

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY SUPPORT

By Rev. Helen Zidowecki, UU SGM Network Board

The UU SGM Network has long recognized the need for various types of support for starting, enhancing, or rejuvenating Small Group Ministry programs in UU congregations. The need for support also was expressed by many respondents to our recent survey. (Survey results are reported on page six of this issue).

The UU SGM Network is considering ways to make available support systems such as Networking and Partnering, Mentoring, and Consultation. We solicit your input about the types of support you may need for your congregation. Your suggestions will help us to develop effective systems of support for SGM/Covenant Group programs.

Networking and Partnering. We all are involved in Networking: the sharing of session plans, articles about our respective programs, and participation in conferences and educational programs. “Partnering” is structured Networking over a period of time. Partnering can occur among churches geographically, such as clusters; or with like characteristics, such as size; or program characteristics, such as Small Group Ministry with Young Adults. This can be done between congregations with established programs and those who are starting programs.

Mentoring is a relationship in which one person or group takes special interest in helping another person or group develop a successful program over time. This is more individualized than Partnering, and focuses more on one party, the mentee. This could happen between SGM Coordinators. Effective Mentoring is characterized by mutual respect, trust, understanding, and empathy. Mentors share life experiences and wisdom, as well as technical expertise. Both the mentor and mentee contribute equally. The mentee has responsibility for the relationship, seeks advice from the mentor, and is willing to listen to this advice. In addition, the mentor must be able to act in the best interest of the mentee.

Consultation is directed more at preventing or resolving concerns. It is usually time-limited and directed at a particular situation. Consultation provides expertise and resources toward a resolution of a situation in some manner.

The UU SGM Network proposes a support system making partnering, mentoring, and consultation available to beginning, re-starting, established, and faltering SGM programs. Together we’ll explore options, make discoveries from experience, and share the excitement of moving forward. Mutual support increases understanding of how we implement SGM and its impact on participants and congregations. Engagement in support systems, both providing and receiving support, strengthens both parties.

We invite your responses to this proposal for mentoring and support. Send us your comments and suggestions about the areas of support that would be most helpful. How would you like to be involved in either providing or receiving support? Tell us at office@smallgroupministry.net. We look forward to launching support strategies for SGM programs across the denomination.

-Taken from the Small Group Ministry Network Journal, Spring 2016