

Elements of Small Group Ministry

Size. The ideal covenant group size is eight to ten people. The group should have at least three or four people plus the facilitator and never more than twelve, including the facilitator.

Frequency of meetings. The group should meet at least once a month and may meet twice a month or even weekly in someone's home or at church (if a quiet, private, living room-like setting is regularly available).

Format. The format must combine worshipful and/or centering readings or rituals and personal check-in periods at the start and at the end. (See the recommended format below.)

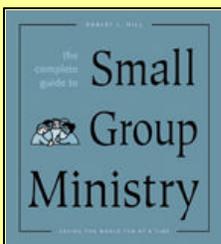
Facilitators. A facilitator is a woman or man who has been chosen and trained by the minister(s) (or in societies with no minister, by someone chosen by a small steering committee). The minister (or designated leader) then facilitates a covenant group for facilitators so that the training is ongoing and shared.

Empty Chair. Always keep at least one chair empty, to symbolize those not yet reached who need us and to suggest the expectation that a new group will be "born from" this group when membership gets to ten or so.

Covenants. During the second meeting, agree on a behavioral covenant-on how members wish to be with each other. Later, agree on at least one service to perform for the church each year. Twice a year, find a way of doing, as a group, something beneficial in the larger community.

Standard Format

- An opening reading from a Unitarian Universalist source (our hymn book contains enough material to sustain a covenant group for many, many months).
- A check-in period during which each person is asked to briefly state his or her answer to a question such as, What's on your mind today? What do you need to leave behind for a couple of hours in order to be fully present here?
- A time for the focus or purpose of the meeting. The topic or activity can be whatever the group prefers, so long as it is consistent with our Purposes and Principles and the mission of the sponsoring congregation. The focus should be more on sharing than on debating.
- The closing check-out. The facilitator asks each person for a word or phrase that says something about how she or he is feeling as the meeting draws to an end.
- A closing reading. Again, it should be from a standard Unitarian Universalist source.



The Complete Guide to Small Group Ministry: Saving the World Ten at a Time by Robert L. Hill.

Available from the [UUA Bookstore](#) and [Amazon.com](#)

