

Community Ministers Use Small Group Ministry Format For Regional Gathering

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On Sunday afternoon, March 9, seventeen community ministers from New England gathered in Boston for fellowship and education. Community ministers are those professional and lay ministers who fill their call by serving beyond the boundaries of a single congregation. The event was sponsored by a regional subgroup of the Society for Community Ministries (SCM), (for more information, visit their website at uuscm.org). Community ministers include those serving as hospital and prison chaplains, pastoral counselors, rites of passage officiants, social justice workers, spiritual directors, artists and musicians, and those working in social service agencies and non profits (including the UUA). UUA staff representatives included Rev. Beth Miller and Rev. Jory Agate.

After introductions, reports and business, the large group broke into small groups for an actual Small Group Ministry session. The groups were skillfully facilitated by Carie Johnson and Rev. Michelle Walsh. The focus of the SGM session was to help those present share more deeply about their calling and the rewards and challenges of their work. **In the words of and Rev. Maddie Sifantus, SCM member and organizer of the event, “The small group experience was what was needed more than anything.”** The ground rules helped create a safe environment so participants would feel comfortable enough to share. It gave those present an opportunity to set aside time in order to reflect on their ministry and to make deeper connections with fellow travelers. The small group experience was followed by dinner and a closing worship service. **The evening was such a success that those present were eager to continue and several volunteers came forward to begin planning the next event.**

Small Group Ministry is being used more and more by ministers and lay leaders to enhance their cluster meetings, District events and regional gatherings. **For a testimonial on the powerful use of small group ministry in a ministers' cluster, see the article “Small Group Ministry Magic for Ministers” by Rev. Dena McPhetres in the Winter, '07 issue of this Quarterly** (available on line at www.smallgroupministry.net).