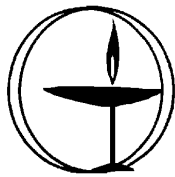


# **U.U. Small Group Ministry** **Quarterly**



Vol. 2, No. 3, Winter, 2006

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## **Revitalize Your Congregation's Social Action Program With Small Group Ministry!**

**Rev. Calvin O. Dame, Augusta, ME**

This may seem at first like a contradiction, but I believe that a vital Small Group Ministry program that helps members strengthen their connections to one another and deepen their own spiritual lives, can **also help to energize a congregation's social action program that connects members to the larger community and world through witness and service.** This happens in several ways.

First, the essential elements of covenant group ministry, as outlined by Rev. Bob Hill (in his book, "The Complete Guide to Small Group Ministry") and as recommended by the UU Small Group Ministry Network, always **includes an expectation of service to the congregation and/or the larger community.** While within the groups connections among members are strengthened and avenues for a deeper spiritual life are opened up through sharing and the exploration of topics, at the same time the service component regularly connects groups beyond their own circle. This provides a reminder **that a life of faith is a life of service.** When a small group ministry program includes a covenant with an expectation of service, it provides a powerful modeling that our lives in religious community are not just for our own renewal, but require of us an engagement with the world.

Then, it is important to understand that people come to our congregations for many reasons. People come seeking intimacy and spiritual growth, they come hoping to find the warmth of community and they come hoping for a place where they can explore questions of faith. **And people come hoping for a way to live out their faith, hoping to be able to make a contribution and to witness and work for justice.**

But at the same time, we also come seeking wholeness. People come to our congregations tired, hurt, lonely, discouraged, dispirited, and hungry for renewal, hungry for the gifts of the spirit. **As we are able to meet these needs:** to feed one another, to encourage healing, to foster connection, to provide for the renewal of the spirit, **then do we find that we are able to reach out generously,** to engage and to serve the world beyond the walls of our buildings.

In the years since we adapted and adopted Small Group Ministry in Augusta, our congregation was energized in a number of ways, **and our social justice efforts expanded in a fashion that I could not have imagined before.** Not that we wouldn't have wanted to be more active, but we never seemed to have enough energy to sustain projects. Following 9/11, we adopted an Afghan refugee family in collaboration with the

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## **Praxis-Reflection Small Groups Piloted in Justworks Journey**

**Rev. Marti Keller, Decatur, GA**

**Last summer more than sixty people gathered at an airport hotel outside Atlanta, Georgia to begin a civil rights journey.** The week-long bus trip across parts of the Deep South retraced some of the marker events of the movement to secure equal access and voting rights for African Americans more than 40 years ago. This intergenerational gathering, sponsored by the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), was designed to educate, motivate, and inspire its participants to work in new arenas of justice-making in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**For its second annual Justworks Civil Rights Journey, the UUSC designed small groups using the praxis-reflection model** of many religiously based liberation movements, such as efforts to eradicate poverty and preserve the rights of native peoples in South America. It is not enough, many human and civil rights activists have found, to boycott, march and protest. Without education before hand and intentional reflection afterwards, social action efforts can be mechanical and soul-depleting. **By forming "cell" groups, workers in the field of peace and freedom find their spiritual centers and strengthen community.**

**From the first night, the civil rights work camp incorporated praxis-reflection groups into the daily schedule.** Each group had six to ten people with facilitators briefly trained and then coached by Rev. Marti Keller, board member of the SGMN, longtime advocate in reproductive health and poverty rights, and adjunct teaching supervisor with the contextual education program at Candler School of Theology at Emory University. The facilitators were chosen from the UUSC staff and young adult counselors.

**The purpose of the small groups was to have a more intimate place for participants to share experiences, observations and feelings about what they would see and do along the route from Atlanta to Montgomery to Selma and then Birmingham, Alabama.** The groups were also described as places to help understand personal and social transformation better, and to find why and how what would change members over their week together. Each participant received a journal, and there was time during each group session for writing, with the choice of sharing or keeping private what was written.

**Each member of the group was encouraged to reflect on what he or she had learned, what the "ah hahs" were** as they walked down Sweet Auburn street in Atlanta and stood at Martin Luther King Jr.'s crypt and reflecting pool, or gathered where young people had been set upon by dogs and hosed down in a city park, or crossed the bridge where Bloody

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## Facilitators' Corner: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Your Small Group Ministry Program M'ellen Kennedy, Starksboro, VT

As I talk with lay and professional leaders involved in Small Group Ministry (SGM), a **common concern is how do we evaluate the effectiveness of our programs?** In the field of educational evaluation, a distinction is made by evaluators between summative and formative evaluation. Summative evaluation is what typically comes to mind when we think about evaluation. Summative evaluation refers to a formal assessment or judgement, of whether a program has accomplished its intended goals once the program is complete.

Formative evaluation on the other hand, is on-going assessing of a program in process that is used to guide and rework the program as the program organically grows. In Small Group Ministry, formative evaluation is likely to be most helpful, at least at first. **In fact, in the basic SGM model there are two already existing opportunities for formative evaluation.**

**The first opportunity for formative evaluation is the "check-out" that is part of the close of every meeting.** It is an opportunity for each member to speak briefly one last time before the meeting closes. The check-out can take the form of "likes and wishes." This means that each person is given a chance to say briefly what they liked about the meeting and what they would have wished for. Each person of course can pass, that is, opt to say nothing. There is typically no discussion at this time (since it's the close of the meeting). **In the go-round of "likes and wishes" the members and the facilitator(s) get a quick read or pulse on the group.** For example, several members may make a comment something like, "I wish we started on time." This is feedback for the whole group that attention is perhaps needed to this area of how the group is functioning. **"Likes and wishes" as a check-out offers an organic, informal opportunity for formative evaluation.** Whatever is shared in this part of the meeting can guide the facilitator and members to celebrate the great things about the group and also to attend to the areas that need it.

**Another natural opportunity for formative evaluation is the monthly facilitators meetings.** The basic SGM model suggests that group facilitators meet monthly with the professional minister(s) and/or lay ministry team. The point of these meetings is to uphold the vision of SGM, to provide ongoing support for facilitators and to offer an opportunity for skill building for facilitators. Monthly meetings usually include a "group check-in" where facilitators get to share how they're doing in their job as facilitator and how they feel the group is going. Successes get celebrated here. And facilitators also get a chance to talk over challenges and to brainstorm ways to address them. Groups that may be struggling can get help to improve their functioning before problems get too serious and before a facilitator gets overwhelmed by the challenge. This is part of the beauty of the model. The monthly facilitators meeting provides an opportunity for a regular, sharing and formative evaluation. At the end of these meetings facilitators often go away energized and with new insights to bring back to

(Continued in next column)

## The UU Small Group Ministry Network (UUSGM Network)

The UU Small Group Ministry Network is a membership based Independent Affiliate Organization of the Unitarian Universalist Association (see [www.uua.org](http://www.uua.org)). The purpose of the Network is to support small group ministry and related shared ministry models in Unitarian Universalist congregations through developing new resources, networking and training opportunities.

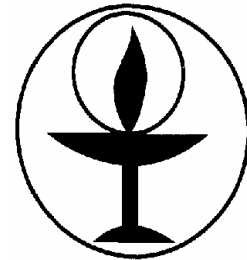
### Joining the Network

**For info on joining and benefits of membership, see the back page of this Quarterly, or visit [www.smallgroupministry.net](http://www.smallgroupministry.net)**  
**Time to renew? Check your mailing label.**

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### Board & Staff

Rev. Calvin Dame, President  
Elizabeth Barrett  
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Rev. Helen Zidowecki  
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Rev. Bob Hill  
Rev. Glenn Turner



**Co-Coordinators**  
Peter Bowden  
M'ellen Kennedy

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### We Welcome Your Gift to the Network

For the UU Small Group Ministry Network to accomplish our mission, we need adequate funding. We are funded primarily by our members. There is much work to be done to support Small Group Ministry in our congregations. And we want to do it! In order to take on the needed research and resource development projects we need your support. **Your donation to the UUSGM Network is tax deductible.** We thank our members for their support and welcome additional financial contributions.

**For more info on making tax deductible donations, please contact Peter Bowden (401-855-0037).**

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### Facilitators' Corner: Evaluating Your SGM Program (Continued from previous column)

their groups to enhance the group's functioning.

I would love to hear your experiences with evaluating your SGM Program, both formative and summative approaches. At this point I have not heard of any comprehensive summative evaluation of and SGM Program by one of our congregations. If your congregation is or has done one, let us know and we'll share it here so others can learn from your experience. Wishing You the best with your vital work as a facilitator.

## **News From Our Members: Soul Expansion, Made Personal Noreen Palladino Cullen, Glastonbury, CT**

Our Spirit Friends group has been meeting monthly for six years now. This is the name of our small group ministry. Some of the participants have changed through the years and some have stayed the same. We have purposely kept the group small, between six and nine. This allows enough airtime for each person to take the time to think out loud which makes for the most meaningful dialogue. **Spirit Friends is the centerpiece of my participation in Unitarian Universalism and a very precious aspect of my own spiritual expansion.**

The meetings cause me to think differently and feel deeply in a way that informs my sense of being a spirit-wrapped-in-flesh. **These are times to step out of time for a couple of hours and wrestle with topics that take me on an inward journey to where my spirit meets my human personality.** By being in dialogue with others who are providing an open discussion space, I can struggle to be articulate and specific in framing my beliefs and questions and ponderings. I can hear when I am merely reflecting what I may have absorbed from others and when I have reached into a deep place that is more purely my own.

**The members of the group come with different backgrounds and current belief systems.** Some have done a great deal of inner work and others have not done as much. This spectrum forces us to be thoughtful and exacting in the way we communicate, which inevitably enriches the discussions. The one commonality among us is the belief that we are more than just physical beings.

**Topics are informally offered by various members of the group.** Sometimes the topics arise from an individual member's life circumstance, such as a death in the family. Other times one of us may have come across a listing from a book's table of contents. We allow ourselves the freedom to move through a topic over more than one session or segue into one that was unplanned. Once in a while a topic springs up spontaneously from the check-in with which we begin each session. We take turns relating how our past month has gone, especially what has occurred that has connected us or reminded us of our sense of spirituality.

**We ask respectful questions** of one another and share our genuine puzzlement over statements a member may have made. This provides a kind and yet clear mirror and causes the speaker to explore ever deeper into her or his beliefs. Once in a while a member of the Spirit Friends group is surprised by what they themselves have said. These moments of self-revelation are treated with high regard and even a sense of celebration. **It is a moment when the spirit seems to reveal itself from the depths of that person and it leaves the rest of us in awe.**

The feeling I get from meetings is that people's souls expand more into their personalities. This interpenetration of the deep and beautiful aspect of each of us is such a comfort and such a joy. **There is a sense of witnessing an awakening from a long slumber out of the detailed and consuming day-to-day world in which we all function.** It is both soothing and enlivening.

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## **Engaging In Service From A Small Group Ministry Base Rev. Helen Zidowecki, Litchfield, ME**

A particular small group in our congregation had been meeting for several years, with some changes in membership over time. The members volunteered in various ways as individuals within the congregation, and considered this as their service. Engaging in service, not just as individual members, but collectively as a group, was an expectation of groups in our Small Group Ministry Program. **What would entice the members to engage in a group service project?** What would be meaningful? It so happened that group members all enjoyed books. We also were concerned about the rising costs of fuel, especially for those on a limited budget. Put those two together, and the Books for Fuel Sale! was held.

The sale itself occurred on a weekend of hard rain that kept people homebound, and thus was less than a howling success. However, the time that we spent together engaged in the sale, working on a common project, **raised the bonding in the group to a new level.** In fact, the group then decided, on short notice, to adopt a family from the devastation in Mississippi after Hurricane Katrina. Again, in putting together a box of supplies for that family, we learned so much about each other's interests and how we make choices.

Reflection on these service project activities brought us several basic insights. First, bonding is the first step in the "Five Steps to Building Community" that are part of the UU Youth culture. "The first step in building community is to break down the cliques and barriers that exist, and to establish a relationship of trust among the individuals in the group. **A problem-solving task or other activity that requires group members to work side by side can create communal bonds.** As they discuss solutions and help one another accomplish the goal, group members transcend their diverse backgrounds. Cooperation is the goal." Although our small group had been meeting for several years, these service activities provided a bonding that refocused the group. In the group, we had bonded around our individual needs, but the service activities created a group bonding. And rather than "transcend their diverse backgrounds", we "incorporated" our backgrounds that brought a richness to our very activities. (Deep Fun, <http://www.uua.org/YRUU/resources/online/deepfun.html>)

Second, **the activities that we selected were of interest to the members of the group.** For a project to be successful, the group needs to connect with the activity on a meaningful level.

Third, **there needed to be various ways for our group members to participate in a project, if they so choose.** For example, raising money implies that everyone is able to contribute financially, which may not be the case. Writing notes to go with the box for Mississippi, or gift wrapping or making sure that the items were packaged and delivered is a contribution that does not involve financial resources.

A reluctant group need not take on a lofty service project. The important thing is to begin moving together beyond ourselves to an experience of our connection with the larger world.

# Revitalize Your Congregation's Social Action Program With Small Group Ministry!

Rev. Calvin O. Dame

(Continued from page 1)

local Lutheran congregation. And in the years since we have created an ongoing project in Nicaragua called NICA, or Neighbors in Central America. We send medical and construction teams twice a year, of congregation and community members, and recently welcomed a team from another Maine congregation. It is a great project, involving everyone from Religious Education classes collecting pencils and reading glasses to seniors signing up for the trip. Is it perfect? No, but **we have learned a lot about ourselves and our privileged place in the world and have helped people in real ways.**

I think if you were to ask anyone who has lived through the changes in this congregation, they would join me in this assertion. **It has been the richness and challenge of our Small Group Ministry that has fed the generosity and has helped us to imagine new possibilities for ourselves and to sustain a deeper and wider social engagement.**

## *Suggestions for Encouraging Social Action in Your Small Group Ministry Program*

**Celebrate** the service projects of your small groups! In Augusta we've had people join groups because of the spirited applause and laughter as groups were recognized and thanked on a Sunday morning. Actual quote: "I saw all these people laughing together and having fun and I wanted some of that!"

**Create** sessions that engage people in issues of justice and social concerns. These might address specific initiatives in the life of a congregation or they could explore questions of faith, service, ethics and justice.

**Form** affinity groups that have a social justice project as their focus. Often in our congregational efforts, people just run out of steam or grow discouraged at the intractable nature of social problems. But in a group formed to address say, racism or the environment, members can take the time to explore their own experiences and conflicts, can look for and try out short and long term projects, and can create and maintain relationships that can sustain their efforts through successes and disappointments.



## The UU Small Group Ministry Network (UUSGM Network)

### *Our Mission:*

***"To help create healthy congregations  
and a vital Unitarian Universalist movement  
by supporting Small Group Ministry."***

## Praxis-Reflection Small Groups Piloted in Justworks Journey

Rev. Marti Keller

(Continued from page 1)

Sunday had taken place. What was revealed about what it means to be human, about good and evil, about what it means to be in solidarity with the oppressed?

**Other suggested exercises included reflecting on words such as liberation, freedom, transformation, righteousness, and justice**, especially in light of the "praxis" or work of re-living the sit-ins, teach-ins, and voter registration drives that shaped the civil rights movement.

**Each day's experiences provided rich materials for group conversation.** A late night walk down a dark country road in the southern countryside led to the topic of fear. When do you remember being most afraid? How did that shape your sense of yourself, of personal power or disempowerment?

Scott McNeill, a college senior from North Carolina, remembers that one night after viewing an extremely moving but complex museum, his small group had some structured questions and moments of silence to aid in processing the events of the day. He recalls that some of the questions asked: what images stuck in your mind today? Were any of these, they were asked, that were especially gruesome, tragic or otherwise jarring, or did they bring up other emotions?

"That night, wheels turned and sense was made somehow of tragedy and pain," Scott observes. This happened for him because there was time set aside to relive his experiences, and that, along with the guiding questions, **"prompted the consciousness-raising that was impossible to do with a large group."**

Kim McDonald, senior program staff member with the UUSC and director of the Justworks trips and work camps, says she is **committed to forming small groups again for this summer's journey.** She will be consulting with Rev. Keller, and they will both be looking at ways to provide earlier and deeper facilitation training, as well as coming up with topics and discussion questions that meet participants where they are in their own processes of transformation.

For info on this summer's program, visit [www.uusc.org](http://www.uusc.org)

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## Soul Expansion, Made Personal Noreen Palladino Cullen

(Continued from page 3)

**I am grateful to be with people who have the courage to question themselves and the openness to absorb new thoughts and new beliefs.** The dialogue we have once a month gives me solace and hope. I have compassionate witnesses to my life's journey and to my quest to be a worthy and awake human being. I have fellow Earth travelers who encourage my wish to go ever deeper into the places within myself that need illumination and that inform my humanness with a reminder of its divinity.

**Each of my Spirit Friends would describe the sessions differently. They would tell you a variety of wonderful results they have gained by being in the group.** That, I think, is the best portrayal of the richness and grace that a small group ministry can offer to one's life.

# Network News

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## **NEW!! Field Test UU Principles and Parenting: Small Group Ministry**

**Now through May 31, 2006**

Small Group Ministry Sessions are on line at [www.hzmre.com](http://www.hzmre.com) This includes discussion of Small Group Ministry for parents and 12 session plans. If you use the session plans, or review the material, please send comments to Helen Zidowecki at [hzmre@hzmre.com](mailto:hzmre@hzmre.com)

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## **Regional Conferences On Small Group Ministry**

The UU Small Group Ministry Network has joined with local congregations and districts to offer regional conferences in the U.S. and Canada. **The feedback from our conference participants has been excellent** (see Fall 2005 UUSGM Quarterly). **Could your district, congregation, or region benefit from a conference on small group ministry? If so, please contact us at**

**conferences@smallgroupministry.net**. A regional conference is an opportunity for area congregations just considering the idea, as well as congregations with already existing programs, to receive help and encouragement to be successful in their endeavors. If your congregation is needing help to launch a program or to invigorate an existing program, we also provide trainings for individual congregations.

### **Future Conferences**

The UUSGM Network has received requests to explore the possibility of regional conferences in the following geographic areas.

**Northern New England      Fall 2006**

**Heartland District              Fall 2006**

If you would like to attend or assist in the planning process please contact M'ellen at [mellen@smallgroupministry.net](mailto:mellen@smallgroupministry.net)

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## **New on Our Website** [www.smallgroupministry.net](http://www.smallgroupministry.net)

### **Elizabeth Barrett. Madison, WI**

Members of our Network can now access all the UUSGM Quarterly issues as well as specific articles from them. Peter Freeman Bowden, co-coordinator the UUSGM Network maintains the website with regular updates. We know that several UU congregations use articles from our Quarterly in their monthly coaching meetings for facilitators. Articles such as M'ellen Kennedy's "Is Your Group too Polite? The Balance between Risk and Safety" have enriched the ongoing support and training that happens in our coaching meetings. Non-members can read a portion of our previous Quarterly issues by clicking on [A Taste of the Quarterly](#). If you're considering joining our Network, check it out. Details on joining are on the back page of this issue of the Quarterly.

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## **Youth SGM Resource Available! "Small Group Ministry with Youth"**

**by the Rev. Helen Zidowecki.**

**Commissioned by the UUSGM Network**

The dynamic Small Group Ministry format can be and has been used effectively with Youth to create powerful group experiences. **Drawing on her years of experience working directly with Youth, Helen Zidowecki has created a useful booklet for those wanting concrete help in how do this appropriately and well.** This resource includes a session for facilitators, and discussion and session plans for The Five Steps to Building Community and Six Components of a Balanced Youth Program. **A total of 25 session plans are included.** The resource costs \$25 plus \$5 shipping and handling. All proceeds from this resource, in excess of development cost, go to support the ministry of the UUSGM Network. You can order the resource on-line at [smallgroupministry.net](http://smallgroupministry.net) or contact Peter Bowden at (401-855-0037)

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## **Margaret Fuller Award Goes To Small Group Series on Religious Feminisms**

**Marti Keller, Decatur, GA**

**Small Groups are inherently feminist in construct and intention, being both non-hierarchical and honoring individual experience.** The Unitarian Universalist Women's Federation's Margaret Fuller Awards Program has recognized this by funding the development of a series of sessions exploring feminist theology and theologians.

**Dr. M'ellen Kennedy, MDiv has been awarded a grant to research and write a small group ministry demonstration project on "Encountering Feminist Theologies."** M'ellen is a community minister, a consulting parish minister and community psychologist in Vermont, and co-founder and co-coordinator of the UU Small Group Ministry Network. She hopes through this project to **increase the exposure to feminist theologies within congregations** through sessions on images of the divine, violence and non-violence, spiritual experiences of women, and the language of God Talk. The sessions will include material from a wide variety of theologians and perspectives such as: Rebecca Parker, Starhawk, Mary Daley, and Alice Walker.

M'ellen is pilot testing these sessions in the spring and summer of 2006 in a Small Group Ministry program at a UU congregation. **Pending adequate funding, the product of this demonstration project will be an exportable booklet, available at the UUA General Assembly and on line.**

Since 1989, the Margaret Fuller Awards Program has given over 35 grants to UU women doing scholarly, creative and prophetic work in religious feminisms. More information is available at [www.uuwf.org](http://www.uuwf.org).

# Small Group Ministry at General Assembly & CENTER Day 2006

**St. Louis, MO,  
June 21-25**

For more info, visit [uaa.org](http://uaa.org)  
On-line registration now open!

Once a year representatives and members of our Unitarian Universalist congregations and organizations gather for our General Assembly (GA). This year, GA will be in St. Louis, and will feature opportunities for Small Group Ministry (SGM) or Covenant Groups. Our Spring Quarterly will have more details about GA events.

**Let us know if you're planning an SGM event at GA and we'll publicize it in future issues of this Quarterly.**



## **UUSGM Network Booth VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITY!**

The UU Small Group Ministry Network will have a booth in the Exhibit Hall again this year. We welcome a few enthusiastic SGM folks to help us staff the booth. It's a great opportunity to hear about what's going on around the country with SGM and to spread the good news of the power of SGM. If you'd like to help staff the booth, please contact M'ellen Kennedy at 802-453-5469 or [mellen@smallgroupministry.net](mailto:mellen@smallgroupministry.net). We'd love to have You join us. Thanks in advance!

## **Experience Covenant Groups at General Assembly 2006**

**General Assembly 2006 in St. Louis will offer dedicated time and space for Covenant Groups to meet.** Covenant Groups at GA 2004 in Long Beach and GA 2005 in Fort Worth earned rave reviews from participants, proving to be a highlight of the GA experience for many. This year's program promises to be even better.

Whether you are an experienced GA attendee or a first-timer, whether you are a member of a Covenant Group in your congregation or Covenant Groups are new to you, this program offers the opportunity to enhance your experience at General Assembly 2006 in St. Louis. If you have facilitated a Covenant Group (or Small Group Ministry by whatever name) in your home congregation for one year or more, **you are invited to apply to be a GA Covenant Group facilitator.** Facilitator Training will be provided by staff and board of the UU Small Group Ministry Network.

Registration forms for GA Covenant Group members and facilitators, with details about group meeting times and logistics, are available on-line. If you would like to participate, please register on-line. There will be no on-site registration in St. Louis.

[www.uaa.org/cde/sgm/CovenantGroup.pdf](http://www.uaa.org/cde/sgm/CovenantGroup.pdf).

For more information, contact the Rev. Connie Grant, GA Covenant Group Coordinator, at [GACovenantGroups@aol.com](mailto:GACovenantGroups@aol.com).

## **The UU Small Group Ministry Network Is Sponsoring the Following Workshops:**

### **Introduction to Small Group Ministry**

Small Group Ministry (SGM) or Covenant Groups are being used successfully in hundreds of congregations to build community and encourage deeper spiritual exploration. This workshop will provide an introduction to SGM, how and why it works, and to the essential components of a healthy SGM program. Presenters will be Staff and Board of the UU Small Group Ministry Network. Tentative Time Slot: Friday, 6/23, 11AM -12:15 PM

### **Strengthening Existing Small Group Ministry Programs**

Small Group Ministry or Covenant Groups, are transforming our congregations by encouraging deeper spiritual growth and the development of friendships. This workshop will focus on the leverage points for strengthening or revitalizing an existing program. We will explore how to maintain a healthy program and avoid and overcome common pitfalls. Presenters will be Staff and Board of the UU Small Group Ministry Network. Tentative Time Slot: Friday, 6/23, 4-5:15 PM, Repeated Saturday, 6/24 8:30-9:45 AM

### **Small Group Ministry At CENTER Day**

**in St. Louis, MO, June 19-21, 2006**

**For more info, visit [uuma.org](http://uuma.org)**

The UUSGM Network will be offering the following workshop for religious professionals at CENTER Day

### **The Possibilities and Perplexities of Small Group Ministry**

**June 20, 1:30-2:45 PM**

More than half of our congregations have tried Small Group Ministry (SGM) or Covenant Groups as a way of meeting the needs for intimacy and spiritual growth. Groups hold the promise for revitalizing our churches. Yet many of us are encountering challenges and frustrations as we use this approach. This session will provide a candid review of SGM and explore ways to successfully run programs to prevent and avoid some of the common pitfalls. We'll explore the hidden, cultural biases that can limit program effectiveness. We'll invite sharing with colleagues on their views of and experiences with SGM.

Presenters will be Dr. M'ellen Kennedy, MDiv, Rev. Helen Zidowecki, and Rev. Marti Keller.

### **Annual Meeting**

The Annual Meeting of the UU Small Group Ministry Network will be held at GA in St. Louis. Details on the Meeting will be in an upcoming Issue of this Quarterly.

# Small Group Ministry Network Institute

## August 12 – August 18, 2006

### Ferry Beach, UU Conference Center Saco, Maine



Register on-line at [www.ferrybeach.org](http://www.ferrybeach.org)

**Register & Pay by 3/31/06 and receive a 5% Discount**

The Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network is delighted to offer an opportunity for teams and individuals from congregations of all sizes to learn and practice Small Group Ministry (SGM) with experienced practitioners and leaders. The week will include presentations, hands-on workshops, small group ministry experience, sharing, networking, music and art. Topics will include:

- ❑ **Starting SGM from scratch in a congregation**
- ❑ **Expanding and enhancing existing SGM programs**
- ❑ **Exploring SGM in Lifespan Religious Education**
- ❑ **Preparing and supporting facilitators in their important work**
- ❑ **Revitalizing congregations with SGM**
- ❑ **Creating effective SGM sessions**
- ❑ **Helping ministers work comfortably and constructively with SGM**
- ❑ **Using art, music, movement and alternative approaches in SGM**
- ❑ **Exploring SGM as related to Social Justice and Faith in Action**
- ❑ **Sharing materials that participants bring from their congregations**
- ❑ **Taking home a vision and action plan for SGM**

Mornings will include presentations, discussion and workshops; evenings will have further optional programs and related activities. Afternoons are for relaxing on the beach, lounging on the porch, exploring the environs through organized outings, and other activities. **Participants will have the unique and uplifting opportunity of meeting daily in a hands-on small group.** The conference will be especially effective for groups representing their congregations and all are welcome.

Instructors include: Rev. Calvin O. Dame, Rev. Helen Zidowecki, Dr. M'ellen Kennedy, MDiv, Peter Bowden, Elizabeth Barrett, Rev. Marti Keller and others.

**Imagine enjoying the beach, worshipping among the pines, making new friends, sensing our history, and participating in rejuvenating our Unitarian Universalist movement with Small Group Ministry – all in a week this summer!**

### ***Comments From Last Year's Ferry Beach Attendees:***

*"The staff of this workshop have such amazing gifts, knowledge and excitement, that I want to see all this more widely shared!"*

*"I'll go back with ideas on how to design and implement the SGM program in my congregation, solid concepts and practical experience gleaned from others."*

*"Thank you, thank you. It was a powerful experience for me personally and I'm looking forward to sharing what I've learned with my congregation. Thank you for all the work and care you took in putting together a meaningful and practical conference."*

*"I'll take home a great deal of wisdom and constructive ideas to apply in our own SGM program."*

*"The week more than met my expectations! I'll go back with many, many things, including the excitement gained about starting a program."*

*"It was great! Thank you so much. I believe in the power of Small Group Ministry."*

**Time To Renew? Check Your Mailing Label!**

**Do You Want  
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**The UUSGM Quarterly**

**Editor: M'ellen Kennedy**

**Feature Articles in Future Issues**

Spring 2006      The Language of Reverence  
Summer 2006     How SGM Impacts the Congregation  
Fall 2006        What topic would You like to see covered?

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