

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA

## ***Sharing Our Ministry***

May 2003

### **Facilitators Should Read This Note to Their Groups:**

This session about shared ministry has a dual potential: it can meet the needs of members of the SGM groups as we seek to deepen our spiritual connection with one another *and* permit the Committee on Ministry (COM) to learn about the degree to which the members of our group understand and agree with the vision of sharing ministry at MLUC.

At the SGM Facilitator's meeting in June, members of COM will interview the SGM facilitators to hear your report about what this session was like, how members feel about shared ministry, etc.

Members of the COM will then extract themes from these interviews and communicate the findings to relevant parties in the church community.

### **Opening Words & Chalice Lighting:**

We need one another when we mourn and would be comforted.

*We need one another when we are in trouble and afraid.*

We need one another when we are in despair.

*We need one another when we would accomplish some great purpose,  
and cannot do it alone.*

We need one another when we need to be called to our best selves again.

*We need one another in the hour of defeat, when with encouragement  
we might endure, and stand again.*

We need one another in the hour of our success, when we look for someone to share our triumphs.

*We need one another when we come to die, and would have gentle hands prepare us for the journey.*

All our lives we are in need, and others are in need of us.

*(adapted from Fredric J. Muir)*

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Ministry is serving others.

Ministry is serving others in faith—out of our beliefs, our *Principles and Purposes*.

Ministry is serving others in faith, hope, and love: the hope that we can, somehow, make a difference in the life of someone else, the hope that, by having compassion, we will know what to give of ourselves and how to give it.

*(adapted from Fredric J. Muir)*

## **Check in/Sharing (approximately 30 minutes)**

### **Focus Readings:**

When you respectfully and unabashedly share your objections about the war in Iraq with your neighbor, you are doing a social justice ministry.

When you volunteer to teach Church School, you are ministering to children.

When you catch yourself becoming strident in a congregational meeting, then calm yourself down so you can listen better to others, you are doing a community building ministry.

When you come in early to set up for the coffee hour, you are doing a coffee ministry.

When you recall that someone you met at coffee hour has been out of work for six months and pick up the phone to express your support for that person, you are doing an encouragement ministry.

—*Inspired by Doug Kraft*

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Shared ministry is based on the understanding that ministry is not the possession of ministers alone, but is shared by all who choose to call themselves Unitarian Universalists. Shared ministry is grounded in the understanding that we all are called to use our gifts in the ministry of the church, because the existence of this community depends upon the sharing of our gifts. But our ministry is not limited to what happens within our walls. Ministry is what we might do with our whole lives, if we looked at it that way.

There are times when we all just need a sanctuary for our souls, a time and a place when we can simply be, simply rest in the moment, draw nourishment for the often draining demands of our daily lives. We need a time to rest in the grace and generosity of others.

But each of us needs to identify our gifts, to discern our call, to see the way Unitarian Universalism does, or could, inform our daily life. What I wish for us is that we become the people, the congregation, we are capable of becoming.

*(adapted from Rev. Dr. Ellen Johnson-Fay)*

**Focus Questions: (45-60 minutes)**

1. Tell of a time—if there was such a time—when someone at MLUC, or elsewhere other than one of the clergy ministered to you, i.e., supported you and cared for you in a meaningful way. What did that person do and how did it feel?
2. How do you feel about the idea that ours might be a church filled with people who minister to one another? How would it feel to be in such a community?

3. What could you do to make person-to-person ministry more the norm at MLUC?
4. This is a Small Group Ministry, how can we make it a larger ministry?
5. What themes and messages would you be comfortable with your facilitator sharing from the group's discussion of Questions #2 & 3? (With the Committee on Ministry.)

### **Checkout/Likes and Wishes**

### **Closing Words & Extinguishing Chalice:**

Wherever there is a meeting that summons us to our better selves,  
Wherever our lostness is found,  
Our fragments are reunited,  
Our wounds begin healing,  
Our spines stiffen,  
And our muscles grow strong for the task—  
There is ministry.  
May all of us minister.  
May our ministry be a blessing to this congregation and to the larger world.

*—Adapted from the Rev. Gordon "Bucky" McKeeman*