

Small Group Ministry Revolutionizes Lifespan Faith Development!

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The power of the small group ministry format is transformative in n taking adults, children and youth deeper into development of their spiritual journeys! This power comes from the focus on giving and sharing from individual perspectives, opening of our own selves to new thoughts and emotions, engaging in small group ministry as spiritual practice.

In the last six months, I had the opportunity to present Small Group Ministry in various settings, and came away from each more convinced than ever of the power of the process.

Gail Forsyth-Vail, Director of Religious Education, North Andover, MA, and I used Small Group Ministry as a methodology in the **Curriculum Renaissance Module at Star Island Religious Education Week last July.** For example, a session titled “Layers of Clarity” was used to experience explicit, implicit and null curricula. Gail included discussion of why and how they use Small Group Ministry for their entire religious education program in a larger congregation. I focused on how this can be used for the any sized congregation.

I had an opportunity to co-lead the Teacher Training Renaissance Module with **Rev. Elizabeth Strong, Program Consultant for Mass Bay District, at Ferry Beach.** We incorporated several Small Group Ministry sessions, such as one on “Safety.” **Small Group Ministry is a way of deepening teacher development.** As a follow-up, I used this methodology in orientation for people interested in participating in a religious education program in a congregation. I encourage small group ministry to **be part of ongoing meetings of Religious Education Committees and teaching team meetings.**

Fresh from our summer experience, Gail and I also presented Small Group Ministry at the **LREDA (Liberal Religious Educators Association) Fall Conference** in Chicago in October. We had an opportunity for presentation to the total group (about 200), followed by a more specific workshop with over 100 participants. Most of the participants had basic understanding of Small Group Ministry, so that our focus was on how Small Group **Ministry in religious education can range from a methodology for engaging people in religious education to transforming the setting from ‘religious education’ to the more encompassing ‘educational ministry’.**

I am continuing to develop session plans for teacher development. Please look for these, as well as my ongoing presentation of Small Group Ministry and Lifespan Religious Education, on my web site, at <http://www.hzmre.com/sgm/>. I would also like to communicate with any of you around this focus for hzmre@hzmre.com

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“By their groups you shall know them.”