

## **The UU Small Group Ministry Network**

### *BASIC ELEMENTS OF COVENANT GROUPS & CHALICE CIRCLES*

*Covenant Groups and Chalice Circles* are intentional lay-led small groups that deepen and expand the ministry of a congregation.

*Small* means a group with a maximum of 8-10 people. Groups of this size provide an opportunity to relate on a more intentional level.

*Group* is a gathering of individuals, sometimes selected at random, sometimes selected for a specific interest or characteristic, that meet over a period of time.

Ministry is the process or act of caring or being present with another. This relates to the spiritual as well as the physical and emotional well-being of the group participants.

*The Power and Promise of SGM are Intimacy, Ultimacy and Growth.*

*Intimacy* is increased depth of relationship that comes from meeting over time, willingness and ability to *listen* without comment or advice, and to learn from others, and willingness to share from the soul, beyond the surface. *Ultimacy* focuses on meaning and significance, rather than details, information or outcome. *Growth*: Small Group Ministry provides opportunities to grow leaders and the potential to grow churches in numbers, and in generosity, cooperation, and sense of well-being.

This growth occurs when people are connected.

**Three agreements** between the groups and the congregation as a whole are suggested:

- 1) To abide by a set of *relationship ground rules*, frequently call a *covenant*. This includes ways to listen and be heard.
- 2) To *welcome new members* to the group or to the program overall, keeping the groups open to new people and new ideas.
- 3) To engage in *service* to the congregation and larger world. This helps the group deepen its internal relationships, increases the connection with the congregation, and gives from the abundance of the group experience.

**Leadership has two functions and can be done by one person or shared:**

The *Group Leaders* are chosen and trained by the minister(s) and/or designated lay leadership as shared ministry. Group Leaders meet with the minister/lay leadership for spiritual support, enhancing group development, and awareness of new resources.

The *Session Facilitator* leads a meeting of the group, using basic facilitation skills, and assists with upholding the model during the meeting. This can be done by one person or rotated within the group.

The *Session plan* is a guide and a springboard for discussion. The *Standard Format includes:*

- An *opening* reading that introduces but does not guide the topic.
- A *check-in* during which each person briefly shares about such questions as, “What's most on your mind today?” or “How is it with your spirit today?”
- A time for the focus or theme of the meeting with sharing from personal stories, and learning from listening to others, rather than wanting others to agree with a perspective.
- The *check-out* gives opportunity for each participant to say how the session was for him/her.
- A *closing reading*.

