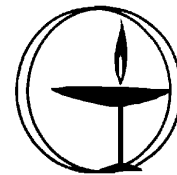


U.U. Small Group Ministry ***Quarterly***

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Announcing the U.U. Small Group Ministry Network By Rev. Calvin O. Dame Augusta, ME

Small Group and Covenant Group Ministry holds the promise of **transforming individual lives, transforming our congregations, and transforming our liberal religious movement.** These are audacious statements, perhaps, but look what is happening. From two or three programs, at the most, five years ago, hundreds of congregations now have some kind of covenant group program in place. In my congregation and in others I have watched as the satisfaction and excitement of the small group experience spreads out to strengthen and energize other aspects of congregational life. And I have watched, in my congregation and in others as participation in small groups has rounded and connected members with one another beyond the limits of the coffee hour, and provided **a forum for deeper spiritual inquiry and the exploration of vital questions of faith.**

I have a deeply held respect for the promise of Small Group Ministry. Small groups provide the tool with which evangelicals grow congregations of a hundred people into mega-churches of ten thousand or more. And it is the reason that members of those congregations report that the mega-churches **provides the most intimate experience of their lives.**

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See Membership Information on page 3

Share the Wealth: Freeing You Inner Facilitator by Mellen Kennedy, PhD Burlington, VT

"I have been my whole life a bell
and never knew it until the moment
I was lifted and struck."

Annie Dillard

As I talk with small group ministry members and leaders, **one of their major concerns is wanting to become more comfortable with facilitation.** I can certainly identify. When I found myself in the position of facilitating my first women's group about twenty years ago, I felt both intimidated and energized by the challenge. I felt a weight of responsibility to somehow see to it that everyone in the group had a reasonably positive experience.

When I got introduced to the idea of shared leadership, my understanding of myself and the other group members shifted. **Shared leadership is when each person in the group contributes in some way to the well-being of the group.** Contributing can mean any number of things including bringing an opening reading or a snack, putting a notice about the group in the church newsletter, or facilitating a meeting.

I have come to see shared leadership as the key to an effective group. Ed Madara and colleagues at the American Self-Help Clearinghouse conducted research on small groups that indicated that groups with shared leadership have greater longevity than groups with a more traditional or hierarchical leadership style. As I think about it, this makes sense.

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Announcing the Small Group Ministry Network (continued from page 1)

People in our culture yearn for intimacy and ultimacy, they are hungry for a place where they can be known and accepted, and where they can engage with serious questions of depth and meaning. I believe that Small Group Ministry offers us the opportunity to meet those needs and to welcome more people into the circle of our liberal faith. **I believe that Small Group Ministry is a tool to help us become the churches that we dream of being, and help us to fulfill our mission within and beyond our congregational walls.**

And the beauty of this is that it is so simple. People meet in groups to share and to explore religious questions. They can do it at the church, or they can do it in their homes or they can meet some where else? It is so simple! But, in fact, a successful program requires a bit more. It requires preparation, thoughtfulness, support, training, promotion, good will, nurture, resources and intention. **And most of all, it requires a continuing, shared vision of the promises and possibilities as well as the dynamics of making small groups work in a congregation.**

That's where the U.U. Small Group Ministry Network comes in! Those of us who have helped to spread the gospel of small groups and to share what we know about starting, promoting and sustaining a program have felt for a while that we need a congregational-based network. **Thus we forming the Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network (UUSGMN).** The purpose of the Network is to promote the vision of Small Group Ministry, to share information, to connect people who are doing this work for mutual support and encouragement, to develop training resources and opportunities, and to make our congregations stronger and more vital through this simple program

So, we invite individuals and congregations to join in the U.U. Small Group Ministry Network. We are seeking to become a UUA Independent Affiliate Organization. This is the first issue of our Quarterly Newsletter that will offer information, explore issues and share resources. We will have a presence for conversations, questions, tips and resources. We will help to connect trainers with congregations in need of help; develop new training materials, as well. We will help convene workshops and conferences to encourage connections, develop models, deepen skills and expand our collective vision.

We invite your participation, we invite you to bring your experience with covenant groups or come and learn how to do it. We invite you to join, at the regular or at a sustaining level, and us to strengthen the life of local congregations by creating a network of mutual encouragement and support.

Welcome to the Small Group Ministry Network!



Our Mission:

To strengthen local congregations by:
 supporting Small Group Ministry;
 offering individuals avenues
 towards connection and spiritual growth;
 and helping to transform the world.



SGM Resources Online

www.smallgroupministry.net

Looking for resources on the web? We maintain the only comprehensive website on Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry. Here are just some of the new and popular resources you can find through our site:

Designing and Implementing a "Small Group Ministry" Focus for Your Congregation By the Rev. Glenn H. Turner. Updated October 2003.

SGM Resources by the Rev. Calvin Dame:

- * A Small Group Ministry Resource Book
- * SGM Participant's Handbook
- * Small Group Ministry in the New Millennium
- * What Makes Small Group Ministry Different?

A Covenant Group Source Book 📖 by the Center for Community Values.

Adapting Small Group Ministry for Children's Religious Education By Gail Forsyth-Vail. For purchase.

Campus Ministry Covenant Group Manual 📖 by UUA Young Adult & Campus Ministry Office

Finding Your Path 📖 session series by Michael Tino. June 2004.

Tips for Great Small Groups 📖 A growing list of tips & ideas for small groups.

Deep Facilitation 📖 Simple ideas for making small group sessions more meaningful.

"ELEMENTS OF SMALL GROUP MINISTRY" 📖 Excerpt from the Rev. Bob Hill's new book the Complete Guide to Small Group Ministry.

Adventures in Small Group Ministry. An online journal (blog) with tips, suggestions and challenges by Peter Bowden.

UU Identity Series Session series for Young Adults by Kate Erslev.

Deep Fun: Games and Icebreakers A classic UU resource on community building and group fun.

Get news / web updates: New resources are being submitted to us all the time. Would you like to know when resources are posted to our site? Visit our website and subscribe to our monthly electronic news and web update list.

Membership in the UUSGMN

We extend to You a heart-felt invitation to join the UU Small Group Ministry Network!

Benefits of membership include:

- F **Our new journal, *the SGM Quarterly***
- F **Access to the Members-Area of our website**
- F **Discounts to UUSGM Network Events**
- F **Assistance in planning your SGM regional conference**
- F **The joy of knowing you're helping our grass roots Small Group Ministry movement flourish!**

Year Membership	Individual: \$35US
	Congregational \$60US
	(Congregational Membership includes 6 copies of the Quarterly)
	Contributing Membership \$100US
Founding Membership	\$250 \$500 \$1000US

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Please circle the membership level above.

Please mail your check made out UUSGMN to
155 Evarts Street, Newport, RI 02840

The UU SGM Quarterly:

The UUSGM Quarterly is a journal which offers information, explores issues and shares resources. It provides a venue for conversations, questions, practical tips and resources. This is the first issue of the SGMQ. We welcome your request for future topics and your submission of potential material for the newsletter.

è Feature Articles in Upcoming Issues:

Fall 2004 Recruiting New Members

Winter 2004 Developing Session Topics

Spring 2005 Grounding Groups Through Service Projects

Summer/GA 2005 Cultivating Leadership

Religious Education and Small Group Ministry By Rev. Helen Zidowecki

Northeast District Religious Education/Youth Specialist
Religious Educator, Church of the Larger Fellowship

Working with Small Group Ministry rapidly brought me to the concept of what I have been calling **Relational Religious Education**. This sets the basis of the educational ministry of Unitarian Universalism on relationships: between leaders/facilitators/teachers/mentors and participants; among participants; and between the educational ministry and the total ministry of the congregation. **It is the way to enhance the educational ministry for lifespan faith development**, it provides an intergenerational approach, and allows flexibility in religious education. It can provide structure and flexibility that is needed for youth and young adult programming.

Resources are being written to incorporate Small Group Ministry into religious education. Last year, I published "**Relational Religious Education: A Small Group Ministry Model.**" This is on my web site at www.hzmre.com under Small Group Ministry. Gail Forsythe-Vail in the North Andover, MA, has been using this in their religious education program for several years. Work is also being done related to using the Small Group Ministry format in development of teachers in religious education programs. Small Group Ministry was the theme of the packet published by Rev. Patricia Hoerdoerfer last summer, and there is interest in using it as a model in a camp for families.



**Keep posted!
Small Group Ministry
is revolutionizing
Religious Education!**

Facilitation

(Continued from page 1)

For the groups with a lone ranger type of leadership, when that lone leader gets tired, or ill, or just can't attend to the group, the group is more likely to collapse. And lone-ranger leaders **are** more likely to burn out. By contrast, a group with shared leadership is more stable and less dependent for its existence and health on the presence any single member. So, groups with shared leadership are more likely to be around for a while.

Longevity is not the only measure or even necessarily a meaningful measure of a successful group, however. There's more to it than that. **Something magical happens when we actually contribute to the well-being of another -- we, ourselves grow.** Whether that other is a plant, a family member or our small group members, we feel the benefit when our attention and effort help another being. When a person contributes their time, attention and caring to the group, that person feels more of a sense of belonging in the group and more of a sense of empowerment. When a member is invited to or steps into a leadership activity, he may discover previously untapped resources within himself or previously unrecognized dimensions of himself. Annie Dillard says it well in the opening quote. In groups with shared leadership, each member has a sense of commitment, ownership and investment in the group -- it is after all **their** group. They see themselves as vital members of the group and not guests in the group.

I sense that groups with shared leadership have an extra verve and dynamism. They are buzzing with the creativity and contributions of their members. The energy of such a group lifts the burden of facilitation. The responsibility of facilitation becomes a lighter duty freely shared among the membership. Given that shared leadership is so important, **how do we cultivate it in our groups? Stay tuned for my next SGMN Quarterly article.**