

*From Our Members...*

**"OPEN" SMALL GROUP MINISTRY SESSIONS**  
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In January of this year the Unitarian Universalist Community Church in Augusta offered a "drop-in" SGM session during the first of two Sunday services. The session provided an opportunity for people to experience a session and connect with others at a deeper level in the hopes of them becoming part of a group.

Notes from our experience are:

- We evolved from "drop-in group" to "open group", implying that people were intentionally attending.
- We watched for people who came consistently in the hopes of having a regular, on-going group on Sunday mornings in addition to the "open group."
- So far, people attending the Sunday sessions have not joined other groups. Program brochures and info on the process for joining a group are on hand.
- The sessions lasted for an hour: check-in was not as extensive and more of the time was focused on the topic. This still provided a meaningful experience.

Several things in our congregation made this Sunday morning open session possible. First, we have two services so the SGM session is not in opposition to worship. (We did not have sessions during the summer when there is only one service.) Second, religious education is offered in both services: traditional RE in the first service and *Spirit Play* during the second service. (Children of participants looked forward to participating in both programs.) Third, there is a core group of facilitators that rotate on the Sundays.

We found it important, as we experiment with different implementation patterns, to maintain the basic elements of SGM: small group, focus on ministry and dialogue, and connection with the larger church community.

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