

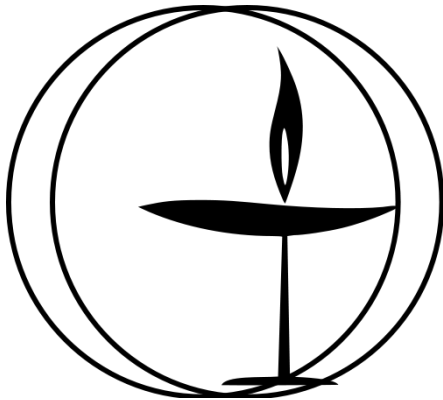
# SGM QUARTERLY

VOL 5 NO 3

SPRING 2009

A publication of the UU Small Group Ministry Network

ISSN 1945-2683



## News from the Network

### **Covenant Group News Has a Brand New Look!**

*CGNews*, the *Quarterly's* sister publication, is a free, interactive e-newsletter sent every month to 1200 subscribers. The February issue marked the debut of our updated format with color and graphics. Questions of the Month, posed by our readers, receive answers from readers and Network board members. The featured articles focus on group health and sustaining vibrant SGM/Covenant Group programs. Share your insights, strategies, and experiences with fellow practitioners. Submit to *CGNews* editor at [diana\\_dorroh@hotmail.com](mailto:diana_dorroh@hotmail.com). Subscribe at [www.smallgroupministry.net](http://www.smallgroupministry.net).

### **Network Member Congregations – Now on the Web!**

See your congregation's name on the membership list. Find others in your district who are Network members and valued supporters. Consider organizing a regional SGM workshop with area congregations. We can help with planning the event! Write us at [office@smallgroupministry.net](mailto:office@smallgroupministry.net).

### **Subscription Renewal**

If "Time to Renew" appears on your address label, it's time to send your annual membership fee in to the Network Treasurer so there will be no lapse in your subscription. Download a renewal invoice on the Network website.

### **PayPal Makes a Comeback!**

Enjoy the ease of renewing your membership and purchasing resource materials online with PayPal secure transactions. PayPal is being reinstated on our website by popular demand. Look for its arrival soon. Membership and purchase by mail are available as well.

### **UU SGM Network at General Assembly June 24-28 2009, Salt Lake City, Utah**

The Network will present *Facilitator Training: The Key to Small Group Ministry Success* with Diana Dorroh, Rev. Melissa Carvill-Zeimer, Rev. Dr. Justin Osterman, and Rev. Bret Lortie. The workshop will provide a concrete plan for designing and implementing a comprehensive training program. The minister's role in sharing and blessing this ministry will be a special focus. Visit our booth in the Exhibit Hall where our publications and resources will be available.

### **SGM Summer Institute, August 16-21, 2009**

#### **The Mountain Retreat & Learning Centers, The Highlands, NC**

Join us in the majestic Appalachian Mountains for a week-long immersion in small group ministry! The Institute offers general and in-depth sessions to match every program, and features daily small group experiences plus a take-home plan. Emerging resources and developments included. See flier and registration form in this issue.

#### **In this issue:**

<i>Facilitator's Toolbox</i> .....	2
<i>SGM Program Notes</i> .....	3
<i>From Our Members</i> .....	4
<i>Minister's Page</i> .....	6
<i>Service Projects</i> .....	7

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

## FACILITATOR'S TOOLBOX

### *Becoming a SGM Facilitator (aka Truly Becoming a Unitarian)*

by Raef Lee, Devon, PA

I had been in my SGM group a mere one year, when I got the e-mail. Did I want to co-facilitate the group? The e-mail had a necessary first paragraph about my good contribution and how I was a 'natural'. The second, shorter, and more direct paragraph was the request that I co-facilitate my group. I was pleased to be asked, but curious about my qualifications.

When joining the SGM, I was a new member of the church (Main Line Unitarian Church in Devon, PA) and new to Unitarian Universalism. I knew a fair amount about world religions and had tried a couple, but was still searching for a spiritual home. Like most of the world outside a UU congregation, I knew little about Unitarianism. The coffee hour at church was enjoyable, but not a place I could ask about people's beliefs. SGM seemed the place for me to find answers.

My first year in SGM lived up to those hopes. It was a great group of people with differing backgrounds but a similar set of values. The SGM format of investigating a topic through the group's personal experience was a breath of fresh air. What is more, the topics were hitting all the subjects I had questions about. I was being taught by my group. I was even moved to submit a session of my own, based on NPR's 'This I Believe'; a little self-serving I admit, as I wanted to understand what the rest of the group believed.

I had hit one of the UU core principles. If you show interest in an activity, you will end up running it! I accepted the e-mail's request. Being a facilitator turned out to be an easy, but rewarding role. Professionally I do a lot of facilitation. This was a lot easier; the sessions were done for you, my co-facilitator held the meetings in his comforting house, and the group basically facilitated themselves.

There were additional hidden benefits. The word Ministry is in SGM for a reason. Members occasionally need support and help. This is an aspect which seemed natural to my co-facilitator, but I have to keep reminding myself of. Also, there is the background organization: what sessions to do, feedback from the groups and problems arising. I was involved in my first UU committee, with all of the debate, differing ideas, and innovation that I'm beginning to associate with my church.

Becoming a facilitator has achieved my early goal. I now feel part of the congregation, I understand more about being a UU, and I think I've found a spiritual home.

#### **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  
Rev. Melissa Carvill-Ziemer  
Alicia Hawkins

#### **Advisory Board**

Rev. Bob Hill  
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.

## SGM PROGRAM NOTES

### Providing Leader Recognition

Excerpts from the *Facilitator Training and Development Manual*, UUSGMN, December 2008

As part of your ongoing support of facilitators, look for ways to publicly acknowledge your group leaders and promote your Small Group Ministry program. New leaders can be announced in the newsletter and recognized during a Sunday service or as part of a worship service devoted to your SGM. A possible format would be:

- A. Minister introduces the Program Director/Coordinator
- B. Program Coordinator describes the Small Group Ministry program and the benefits to participants and the congregation
- C. One or two Facilitators give short talks about their experiences leading a group
- D. Program Coordinator asks Facilitators of each group to come forward and the members of that group to stand
- E. Applause

Another approach is to formally install your facilitators during a worship service. The ceremony below was created by the Rev. Stephan Papa for the SGM program at Main Line Unitarian Church in Devon, PA.

### *Facilitator Installation Ceremony*

#### **Introduction to the Installation:** *Minister*

The Unitarian Universalist tradition affirms the ministry of the congregation is the responsibility of the membership, not just the called professional clergy; we are aware this calling cannot be accomplished by anyone alone. In our ministry the called ministers serve as leaders and guides to empower the members to care for one another, and for the larger community. Facilitators have made a commitment to be intentional and accountable in their service, and deserve the honor of being commissioned by the congregation in this annual ceremony.

#### **Introduction of the Small Group Facilitators:** *List of facilitators' names*

#### **Charge from the Minister:**

It is my honor to install you as [Program name] Facilitators. Your willingness to learn and to serve makes you an essential part of our ministry. We welcome your wisdom and energy, time and talent, as we work together in the development of depth and breadth, intimacy and ultimacy in our religious experience. On behalf of the called, professional clergy of [Church name], I remind you of the sacred nature of our work as we honor the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and the creation of a more just and peaceful world; and I invite you to call upon us if we can be of assistance.

#### **Charge from the Congregation:** *Board Representative*

We welcome your commitment and ability as you help us be a caring community. We honor your courage to enter into our lives, your willingness to minister and facilitate our spiritual development. We appreciate your decision to serve among us; we entrust you with the responsibilities it involves, and promise to support you as you help us grow.

#### **Facilitators' Response:**

As Facilitators we pledge ourselves along with the members of our groups to this program, which encourages people in their spiritual growth, helping them develop relationships of substance and depth, and meeting their needs to worship, to serve, and to be in community.

#### **Act of Installation:** *Board Representative*

We, the members of [Church name] affirm the necessity of everyone in our religious community reaching out to support one another, to encourage spiritual growth, and to extend our principles into the larger community. We appreciate your willingness to commit to this ministry, and gratefully install you as Facilitators.

#### **Closing:** *Minister*

The Facilitators are an extension of our ministry, providing support and opportunities for spiritual growth. Please join me in congratulating our Facilitators, opening our minds to them, and welcoming them to our hearts. Amen.

*Printed by permission: Rev. Stephan Papa, 3/17/09*

*From our Members.....*

## **The Awakening of Small Group Ministry at UUCDC**

*by Joyce McKee, Jean Shatoff, and Marilyn Huff*

The UU Church of Delaware County “re-launched” its SGM program this year. The Program started about 6 years ago, but remained stagnant with essentially the same 35 members and four groups during that time. After a rather tumultuous time of change in ministry, UUCDC now had a settled minister, the Rev. Peter Friedrichs, eager and willing to lend his full support to SGM. The time was ripe to enhance SGM at UUCDC. Three of us agreed to coordinate a new beginning for Small Group Ministry at UUCDC, and we named our endeavor, “Awaken Your Spirit.”

We started our effort last Fall by recruiting and training new facilitators. Our goal was to be able to offer as many groups at as many times as possible. Susan Hollister at Main Line Unitarian Church led a training session in December that resulted in 12 newly trained (or re-trained) facilitators.

To excite the congregation, we planned:

- A great sermon, during which time people would be able to sign up on the spot for the group(s) meeting their schedule.
- Loads of publicity leading up to and during the three week window we allowed for sign-ups. We created a new logo and pamphlets, “business” cards, posters, signs and mobiles throughout the church, and notices in the newsletter, Order of Service, and weekly Email Digest.
- Testimonials by current SGM members each Sunday morning during the sign-up period.

We were successful beyond our wildest dreams! Over 80 people signed up. Eight groups were formed, five evening groups and three daytime groups. We celebrated with a “Launch Lunch,” after everyone had been assigned to a group. People met the fellow members of their new groups and enjoyed the fellowship of all those who had joined SGM at UUCDC. The minister, who was instrumental in making this program a success, welcomed everyone present and explained what a vital part of church life Small Group Ministry is. We had, indeed, “awakened our spirit.”

*Joyce, Jean, and Marilyn coordinate the SGM program at UU Church of Delaware County in Media, Pennsylvania.*

*In addition to being printed exclusively on white paper, which makes it easier to copy and is a cost-savings for the Network, the newsletter is now printed on eco-friendly, recycled paper.*

## SGM RESOURCES AND EVENTS

### SGM Discussion Group – Join the UUA list serve

The Small Group Ministry Discussion Group is the list serve from the Unitarian Universalist Association web site, listed there as Covenant\_Group\_Ministry. This list provides an opportunity for individuals and congregations that are interested or engaged in Covenant Group or Small Group Ministry to share experiences, questions, comments, problems, innovations, and insight. Subscribe to the discussion group on the Network's website.

### *New from Skinner House Books:*

#### **HEART TO HEART: Fifteen Gatherings for Reflection and Sharing, by Christine Robinson and Alicia Hawkins**

Resources for fifteen group conversations on topics such as forgiveness, loss, nature, money, and friendship. A reimagined model of small group ministry, *Heart to Heart* offers readings, journaling suggestions, and thought-provoking exercises to help participants prepare for the spiritual practice of sharing in community.

**Christine Robinson**, senior minister of the First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque, NM, has participated in many versions of this spiritual sharing model, both as a leader and a participant. Most of the gatherings began as sermons on these topics.

**Alicia Hawkins**, an inveterate collector of quotations and resources for the spiritual journey, has led the SGM program of the First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque for five years. She is currently on the board of the UU SGM Ministry Network.

available from the UUA Bookstore, [www.uuabookstore.org](http://www.uuabookstore.org), April, 2009, \$14

### **Announcing *Small Group TUBE!***

Peter Bowden, co-founder of our Network, has launched a new small group ministry video series, making the content of his consulting and trainings available to all our congregations, a boon to church budgets. Find the new videos and subscribe to the video channel on Youtube™ at <http://www.youtube.com/smallgroupministry>

### **Would you like to be part of the Small Group Ministry Board?**

Members are elected to the SGM Network Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting during General Assembly. The Board meets monthly via conference call. Much of our work takes place in subcommittees-- Membership, Publications, Education/Conferences, and Financial-- between Board meetings. Grant-writing is a particular need at this time. Please communicate your interest to [office@smallgroupministry.net](mailto:office@smallgroupministry.net) to be included in this year's nominations.

To 'listen' another's soul into life,  
into a condition of disclosure and discovery,  
may be almost the greatest service that any human being  
ever performs for another.

- Douglas V. Steere, Quaker writer, 1901-1995

## MINISTER'S PAGE

### Congregational Benefits from a Successful Small Group Ministry Program

*by the Reverend Steve J. Crump*

Have you ever considered the unintended benefits of a small group ministry program? When you have a successful program, you know it. Talk up the success of your program. Nurture your program no matter what its size. Your program can grow with steadfast attention and guidance. Say, "If you're not in a small group, you may be missing out on a key connecting point in our congregation." Encourage groups to hold symbolically an empty chair for a new member. The act of welcoming a new person shifts the relational dynamics of a group. The benefits are twofold: a new person is welcomed and the group gets to practice the art of hospitality, a spiritual practice worth cultivating with wide ranging applications in our lives, both in and outside the church.

And speaking of cultivation, have you noticed how the presence of small groups encourages right relationship and diminishes acting-out behavior in the larger church community? The modeling of right relationship in small groups extends to right relationship in other arenas of our lives. A successful small group ministry sets norms for good communication and well-being.

Let's speak proudly of our group leaders' involvement in our programs. Once a year, have them stand for a brief recognition in a church service. Do not hesitate to say, "Our leaders are hand-picked for their leadership and listening skills."

***Small Groups, Deep Connections.***

Not long ago leaders in our program discussed a model for listening to difficult emotional material when it is occasionally shared in the early check-in portion of a small group meeting. What should a leader do? Scuttle the format for the evening? No. It is usually not necessary to do that. Here is one of our solutions: a leader may ask the group members to be silent for one minute before proceeding with check-in. Allowing the evening to proceed after a minute of silence provides two benefits: we acknowledge that something significant was shared and we acknowledge we are carriers of trust by virtue of our covenant with one another.

Remember the prediction years ago that we would one day live in a high-tech, low-touch world? We live in that world. People are looking for maturational and spiritual growth. Plus, when a group member is in trouble, she or he will get a call from the group leader and, most likely, there will be a referral to our Congregational Care Committee or to the Pastoral Care team.

Small group ministry brings deep listening, a dimension of depth, and care to our lives. Such an experience engenders respect for persons through right relationship. We insiders benefit, of course, but I believe the larger world is meaningfully touched by our work. Give witness to this work.

*Rev. Steve Crump is Senior Minister of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, where 60% of the congregation is participating in small group ministry.*

## UU SGM Network Publications

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

### ***Facilitator Training and Development Manual***

The Network's most requested resource, published in December 2008. Part One is a guide for developing and implementing an in-house training program. Part Two, the *Facilitator's Guide*, is a training module on CD to customize for your program, use in your training sessions and distribute to all group leaders.

*Network Members: \$15 plus \$5 shipping Non-members: \$25 plus \$5 shipping*

### ***Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry*** June 2008

A collection of 50+ articles from 5 years of *Quarterly Journal*, Covenant Group News, and website publications. Articles are arranged by topic, from basic elements of SGM, through the minister's role in shared ministry, sustaining your program, and the application of SGM principles in multiple aspects of congregational life.

*Network Members: \$15 plus \$5 shipping Non-members: \$25 plus \$5 shipping*

### ***Small Group Ministry for Youth*** June 2005

This dynamic format for middle and high school youth includes a session and discussion for facilitators and session plans for the Five Steps to Building Community and the Six Components of a Balanced Youth Program. Twenty-five session plans in all!

*Network Members: \$15 plus \$5 shipping Non-members: \$25 plus \$5 shipping*

## SPOTLIGHT ON.....

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

Share your SGM stories with our readers. Describe the "flavor" of your small group, tell us about your SGM program promotions, and inspire us with your service projects.

Send your comments to [quarterlyeditor@smallgroupministry.net](mailto:quarterlyeditor@smallgroupministry.net).

### **UU Congregation of Columbia, Maryland**

"Early on, our group helped with Sunday morning tasks: we set up the food table, made three urns of coffee, were ushers for the worship service, and cleaned up after coffee hour. The experience taught people the tasks so they would feel comfortable volunteering at other times. Later on, we brought a lasagna meal to a local shelter for the mentally ill, ate dinner with the clients, and played board and lawn games with them. It demonstrated to us how group members could "tag team" on setting up a meal and guiding the clients in the food line, and later, in the board games. An additional benefit was becoming more comfortable with the clients."

### **UU Church of Peoria, Illinois**

"Our men's Covenant Circle built a raised-bed garden for children at a local crisis agency to plant and tend. Of the eight group members, three are engineers. Their ability to design the garden and plan the use of tools and materials helped their fellow group members to appreciate their skills. Another member had a wealth of tools to bring. They are very considerate of each other's skills and limitations. This was one of a series of service projects which continue to enhance their connections."

### **UU Church of Bloomington, Indiana**

"Our group helped package food items to distribute to senior citizens in the community. We joined another faith group at the food pantry site and formed an assembly line, packing the boxes. It was fun, working together and with another faith community. We laughed, chatted, and were silly together. It enhanced our connections as we stepped out of the seriousness and 'verbalness'. In moving and working as a team, we found a new way to be together. Having the opportunity for light conversation and silliness allowed us to be more relaxed together as well. The experience carried over into our next group meetings and is something we still talk about."

**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 discounts on publications and Network-sponsored events, and have a voice and a vote at our annual meeting at GA.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
Congregation

\_\_\_\_\_  
District

\_\_\_\_\_  
Program Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone

\_\_\_\_\_  
E-mail

I would like to receive the newsletter electronically;      YES    NO

Individual Membership (\$40 year) \_\_\_\_\_

Congregational Membership (\$100 year) \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Tax-deductible Donation \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

*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)

---

**UU Small Group Ministry Network**  
**3313 Goshen Road**  
**Newtown Square, PA 19073**