

Service Projects at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Arlington, VA

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I interviewed the Reverend Michael McGee of the UU Church of Arlington concerning service projects in their congregation. Arlington has about 1000 members with 25 Covenant Groups. Rev. McGee started with ten covenant groups four years ago, and was a little reluctant about introducing the service project component of covenant group ministry to his congregation. He wasn't sure how the idea would be received.

Nonetheless, he "put it out there," introducing service as one of three purposes of covenant group ministry: to create community, foster spiritual growth and serve others. He encountered little resistance to his expectation that each group do one service project per year, either for the community or for the church. Even now, almost every covenant group follows through on this expectation. Whenever Rev. McGee encounters a "stalled" covenant group, he encourages them to work on a service project because of the renewed energy and sense of purpose service brings to a group. At his church, groups have helped the community in various ways, including volunteering at a food bank and cooking and serving meals to the homeless. In addition, covenant groups have taken over the implementation of many projects that directly benefit the Arlington Church, including the building of a playground, coordinating the end of the year potluck for all covenant group members, hosting new member potlucks and the annual breakfast for all religious education teachers.