

# SGM QUARTERLY

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## News from the Network

### Network Awarded 501(c)(3) Status!

On August 26, 2008, the UU Small Group Ministry Network was approved as a tax-exempt charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. The Network is now eligible to make grant applications to further support our work. All donations to the Network are tax-deductible.

### Welcome New Board Members!

**Alicia Hawkins, Albuquerque, NM** has been involved in relational small groups for 15 years in other Protestant congregations and says it is her passion and ministry. Five years ago she became a Unitarian Universalist at First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque and developed the Covenant Group program there. She is the program coordinator, forming groups, developing curriculum, training facilitators and leading groups. She is an inveterate collector of quotations and resources for the spiritual journey. In June 2009 Skinner House will be publishing a book she and her minister, Rev. Christine Robinson, are writing on covenant groups.

**Rev. Melissa Carvill-Ziemer, Kent, OH** gladly serves as the minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent in Kent, Ohio where Small Group Ministry is a dynamic part of congregational life. Melissa is excited to support other congregations wanting to realize the power and promise of Small Group Ministry.

We're delighted to welcome Melissa and Alicia, who were elected to the Board in June 2008 at the Network's Annual Meeting at General Assembly. Board members serve one-year terms and are eligible for re-election according to the bylaws. Read about our Board members' passion for SGM on our website. We look forward to an exciting year!

### Receive the Electronic Edition of the SGM Quarterly Newsletter

With the Winter 2009 issue, the UU SGM Network will launch the e-newsletter, available to members directly via e-mail. If you would like to receive your newsletter electronically instead of by mail, please e-mail [mctie@aol.com](mailto:mctie@aol.com) It's eco-friendly and cost-effective, too!

### Subscription Renewal

If your address label has "Time to Renew" printed on it, it means it's time to send your annual membership fee in to the Network Treasurer so there will be no lapse in your Quarterly subscription.

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#### **Our Mission:**

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

*From our Members.....*

**“OPEN” SMALL GROUP MINISTRY SESSIONS**  
Unitarian Universalist Community Church, Augusta, Maine  
*from Helen Zidowecki and Kathryn Kellison*

In January of this year the Unitarian Universalist Community Church in Augusta offered a “drop-in” SGM session during the first of two Sunday services. The session provided an opportunity for people to experience a session and connect with others at a deeper level in the hopes of them becoming part of a group.

**Who We Are:**

The UU Small Group Ministry Network is a non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. We provide support to small group ministry and related congregations through developing new resources, networking and training opportunities.

**Board and Staff**

Diana Dorroh, President  
Steve Becker, Vice President  
Rev. Helen Zidowecki, Secretary  
Susan Hollister, Treasurer  
Anne Haynes  
Walter LeFlore  
Mary Ann Terry  
Rev. Melissa Carvill-Ziemer  
Alicia Hawkins

**Advisory Board**

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Rev. Glenn Turner

**Quarterly Editor**

Beth Tiewater

**Webmaster**

Erik Zidowecki

The SGM Quarterly is published four times a year and supported by donations and memberships. Archives are available on the SGM website.

Notes from our experience are:

- We evolved from “drop-in group” to “open group”, implying that people were intentionally attending.
- We watched for people who came consistently in the hopes of having a regular, on-going group on Sunday mornings in addition to the “open group.”
- So far, people attending the Sunday sessions have not joined other groups. Program brochures and info on the process for joining a group are on hand.
- The sessions lasted for an hour: check-in was not as extensive and more of the time was focused on the topic. This still provided a meaningful experience.

Several things in our congregation made this Sunday morning open session possible. First, we have two services so the SGM session is not in opposition to worship. (We did not have sessions during the summer when there is only one service.) Second, religious education is offered in both services: traditional RE in the first service and *Spirit Play* during the second service. (Children of participants looked forward to participating in both programs.) Third, there is a core group of facilitators that rotate on the Sundays.

We found it important, as we experiment with different implementation patterns, to maintain the basic elements of SGM: small group, focus on ministry and dialogue, and connection with the larger church community.

**MINI-COVENANT GROUPS**

First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque  
*from Alicia Hawkins*

Mini-covenant groups are offered four times a year at First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque. They are designed for those new to the idea of SGM to learn more about the experience of connecting with others beyond the “coffee hour” level. They allow participants to have a taste of what the covenant experience is all about without committing to a regular group.

The mini-covenant groups are perfect for someone who has heard about the groups, but isn't sure SGM is a good fit for them. Many groups go beyond the initial commitment and become a regular group. Each mini-covenant group meets for three sessions and is led by an experienced facilitator. The three sessions are: Sharing Our Histories, Being in Community, and Finding our Place. Each session includes homework for participants, a session plan for the meeting, and a Leader's Guide.

People new to our churches are hungry for the kind of community Covenant Groups offer. A mini-covenant group is an easy way for people to get a taste of the richness that covenant groups can bring into their lives.

*Editor's note: Sessions are available at [covenant@uuabq.org](mailto:covenant@uuabq.org) and soon on the UU SGM Network website, [www.smallgroupministry.net](http://www.smallgroupministry.net).*

## SGM NETWORK AT GA 2008

We had a constant stream of visitors, heard great success stories, and fielded some very challenging questions at our large, dual table "endcap" booth in the Exhibit Hall staffed by members of the Network from all over the US! Our workshop, "Strategies and Solutions for Small Group Ministry," was attended by about 75 people and included a spirited Q & A session. Come be a part of this energizing and inspirational experience at GA 2009 in Salt Lake City!

### FACILITATING SMALL GROUP MINISTRY

**Joseph Priestley District Leadership Day**  
**Sat., October 11, 2008, 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM**  
 Cherry Hill, NJ

This full day workshop for SGM program coordinators, ministers, and facilitators will cover basic elements of SGM, the covenanting process, and SGM experience, facilitation skills development, and key success factors for Covenant Group programs. Presenters are SGM lay leaders from the Joseph Priestley District. At the UU Church in Cherry Hill, 401 N. Kings Highway, Cherry Hill, NJ.

**Registration and cost:** \$40 per person and includes lunch and resource materials.

**For more information go to:**

<http://www.jpduua.org/pages/news-you-can-use.php>

**Register online at:** [www.jpduua.org](http://www.jpduua.org)

### SMALL GROUP MINISTRY FACILITATOR TRAINING

**Saturday, October 25, 2008**  
**Hosted by the First Church in Barre, VT**

This all day advanced workshop is offered by M'ellen Kennedy, a UU minister and community psychologist who presents SGM training events across the country.

**Registration information:** contact Rev. Kennedy at [mellenken@aol.com](mailto:mellenken@aol.com).

Visit [www.smallgroupministry.net](http://www.smallgroupministry.net) for more information.

*The newsletter is now printed exclusively on white paper, which makes it easier to read and copy and is a cost-savings for the Network.*

## SGM SUMMER INSTITUTE 2008

**Rev. Helen Zidowecki**

Forty-two participants and leaders from twenty-four congregations shared the power of SGM at the Summer Institute at The Mountain in August. Using the basic SGM elements as a foundation, they gained insight into the profound changes that can occur within congregations because of Small Group Ministry.

The diversity of participants added a richness to the interactions: some in programs just starting to others from programs in place for over 10 years; from young congregations to those close to 200 years old and memberships ranging from under 100 to over 800. Sixteen states were represented.

Designed initially as a conference to enhance skills in various aspects of SGM, the Institute also provided opportunities to share experiences, explore ways to implement SGM, and understand the subtleties of group dynamics. Having a week together provides the opportunity to live out the topics discussed in workshops, such as group development and facilitation skills. Participants met for Small Group sessions daily, and many reflected on the changes within their group – and themselves – as the week progressed.

There was palpable excitement and energy in the group, enhanced by the serene setting with its vistas of sky, trees, birds, waterfalls, and countless mountain ranges in the distance. Many took advantage of the awesome sunrises and sunsets viewed from the lookout tower and the spacious decks. The atmosphere inspired spontaneous poetry and song at the al fresco Greet the Day rituals and casual evening gatherings in the Great Hall. On the last evening we were treated to the music and hilarity of The Mountain Singers.

One of the outcomes of the Institute was a take-home vision and plan for Small Group Ministry. For congregations that had more than one person attending, this plan was a team effort. It is frequently easier to implement the learning and experiences of an event like the Institute when there are several people who have had the common experience. The conference leaders thank the participants for enriching the Institute with their shared experiences, innovative ideas, and new viewpoints.

We are pleased to announce that the **2009** Small Group Ministry Institute will be held **August 16-21 at The Mountain**, Highlands, NC.

*Editor's note: View a photo of the 2008 Summer Institute participants on our website!*

## Covenant Corner

*The place to share your thoughts, ideas, and experiences.*

### A Group-Splitting Experience

from Lyssa Andersson, Covenant Group Coordinator  
Unitarian Universalist Church of Greater Lynn, MA

Carefully...deliberately...with aforethought; that's how we began our covenant group ministry. In a process that took several years, our timeline began with one person's vision, then another's, and as we became more visible in our church community, the vision grew until we had a strongly committed group of five who formed an implementation team and met every two weeks for the better part of a year to plan our entry into small group ministry. We knew, of course, that we couldn't anticipate the nature of each progression and obstacle on our path to our "grand opening" last fall, but we did try to touch all the bases; we wanted to be as prepared as possible. After having agenda-driven business meetings for four or five months, we decided to limit business to our first half-hour, and to begin to practice our small group ministry skills with a covenant group gathering each time we met. We loved the closeness and the opportunity to "just talk." As you might imagine, our covenant group time quickly became an indispensable part of our lives. One of our group said that whether our covenant group ministry kickoff began with a large number of groups or none, that we had already begun our ministry; that if ours was the only group that was ever formed, it would be sufficient for us.

In our planning meetings, we talked about how we would utilize the facilitators (our Implementation Team members) depending on how many groups were formed, but we weren't really thinking about how forming new groups would impact the personal relationships we had formed among ourselves by effectively splitting our own group. As our two initial new groups formed, it worked out that three of our team would be co-facilitators and members of our evening group and one would co-facilitate the afternoon group. I, as covenant group coordinator, became co-facilitator of the afternoon group and a

member of the evening group. Once the schedule had been made, it was a sudden realization that one of us would no longer be in a covenant group with the other three members of our hardy little team. That recognition was accompanied by a sinking feeling that represented real loss; we were not prepared for the bond that was developed during the implementation team's time together at the start. Although we knew we were to break up and attend to the new groups that would be formed, we were surprised at how we felt about being in different groups.

I'm sure that this sense of loss is what makes splitting any small group so difficult. We experienced it even though I consider ours to be a very successful split. Part of what made our success possible is that we expected the split, although perhaps not the level of emotion connected with it, and understood the reasoning behind its necessity. We had a definite date when we knew there would have to be changes. The division of the group members was due to schedule availability alone, not by clique. We still were able to see one another at church and implementation team meetings. We know that we will have opportunities to get together in the future, and the possibility of being brought together in another covenant group down the line sometime. Our saving grace is that we knew from the beginning that our groups were not planned as permanent placements; there was always the awareness that we would meet in one group for a period of time, and then a new group would emerge.

*We're looking for contributions to  
Covenant Corner for future issues!  
Please send submissions to  
mctie@aol.com*

## UU SGM Network Publications

Order forms available from [www.smallgroupministry.net](http://www.smallgroupministry.net)

**NEW!** *Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry*, published June 2008, is a compilation of 50 articles that have appeared in the UU SGM Network *Quarterly* and on the website in the last 5 years, plus several new articles. Includes a discussion of SGM in general, program oversight, the role of ministers and shared ministry, facilitation, groups, session plans, visibility, and uses of small group ministry. *\$25 plus \$5 shipping*

### **NEW!** *Facilitator Training & Development Manual*

Equip your facilitators to lead successful covenant groups. This guide for implementing an in-house training and development program covers facilitator selection, initial training, on-going facilitator support, and enrichment training. Included in the manual is the Facilitator's Guide, a training module to customize for your program, use in your training sessions and distribute to all group leaders.

*\$25 plus \$5 shipping Order now to receive your copy in Fall 2008.*

*Small Group Ministry for Youth*, a dynamic format for middle and high school youth, 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.

*\$25 plus \$5 shipping*

*Small Groups, Deep Connections.*

## SPOTLIGHT ON.....

*Find out what's happening in groups across the country.*

**Service Activities in Small Group Ministry** connect us to the congregation, allow us to live out our UU faith, and bond group members working toward a common goal.

Here are some inspirational service projects from around the country:

### **West Shore UU Church, Rocky River, OH**

"Our Connection Circle cooked for a large lunch served at our church to encourage people to pledge early. We made soup and salad for 250 people and worked together serving all the guests. We laughed a lot while working and serving. Each member of our Connection Circle excelled in one or more tasks; we appreciated each person's strengths."

### **The Community Church of Chapel Hill UU, Chapel Hill, NC**

"Our four Covenant Groups created and participated in a Sunday Worship Service focused on what CGs are and how they are meaningful in our lives. Everyone played a role: some were speakers or Ushers and Greeters, others led Joys & Concerns or gave testimonials. We were thrilled with the congregation's attendance and response. Afterwards we published the spoken definitions and testimonials on our website. It was a way to get acquainted with other group members, we all found a comfortable way to contribute, and we were anxious and excited together."

### **UU Church of Asheville, NC**

"One of our Covenant Groups served a meal for staff and patients' families at our local hospice. Group members each brought a different part of the meal. The group, which was composed of active, healthy members, had a chance to reflect on many topics--from death with dignity to caregiver burnout--as a result of this project."

### It's true, membership has it's privileges!

As a member of the SGM Network you:

- Get the current issue of the newsletter *before* it's on the website,
- Provide financial support for the SGM movement,
- Receive registration discounts for SGM Network-sponsored events,
- Have a voice and a vote at our annual meeting at GA.

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Name

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Address

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Congregation

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District

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Program Coordinator

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Phone

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E-mail

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Individual Membership (\$40 year)

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Congregational Membership (\$100 year)

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Additional Tax-deductible Donation

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Total Enclosed: \$

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*We rely on donations from members and supporters like you! Your continued financial support allows us to better serve our members. Please consider making a tax-deductible gift to the Network.*

Send completed form and check made out to **UU SGM Network** to 3313 Goshen Road Newtown Square, PA 19073. Download the form online at [www.smallgroupministry.net](http://www.smallgroupministry.net)

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