

The UU Small Group Ministry Network (UUSGM Network)

Our Mission:

"To help create healthy congregations and a vital Unitarian Universalist movement by supporting Small Group Ministry."

The UU Small Group Ministry Network is a membership based Independent Affiliate Organization of the Unitarian Universalist Association (see uua.org). The purpose of the Network is to support small group ministry and related shared ministry models in Unitarian Universalist congregations through developing new resources, networking and training opportunities.

Joining the Network

For info on joining and benefits of membership, see the back page of this Quarterly, or visit www.smallgroupministry.net.
Time to renew? Check your mailing label.

Board & Staff

Rev. Calvin Dame, President
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Rev. Helen Zidowecki

Advisory Board

Rev. Bob Hill
Rev. Glenn Turner



Co-Coordinators
Peter Bowden
M'ellen Kennedy

We Welcome Your Gift to the Network

For the UU Small Group Ministry Network to accomplish our mission, we need adequate funding. We are funded primarily by our members. There is much work to be done to support Small Group Ministry in our congregations. And we want to do it! In order to take on the needed research and resource development projects we need your support. **Your donation to the UUSGM Network is tax deductible.** We thank our members for their support and welcome additional financial contributions.

For more info on making tax deductible donations, please contact Peter Bowden at 401-855-0037.

The UUSGM Quarterly

Editor: M'ellen Kennedy

The UUSGM Quarterly provides information, explores issues and shares resources on Small Group Ministry or Covenant Groups. It is funded primarily by our members like you. Do you have a SGM experience to share, or a testimonial, or an exciting aspect of the SGM program in your congregation? Please send your submissions, your ideas and requests for topics to mellen@smallgroupministry.net.

Language of Reverence

By Rev. Calvin Dame (Continued from page 1)

hear that I think that Covenant Groups are the perfect place to explore these tensions and to uncover common ground. As a UU Small Group Ministry true believer, **I see nothing but opportunity here! It will require thoughtfulness and intention, but what worthwhile and real work does not?**

If the language were a problem in a group in which I was involved, here is the approach I would take:

1. Help the group to understand that there is a significant difference of opinion or perspective, and invite the group to set aside time to explore these differences.
2. Review with members the group's covenant to work respectfully, to listen and to learn. And if necessary, help the group forge a special covenant for this period of exploration.
3. With a commitment in hand, I would spend a session with the UUA Principles and Purposes document, and help the group see that a religious group encompassing different perspectives is exactly who we are. What holds us together is the practice of respect and tolerance.
4. Then, I would identify the words that are contentious and create sessions to explore, with extra attention to respect and tolerance, what these words mean to people and how we can find common ground to walk on together.

This may seem too simple, but I think that the tensions in our groups and in our movement over the language of reverence is fertile ground for the spiritual growth. **I'd like to invite you to participate in this meaningful work with the groups in your congregation.** Over time, SGM members in your congregation may want to engage the whole congregation in exploring this tension and looking for common ground. If you and your groups work on this, I **invite You to write about your experience and share it with others through this Quarterly or the Covenant Group News.** I also invite You to send in any sessions you create to put up on our website, www.smallgroupministry.net, so others can benefit from your experience.

The tension over words, the language of reverence, the vocabulary of spiritual exploration, runs through our movement, **and the way that we make progress is by working together to uncover the common ground, to find the place where we can all stand together.**

*"Reverence for life is the highest court of appeal."
Albert Schweitzer*

Field Test UU Principles and Parenting: Small Group Ministry

Now through May 31, 2006

Small Group Ministry Sessions are on line at www.hzmre.com This includes discussion of Small Group Ministry for parents and 12 session plans. If you use the session plans, or review the material, please send comments to Helen Zidowecki at hzmre@hzmre.com

*"Pursue some path, however narrow and crooked,
in which you can walk with love and reverence."
Henry David Thoreau*



Reports from Ferry Beach, 2005

The Board and Staff of the UU Small Group Ministry Network have already been preparing enthusiastically for the second ever, weeklong UU training on Small Group Ministry at the UU camp, Ferry Beach in Saco, Maine. Our week last year was great fun and very rewarding. We'd love to have You join us this summer. Details on the 2006 program and how to register are on the next page. Below are real reports from Summer 2005 attendees.

Elizabeth Cobblah, Maynard, MA

When SGM was in its first year at our church, First Parish of Stow and Acton Massachusetts, **eight facilitators including our minister attended the SGM conference at Ferry Beach, Saco Maine** with about 35 other UU facilitators, some from as far away as Arizona, Washington state and Louisiana. **It was a thoroughly enjoyable, meaningful and engaging week spent within a sandy block from an ocean beach. Sense of community was strong. The spirit was pleasurable and supportive.**

Workshops and conversations addressed many concerns we had as newly launched facilitators and helped us mark our channels. We got to know what we could relax about and what to pay attention to as facilitators. We got to know the importance of SGM in individual lives and in the organization of the church. We got to know the bare bone essentials of SGM and the flexibility within that structure. **Our confidence rose as our understanding of self and community deepened.**

The variety of workshops offered something to everyone. Sometimes it was difficult to choose between the one we wanted and the one we thought we needed but several workshops were repeated so we didn't feel we missed anything. **The staff members – five ministers by training or by calling, covered different aspects of SGM so that they functioned smoothly together as the distinct fingers and thumb of a creative, caring hand delivering a strong program and clear message.** Among the discussion and workshop topics I recall were life-spanning religious education, varieties of prayer and ritual, using the arts in SGM, right and left brain integration for spiritual growth, session-writing, SGM's impact on church function and emotional health.

Being part of a small group that met daily after lunch was valuable in giving us an SGM experience different from the one at home. It expanded our concept of the program and gave each person a mooring while at Ferry Beach.

The pace of the conference was ideal and included time for reflection, rest, beach-going etc between meetings and workshops. Many of us sensed that time moved very slowly while there. Though the content was full and rich, it could be savored. **We all came away with vital kernels of understanding that have been sprouting and taking root in our lives and churches.** An image of self as a vessel ready to receive, to carry and to offer, is one of many that has stayed with me. In addition, we all probably felt the duo, **intimacy and ultimacy**, a *raison d'être* and an outcome of the program. **Experiencing it, learning to cultivate it, being embraced by August warmth and fellowship at the ocean's edge were almost enough to sustain some of us for several years!**

Marcia Lewton, Port Townsend, WA

Thinking ahead to the stimulation of a weeklong workshop on Small Group Ministry persuaded me to recruit my friend LaVaughn, get congregational backing and sign up. But when the time came to fly from one coast to the other and settle into a dormitory, I got grouchy. **I'm too old to go to camp!** How can I pack four pillows into an airline bag?

Then came an e-mail from a friend who loved her stay at Ferry Beach. She instructed me to give the table an extra bang when singing the Quillen Shinn song. **Camp songs? Table banging? Oh dear.** And I'd have to eat what was put in front of me. Gizzards and tripe, no doubt.

It didn't get any better after I arrived. I'd survived the trip, but now it was time to test out Ferry Beach. **The weather was much hotter than usual and people were splashing around in the ocean.** I took off a shoe and tentatively placed one tender white foot on the burning sand, then quickly withdrew it back into the shoe. The Atlantic, pah. They can have it. I'll take my cool Puget Sound beaches any day.

This couldn't be any worse than a week in the hospital, and I'd lived through that. I could do it. You know how all this had to turn out. No, I didn't pack up and leave. I couldn't leave LaVaughn there to face it alone. Besides, she had the rental car. So I settled in.

After a meal or two I had to admit that the food was better than hospital food, quite a bit better. Enough variety that anyone could make appealing choices. No gizzards. And enough activity that I could take seconds and still lose a little weight, what with our dorm room being on the third floor.

But I still hadn't found out what these folks were going to teach us. **We'd have to do a lot of that weird stuff UUs do instead of pray, no doubt.** The place was crawling with ministers. No telling what they'd demand. What if we had to sing hymns?

Fortunately there was a schedule of workshops and events to choose from. **Coming from a congregation with Small Group Ministry already in place, I was able to find classes that added information and skills, while folks new to the program could go into it from the beginning.**

In addition to plenary sessions and workshops, we formed our own Small Groups, which were conducted just like the ones we would be attending back home. There were informal porch talks covering whatever participants wanted to bring up. Braver souls than I could join in an early morning dip in the ocean and attend chapel, if they still felt up to it.

As the week wore on, I began liking people I didn't think I could possibly stand. Small Group Ministry will do that to you. Participants from all over the country brought suggestions on how they dealt with some of the

(Continued on page 6)

Small Group Ministry Network Institute

August 12 – August 18, 2006

Ferry Beach, UU Conference Center Saco, Maine



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 Bowden, Elizabeth Barrett, Rev. Marti Keller and others.

Imagine enjoying the beach, worshipping among the pines, making new friends, sensing our history, and participating in rejuvenating our Unitarian Universalist movement with Small Group Ministry – all in a week this summer!

Comments From Last Year's Ferry Beach Participants:

"Outstanding presenters. It went beyond my expectations. Great conference and facility."

"It offered experiences I did not expect – surpassed my expectations. Small groups were wonderful. I'm taking back a deeper sense of what is possible for how we relate with each other, for our program, and what transformation might look like for our church community."

"The staff of this workshop have such amazing gifts, knowledge and excitement, that I want to see all this more widely shared!"

"I'll go back with ideas on how to design and implement the SGM program in my congregation, solid concepts and practical experience gleaned from others."

"Thank you, thank you. It was a powerful experience for me personally and I'm looking forward to sharing what I've learned with my congregation. Thank you for all the work and care you took in putting together a meaningful and practical conference."

"I'm bringing home more organization for our SGM program, and inspiration and tools to make it better."

To register and for more information, visit www.ferrybeach.org

Small Group Ministry at General Assembly & CENTER Day 2006

St. Louis, MO, June 21-25, 2006

To register and for more info, visit uua.org

Once a year representatives and members of our Unitarian Universalist congregations and organizations gather for our General Assembly (GA). This year, GA will be in St. Louis, and will feature opportunities for Small Group Ministry (SGM) or Covenant Groups.

è **Let us know if you're planning an SGM event at GA and we'll publicize your SGM event in the Summer/GA Issue of this Quarterly.**

UUSGM Network Booth An Opportunity to Help Out & Learn More about SGM

The UU Small Group Ministry Network will have a booth in the Exhibit Hall again this year. This is an invitation for a few enthusiastic SGM folks to help us staff the booth. It's a great opportunity to hear about what's going on in our movement with SGM and to spread the good news of the power of SGM. If you'd like to help staff the booth, please contact M'ellen Kennedy at 802-453-5469 or mellen@smallgroupministry.net. We'd love to have You join us. Thanks in advance!

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. **To learn more, read the reviews by two of last year's participants on the previous page.**

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 forms for GA Covenant Group members and facilitators, with details about group meeting times and logistics, are available on-line. If you would like to participate, please register on-line. There will be no on-site registration in St. Louis.

www.uua.org/cde/sgm/CovenantGroup.pdf.

For more information, contact the Rev. Connie Grant, GA Covenant Group Coordinator, at GACovenantGroups@aol.com.



The UU Small Group Ministry Network Is Offering the Following 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

Small Group Ministry At CENTER Day in St. Louis, MO, June 19-21, 2006

For more info, visit uuma.org

The UUSGM Network will be offering the following workshop for religious professionals at CENTER Day

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.

UUSGM Network Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the UU Small Group Ministry Network will be held at GA in St. Louis. Details on the Meeting will be in an upcoming Issue of this Quarterly.

Time To Renew? Check Your Mailing Label!
Do You Want
to Subscribe to this Quarterly?

Become a Member of
The UU Small Group Ministry Network!

Individual: \$35US Annually (1 copy of Quarterly)

Congregation: \$60US Annually (6 copies of Quarterly)

New & Existing Members: To make our larger efforts to support this ministry possible, such as research and development of resources, we need your donations above your annual membership fee.

Additional Donation: \$100 \$250 \$500 \$ _____

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Congregation _____

Phone _____

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Comments _____

Please complete the form above and mail with your check made out to "UU SGM Network" to the UU SGM Network, Attn: Peter Bowden, 155 Evarts Street, Newport, RI 02840
You can also join and renew on-line: smallgroupministry.net

We Welcome Your Gift to the Network.

UU Small Group Ministry Network
155 Evarts Street
Newport, RI 02840

The Benefits of Network Membership:

1. Experiencing the joy of helping our grassroots Small Group Ministry movement flourish!
2. Getting the SGM Quarterly mailed to your home or congregation four times each year.
3. Accessing great members-only resources through our website.
4. Receiving registration discounts when you attend UU SGM Network sponsored events.
5. Receiving assistance when you plan and offer a regional small group ministry event.
6. Participating as a voting member in the UUSGM Network Annual Meeting at General Assembly.

The UUSGM Quarterly

Editor: M'ellen Kennedy

è Feature Articles in Future Issues

Summer 2006 How SGM Impacts the Congregation
Fall 2007 What topic would you like to see covered?

Subscribe to the Covenant Group News

Keep up on news about Small Group Ministry and Covenant Groups with the monthly free e-news, "Covenant Group News." The newsletter was started by Bob Hill and is now published by the UU Small Group Ministry Network. If you're not already a subscriber, to sign up, visit our website www.smallgroupministry.net