

From Our Members...

Making Friends Along the Way
By Laura Gaynor, Seattle, WA

The best way to describe my experience with covenant group ministry is that it has been a three year spiritual journey making many friends along the way. As a team we design a covenant to guide us in how best to share topics. Each week the group is given a topic and a series of questions to help us reflect upon our life experiences. Topics cover a wide range: "What are your passions? Which UU principle is the most difficult for you to follow? How does humor help you through tough circumstances? Do you have many healthy relationships?"

We take some time to ponder and soul search, then share our answers. Before I began attending covenant groups, I didn't realize the benefits of sharing my thoughts or feelings. For me, sharing does not always come easily, especially in a group setting. I've been very happy to find that the groups are accepting, warm, and empathetic. The topics also help me to question areas I may not otherwise examine. I feel much more rounded after spending

time studying important questions that are relevant. And I have gained wonderful wisdom from people who have had many life experiences. Sometimes it's an individual or the group's positive outlook that really energizes me to seek the positive instead of the negative in my life. That alone has been a profound experience! When my brother, who is developmentally disabled, was hospitalized with pneumonia last year, I spent about three months dealing with a very stressful situation on a daily basis. I cried a lot, and wondered every night how I would get through the months ahead. My thoughts seemed to shift frequently to the covenant group, the things we discussed, and to our church. I'm not sure how different it would have been without being in the group, but I think it helped me to move on and heal. I was motivated to get back to my normal life again. Every two weeks I pleasantly look forward to taking this special journey with my covenant group friends.

Laura is a Covenant Group member at Westside UU Congregation in Seattle, WA. Her article first appeared in the *Uniclarion*, WSUU's newsletter. *Reprinted with permission, 5/5/09.*

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