

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network
Session Plans: Dynamic UU Literature



What other UU literature

Has reached so many areas of UUism?

Has had such an impact on congregational and individual spiritual lives?

Addresses such a diversity of topics: life issues, social and justice issues, beliefs and faith traditions.

Is designed for being in covenantal relationship within our faith community?

One of the greatest successes of Small Group Ministry in the last twenty years is the number and range of people who are sharing Session Plans and information from their experiences.

The session plans call all of us to *intimacy*, learning how to be together, and *ultimacy*, going deeper in topics of life and witness. Session plans have been created by clergy and laity, and are from congregations of all sizes, varied geographic and demographic characteristics, and settings within and outside of congregations.

Small Group Ministry provides the process for deepening our listening from the heart, learning from the experiences, our own and those of others. The wording of session plans guide us to engage in and receive new insights, and we hone the ability to share so that others can hear what we have to offer.

How many Small Group Ministry/Covenant Group session plans are there?

Countless! Over nine hundred from over seventy congregations and numerous individuals are included in the UU Small Group Ministry Network website session plan directory. Several hundred are in the session plan collections that are linked from the website, such as to congregation websites and UUA. Collections of session plans have been published by the Network, congregations and programs and individuals.

Who writes session plans? Several hundred people have been involved in writing the session plans that have been sent for inclusion on the Network website. There are many more who have contributed. There may be a team of writers in a congregation. Small groups themselves develop session plans. Writers include people who have been life-long UUs, and those who are newly exposed to UUism.

Ministers were the primarily authors of session plans in the early development of Small Group Ministry. Ministers publish collections of meditations and sermons. Will published session plans be the next type of published collection – for ministers and laity?

Acknowledge the writers and contributors to session plans! This includes parts that are created by people in the local setting. Engaging with the content of a session plan may give rise to expressions to be shared – maybe for the first time.

Increasingly there is acknowledgement given to adapting a session plan from another congregation or source. The session plan is a tool for networking.

Why are session plans written? Session plans are written to address a theme or a specific event or evolve from events in life. There may be a story behind a session plan, a reason for writing it. Plans develop from our experiences, literally, or engaging with a topic that impacts our lives.

The **format** for session plans include:

Opening words that set the time as special.

Check-in with sharing from our lives—bonding.

Consideration of the topic with introduction and questions that open many facets.

Check-out on how the session went

Closing words to draw the time together to a close

Session plans include local preference. Some session plans are written to be used spontaneously; others have pre-session readings or questions for reflection. Groups have various ways of interacting to allow openness without interference. Some groups have the check-in/sharing before the opening words, though most use the opening words to move into the sharing. The variations can be seen by looking at a variety of sessions on the Network website

(<http://www.smallgroupministry.net/public/sessions/index.html>)

Benefits to writers Developing a session plan with a broad introduction to the topic and questions that open into new visions is a creative act. It allows participation from all levels and corners of the community and denomination.

Thought and intention are needed to present an idea so that another person can connect with it—and without knowing the result of the connecting. Small group ministry sessions encourage a sense of openness and adventure.

What topics are included? We are continually trying to organize the sessions for ready accessibility. Some of the broad categories are:

Life and life issues

Spiritual journey, beliefs

Community relations and life, covenanting

Social Justice, witness

SGM group practices and dynamics

Celebrations

These are always changing as we write for a new time and focus. Session plans present

Varying view or perspectives on a topic

Perspectives change over time – revise

Cultural focus

Send session plans for inclusion on the Network website to office@smallgroupministry.net. Also indicate if you would like to assist with making session plans accessible.

Rev. Helen Zidowecki, From General Assembly 2019