

SGM Introductory Sessions at MLUC

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Small Group Ministry is important to members of Main Line Unitarian Church in Devon, PA. It allows them to develop deeper personal connections to other members of the congregation and to explore different aspects of spirituality. While not all members have the time or the inclination to join a group, those who do usually find that it soon becomes a meaningful and rewarding part of their lives, and we encourage everyone to give it a try. We always have a SGM presentation as part of the new members orientation class, but it can be intimidating for some people, particularly new church members, to join an existing group. This spring, we are offering a series of four “try it out” Introductory Sessions made up entirely of SGM novices led by an experienced facilitator. The intention is to let people get a feel for the SGM format without having to make a long-term commitment right away.

To recruit participants, we put a notice in the church bulletin that goes out via email midweek and the one in the Sunday program. We also set up an attractive table in the atrium after each service for two consecutive Sundays with a poster, sign up slips for name/phone/email that allowed people to indicate their preference for day and time, and a couple of friendly, experienced SGMers to recruit. We offered a choice of weekday daytime and evening sessions. (Weekday evenings were most popular. Sunday evening was offered, but was rarely chosen.) We made sure to take the names of people who were interested but could not make the particular sessions offered, as we may be able to fit them into an existing group. The facilitators for these Introductory Sessions were chosen for their willingness, availability, and experience. They will call those who signed up and welcome them, provide details, and answer any questions prior to the first session.

The first session is likely to spend less time on a topic and more time on explaining how SGM works and on introductions - something that would normally not be necessary in an existing group. The facilitator will cover ground rules and procedures and introduce the covenant. The second session will run more like a “standard” SGM, though time for questions and getting to know each other will still be emphasized. By the third and fourth sessions, we hope the groups will be more comfortable and familiar with each other and will spend more time discussing the topic. Topics have not yet been chosen, but we will select some that were well-liked in previous groups.

We hope that participating in this short series of sessions will be a positive experience for everyone and will lead to either the continuation of the short-term groups themselves or to members feeling comfortable enough to join other groups as individuals in the fall. Check back with us in early June, and we’ll tell you how it turned out!

-Taken from the Small Group Ministry Network Quarterly, Spring 2013