were more inclined to share it? What would make it more useful? You can share feedback with me via email or phone. Write to me at [peter@smallgroupministry.net](mailto:peter@smallgroupministry.net) or call (401) 855-0037.

In cooperation,



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## SMALL GROUP MINISTRY programming at General Assembly 2006 & CENTER Day

Each year representatives and members of our congregations gather for the annual meeting of our association. This meeting is called General Assembly (GA). This year, GA will be in St. Louis, and will feature many workshops and experiences for those interested in Small Group Ministry and Covenant Groups.

### Small Group Ministry Workshops

#### Introduction to Small Group Ministry

Small Group Ministry (SGM) or Covenant Groups are being used successfully in hundreds of congregations to build community and encourage deeper spiritual exploration. This workshop will provide an introduction to SGM, how and why it works, and to the essential components of a healthy SGM program. Presenters will be Staff and Board of the UU Small Group Ministry Network.



Tentative Time Slot: Friday, 6/23, 11AM -12:15 PM

#### Strengthening Existing Small Group Ministry Programs

Small Group Ministry or Covenant Groups, are transforming our congregations by encouraging deeper spiritual growth and the development of friendships. This workshop will focus on the leverage points for strengthening or revitalizing an existing program. We will explore how to maintain a healthy program and avoid and overcome common pitfalls. Presenters will be Staff and Board of the UU Small Group Ministry Network.

Tentative Time Slot: Friday, 6/23, 4-5:15 PM, Repeated Saturday, 6/24 8:30-9:45 AM.



### Additional Workshops

In addition to these workshops offered by the UU Small Group Ministry Network, other small group ministry workshops may be offered. To review the full program booklet keep an eye on the General Assembly website at <http://www.uua.org/ga>. The full program booklet will be posted there once it is complete.

### Visit the UU Small Group Ministry Network Booth

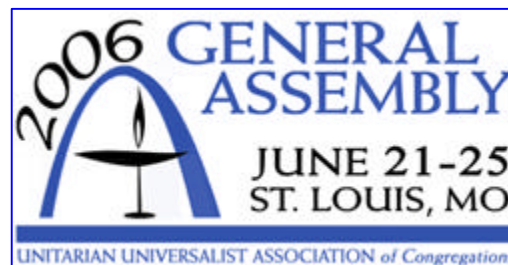
The UU Small Group Ministry Network will have a booth in the Exhibit Hall again this year. We invite you to come and speak with us! Learn more about Small Group Ministry, explore available resources, network with other small group leaders, and more. Interested in volunteering to help staff our booth? Visit the General Assembly page on our website.

# SMALL GROUP MINISTRY at General Assembly 2006 & CENTER Day

## Small Group Ministry At CENTER Day

St. Louis, MO, June 19-21, 2006  
For more info, visit [www.uuma.org](http://www.uuma.org)

The UUSGM Network will be offering the following workshop for religious professionals at CENTER Day. CENTER day is designed for religious professionals. Lay leadership offerings may be found at later in this issue of CGNews.



### **The Possibilities and Perplexities of Small Group Ministry, June 20, 1:30-2:45 PM**

More than half of our congregations have tried Small Group Ministry (SGM) or Covenant Groups as a way of meeting the needs for intimacy and spiritual growth. Groups hold the promise for revitalizing our churches. Yet many of us are encountering challenges and frustrations as we use this approach. This session will provide a candid review of SGM and explore ways to successfully run programs to prevent and avoid some of the common pitfalls. We'll explore the hidden, cultural biases that can limit program effectiveness. We'll invite sharing with colleagues on their views of and experiences with SGM.

Presenters will be Dr. M'ellen Kennedy, MDiv, Rev. Helen Zidowecki, and Rev. Marti Keller.

## Experience Covenant Groups at General Assembly 2006

General Assembly 2006 in St. Louis will offer dedicated time and space for Covenant Groups to meet. Covenant Groups at GA 2004 in Long Beach and GA 2005 in Fort Worth earned rave reviews from participants, proving to be a highlight of the GA experience for many. This year's program promises to be even better. Whether you are an experienced GA attendee or a first-timer, whether you are a member of a Covenant Group in your congregation or Covenant Groups are new to you, this program offers the opportunity to enhance your experience at General Assembly 2006 in St. Louis. If you have facilitated a Covenant Group (or Small Group Ministry by whatever name) in your home congregation for one year or more, you are invited to apply to be a GA Covenant Group facilitator. Facilitator Training will be provided by staff and board of the UU Small Group Ministry Network.



**Registration Form may be downloaded at**  
<http://www.uua.org/cde/sgm/CovenantGroup.pdf>

### **OPEN Registration for first 500 participants!**

For more information visit the <http://www.uua.org/cde/sgm> or contact the Rev. Connie Grant, GA Covenant Group Coordinator, at [GACovenantGroups@aol.com](mailto:GACovenantGroups@aol.com).

## REGISTER for General Assembly 2006

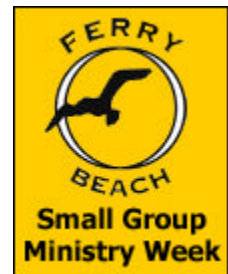
To register for General Assembly visit the GA website at [www.uua.org/ga](http://www.uua.org/ga). Check with your home congregation to see if there is funding to help pay for you to attend this conference.

Send a team from your congregation to...

## The UU Small Group Ministry Network Summer Institute at Ferry Beach August 12 - August 18, 2006

The Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network is delighted to offer an opportunity for teams and individuals from congregations of all sizes to learn and practice Small Group Ministry (SGM) with experienced practitioners and leaders. The week will include presentations, hands-on workshops, small group ministry experience, sharing, networking, music and art. Topics will include:

- Starting SGM from scratch in a congregation
- Expanding and enhancing existing SGM programs
- Exploring SGM in Lifespan Religious Education
- Preparing and supporting facilitators in their important work
- Revitalizing congregations with SGM
- Creating effective SGM sessions
- Helping ministers work comfortably and constructively with SGM
- Using art, music, movement and alternative approaches in SGM
- Exploring SGM as related to Social Justice and Faith in Action
- Sharing materials that participants bring from their congregations
- Taking home a vision and action plan for SGM



Mornings will include presentations, discussion and workshops; evenings will have further optional programs and related activities. Afternoons are for relaxing on the beach, lounging on the porch, exploring the environs through organized outings, and other activities. Participants will have the unique and uplifting opportunity of meeting daily in a hands-on small group. The conference will be especially effective for groups representing their congregations and all are welcome.

### Instructors include:

Rev. Calvin O. Dame, Rev. Helen Zidowecki, Dr. M'ellen Kennedy, MDiv, Peter Freedman Bowden, Elizabeth Barrett, Rev. Marti Keller and others.

Registration is open at [www.ferrybeach.org](http://www.ferrybeach.org)



In my work as a small group consultant and one of the coordinators of the UU SGM Network I spend lots of time recommending resources. As the number of available resources grow, it is getting harder to keep track of all resources available to us. This month I'd like to spotlight three resources. This month we have something old, something new, and something that is not at all UU.

### Designing and Implementing a "Small Group Ministry" Focus for Your Congregation

First written by the Rev. Glenn H. Turner in 2000, this resource was revised in October of 2003 to include references to Bob Hill's book, the Complete Guide to Small Group Ministry (Skinner House).

In this now classic paper Rev. Turner discusses the purpose of Small Group Ministry, and offers, as the title suggests, a process for designing and implementing a small group ministry.

What I find most useful about this resource is list of questions Turner identifies that every congregation will have to answer in designing its ministry. Every Small Group Ministry is unique. Many congregations run into trouble when these questions are not answered upfront.

This resource also includes a session to do with the Board while you are exploring this process, as well as sessions for training or orienting facilitators.

*This document is available for free on our website's [public resource page](#).*

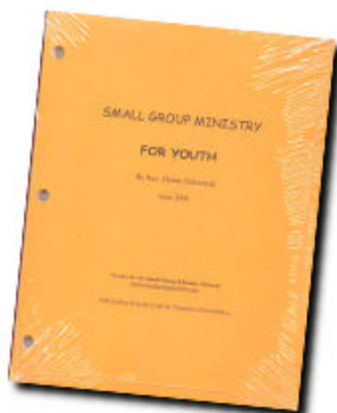
### Small Group Ministry with Youth

UU Youth Groups have been meeting in ways similar to SGM for years! Now there is a great resource dedicated to small group ministry with youth!

In this new resource by the Rev. Helen Zidowecki there is background information on small group ministry and its use with youth, a session for facilitators, and a total of 25 complete group session plans.

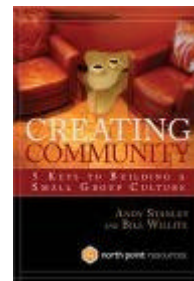
Cost: \$25 plus \$5 shipping and handling.

*You may print an order form from the [resources for sale page](#) on our website.*



**Helen has a GREAT website with many SGM resources. Visit <http://www.hzmre.com>**

### Creating Community : Five Keys to Building a Small Group Culture



In Creating Community Andy Stanley and Bill Willits share how they developed the small group culture at North Point Community Church. This is a church of 15,000 with a huge young adult population. North Point gets the power of small groups as a WAY of doing church. In designing their community, they chose to focus on being a relational church.

Shouldn't that be our focus too?

Here are two additional books from Andy Stanley & North Point Ministries. Though these two titles are not focused exclusively on small groups, they do focus on one of the areas our SGM movement needs some serious help with – leadership development...

[7 Practices of Effective Ministry](#)

[The Next Generation Leader](#)

Find these titles at your favorite online bookstore. Not available through the UUA Bookstore.

In June of 2004 the UU Small Group Ministry Network launched a membership program to support the development of new UU small group ministry resources. Through membership fees, donations and grants we are actively developing resources, training materials and a quarterly journal. These resources are being shared with our members through our website and the SGM Quarterly.

Join the UU Small Group Ministry Network and you will receive the SGM Quarterly in the mail four times per year and online access to all previous issues. Our last issue had a focus on Social Action and included the following articles:

- Revitalize Your Congregation's Social Action Program With Small Group Ministry!
- Praxis-Reflection Small Groups Piloted in Justworks Journey
- Facilitators' Corner: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Your Small Group Ministry Program
- Engaging In Service From A Small Group Ministry Base
- News From Our Members: Soul Expansion, Made Personal

The next issue of the SGM Quarterly will focus on **The Language of Reverence**. New memberships postmarked NEXT THURSDAY, April 20<sup>th</sup>, will be included in this mailing.

## UU SGM Network Membership Form

### Please select a membership

- Individual Membership      \$35      Includes 1 copies of the SGM Quarterly
- Congregational Membership      \$60      Includes 6 copies of the SGM Quarterly

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Congregation \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Optional donation to assist in funding our support of small group ministry:

**Please Circle**    \$5    \$10    \$25    \$50    \$100    \$250    Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed – Male checks payable to **“UU SGM Network”**      \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Send your completed membership form with check made payable to “UU SGM Network” to:

UU SGM Network , C/O Peter Bowden  
155 Evarts Street, Newport, RI 02840