

Knoxville SGM Institute: Truly a Partnership!

Thanks to Tennessee Valley UU Church for hosting the UU Small Group Ministry Institute 2016, April 1-3, in Knoxville, TN. Thirty people from nine congregations participated. The richness came from the active sharing, the energy of being together, and the wealth of wisdom and experience that was evident. The Institute was a partnership between the TVUUC and the SGM Network that we would like to see replicated. The Institute ended with Rev. Chris Buice's Sunday sermon on SGM, followed by sign-ups for groups at TVUUC!

The Institute occurred at TVUUC's request, with their assistance, and the vision of a program for the area. This was an experience of partnering, a type of support mentioned in another article in this Journal. The SGM Network is developing guidelines for such partnership in other locations.

There were numerous benefits in a partnership between the local area and the UUSGM Network:

- We were able to include the interests and needs of the area.
- Participants co-led workshops along with the Network.
- Area congregations were included, leading to further support and collaboration in the region.
- Institute participants gained energy, enthusiasm and ideas from each other.
- The hosts celebrated Small Group Ministry in their own church.
- Rev. Buice's sermon emphasized the importance of SGM within the congregation, and was followed by an opportunity to sign-up up to join a Small Group.
- The host congregation increased leadership among their own members through planning and hosting the Institute.
- We were able to involve Regional personnel. Christine Purcell, Congregational Life Staff of Southern Region, offered greetings. We look forward to more communications with her about regional SGM workshops and conferences.

Creating a conference of any type takes work. Collaboration and sharing the functions made it possible. This sharing included space, people, and financial resources. Thanks again, Tennessee Valley, for requesting and working with the Network on the Institute. Please contact the Network with your interest in having a program for your own and surrounding congregations, at office@smallgroupministry.net

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