

U.U. Small Group Ministry Quarterly



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The “Ministry” in Small Group Ministry Dr. M’ellen Kennedy, Burlington, VT

On an Autumn evening recently about 275 people packed into Bragg Auditorium at All Souls UU Church in Kansas City to view the new documentary “Wal-Mart –The High Cost of Low Price.” The showing was part of the UU Documentary Film Series organized by lay leader, Mike McKelley. **The Series is a “movie ministry” for Mike which he began organizing about three years ago.** Now it’s an important part of the church’s presence in Kansas City, attracting viewers from throughout the community including college and High School students.

How did Mike come to his movie ministry, to that Church and to UUism in general? Through Small Group Ministry! Mike took a “Build Your Own Theology” (BYOT) class 4 1/2 years ago in a Small Group Ministry format. It was part of the Adult Religious Education Program at the church. The class used the basic SGM format including a chalice lighting, an opening, a brief check-in, the body of the meeting (some part of the BYOT curriculum), a check-out and closing. They made their own relational groundrules to guide their time together. They met for ten sessions over the course of about five months.

Through the group, Mike made friends and began to feel connected to the congregation and to UUism. In his words, “Had I not tried that group, I probably never would have found UUism. I saw the listing in a community newspaper. Having grown up in a dogmatic faith left me really uncomfortable with organized religion. I thought I’d never go back to a church. Being in the group got me over the bitterness. It was a chance to explore and fit together my own creed that was positive and legitimate.”

As is typically the case with Adult Religious Education programs that use an SMG format, the members of the group became close. “We bonded and shared deep things with each other. **There was a magic to that group. It worked!**” says Mike.

When the formal Religious Education course was done, **the group members decided to keep meeting because they so enjoyed each other’s company.** As Mike relates, “Some of us have continued meeting every other week ever since. I led the last group session on mindfulness. Some new folks have come and gone, but there’s a core group that’s been together the whole time.

Part of the “Ministry” of SGM is outreach in the community. **Through this Adult Education Small Group Ministry, Mike has found a church home. And in finding a church home, Mike has also found his own ministry.** That’s the other part of “Ministry” of Small Group Ministry. For Mike, “This Series is something that I’ve always had a passion for and finally found a way to do. I’ve gotten so much positive response, so many “thanks you’s”, emails, and pats on the back. People feel that I’m bringing something to the community that is really wanted and that no one else is providing. That makes me feel good. It lights me up.” (Continued on page 3)

Shared Ministry Through Covenant Groups By Elizabeth Barrett, Madison, WI

I’d been in a Covenant Group for over a year when my partner Sam became very ill, spending five days in the hospital. After his release, I was anxious and afraid – how would I take care of him? He was bed-ridden for a week. Thankfully, the members of my small group rallied to bring meals to us – all different kinds of soup, one delivered every other day or so along with salads, bread and the occasional decadent dessert. **Sam and I felt so cared for and supported – that is the power of shared ministry.**

Months later, I helped another group member pack her belongings and move to a new apartment. She said, “I owe you one for this. I owe you.” I thought, No, that’s not true. Jean doesn’t owe me a thing. **She has supported me in more ways than she knows,** always ready with a kind word or a hug, always committed to our group.

The care we provide each other in our Small Group Ministry programs becomes a natural part of being in a group together. **We bond and form a small community, each acting as a lay minister to the rest of the group.** This doesn’t just happen, however. A good facilitator models shared ministry from the first contact with group members by being warm, caring and responsive. Someone in the group took a trip or had a job interview? A telephone call to ask how it went may be in order. A homemade get-well card would be perfect in certain situations. Whenever someone misses a meeting (for whatever reason) the facilitator or someone else in the group can make contact. Soon, an environment of shared ministry permeates the whole group. It’s not forced **and each group finds its own level of comfort with deeper connections that evolve naturally over time.**

At my congregation, our three ministers recently wrote a covenant with “support the laity in shared ministry” as one of their promises to each other. They stated that they “will work to create ongoing opportunities for members of the community to care for one another in maintaining the culture of a healthy congregation.” **Our ordained ministers recognize that they alone cannot meet the needs of everyone in our community.** Of course, we’ve known this for many years, but it’s great to have it finally acknowledged in writing!



Network News

The UU Small Group Ministry Network (UUSGM Network)

The UU Small Group Ministry Network is a membership based Independent Affiliate Organization of the Unitarian Universalist Association (see uua.org). The purpose of the Network is to support small group ministry and related shared ministry models in Unitarian Universalist congregations through developing new resources, networking and training opportunities.

Joining the Network

For info on joining and benefits of membership, see the back page of this Quarterly, or visit www.smallgroupministry.net

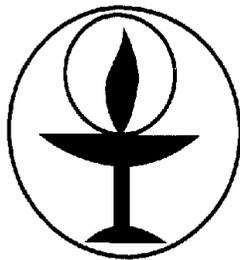
Time to renew? Check your mailing label.

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Co-Coordinators

Peter Bowden
M'ellen Kennedy

We Welcome Your Gift to the Network

For the UU Small Group Ministry Network to accomplish our mission, we need adequate funding. We are funded primarily by our members. There is much work to be done to support Small Group Ministry in our congregations. And we want to do it! In order to take on the needed research and resource development projects we need your support. **Your donation to the UUSGM Network is tax deductible.** We thank our members for their support and welcome additional financial contributions.

For more info on making tax deductible donations, please contact Peter Bowden (401-855-0037).

The UUSGM Quarterly

Editor: M'ellen Kennedy

The UUSGM Quarterly provides information, explores issues and shares resources on Small Group Ministry or Covenant Groups. It is funded primarily by our members like you. Do you have a SGM experience to share, or a testimonial, or an exciting aspect of the SGM program in your congregation? See page 3 for our new column "News From Our Members." Please send your submissions, your ideas and requests for topics to mellen@smallgroupministry.net.

UU Small Group Ministry Network Retreat Sue Stukey, Secretary, Evanston, IL

Summer often provides time for reflection and thought, so the **Board of Directors of the UUSGM Network** took that to heart, and **met in Augusta, Maine for a day and a half in retreat** on August 11 and 12. We set aside time to review what we've accomplished during the past year, and do a little dreaming, brainstorming and planning for the future. SGM President, Rev. Calvin Dame was our host. Board members Rev. Marti Keller, Sue Stukey, Elizabeth Barrett and Rev. Helen Zidowecki attended, as well as our co-coordinators, M'ellen Kennedy and Peter Bowden. Susan Hollister wasn't able to attend, but was with us in spirit.

It has been an amazing year! What began as a few folks around a restaurant table at General Assembly in Long Beach, is now a full-fledged organization, complete with a Board of Directors of dedicated lay and ministerial leaders, and two co-coordinators, all of whom bring a wide array of skills and views. The UU Small Group Ministry Network has over 160 members, both individual and congregational, who receive the Quarterly, discounts on workshops, and many electronic resources. We were accepted as an Independent Affiliate of the UUA and awarded a grant from the UU Funding Panel for Unitarian Universalism. We were invited to teach at Ferry Beach. We have come a long way toward our mission:

Our Mission: "To help create healthy congregations and a vital Unitarian Universalist movement by supporting Small Group Ministry."

During our time together, we rededicated ourselves to **continue that support by providing high-quality information through our SGM Quarterly publication and a well-organized website, running well and full of information.** We clarified the meaning of membership, acknowledging that we need the financial support of members to create and support our print, electronic and training resources. We struggled with the need to finance our work, while still providing readily accessible information to a wide variety of individuals and congregations, encouraging them to network with each other. We clarified the roles of both volunteer and paid consultants, and the Executive Committee of the SGM Network board was empowered to make staffing decisions. We also ate, sang, went for a boat ride and spent hours talking together. After all, it was a retreat, and it was summer in Maine!

By the end of our time together, we arrived at several goals for the coming year and fleshed out a plan of action to: 1) Research and improve our marketing abilities, 2) Look for ways to increase our connection, and interaction with the UUA, perhaps to find increased support as well, 3) Improve our relationship with professional religious leaders, and 4) Strengthen our financial base so that our program co-coordinators are not over-stressed and stretched too thinly as they tend to this important work.

We left our retreat refreshed and committed once again to supporting our congregations as they plunge into the wonderful world of Small Group Ministry. **We know that, done well, it can strengthen our congregations, energize our movement and, perhaps, change the world**

Network News Continued

Wonders on Our Website

<http://www.smallgroupministry.net>

Peter Bowden, co-coordinator of the UUSGM Network, has recently done a fabulous job revising our website. Peter created the site a number of years ago before the Network existed. In Peter's words, "This site has been a labor of love. Wanting our congregations to find the resources they need for this ministry, I am glad that this site has become the home of the UU Small Group Ministry Network!"

On the website you can find notices of upcoming SGM events, sample our free resources, browse the session exchange page, subscribe to our free e-news, Covenant Group News, review the lists of SGM resources, link to UUA and other articles and resources, purchase resources, learn more about the Network and, of course, **join the Network!** And once you join the Network, you'll be able to access our member's only section of the website, full of practical, informative resources including articles and back issues of the SGM Quarterly. **It's definitely worth a visit.**

Small Group Ministry at General Assembly (GA) 2006

St. Louis, MO, June 21-25

For more info, visit uua.org

GA 2006 will have opportunities for Small Group Ministry or Covenant Groups. The UUSGM Network, as a UUA Affiliate Organization, plans to offer workshops for those at different levels of exposure and knowledge about SGM. We also plan to have a booth again in the exhibit hall. Our Winter Quarterly will have more details about GA events. Let us know if you're planning an SGM event and we'll publicize it in future issues of this Quarterly.



Youth SGM Resource Now Available! "Small Group Ministry with Youth"

By the Rev. Helen Zidowecki.

Commissioned by the UUSGM Network

The dynamic Small Group Ministry format can be and has been used effectively with Youth to create powerful group experiences. **Drawing on her years of experience working directly with Youth, Helen Zidowecki has created a useful booklet for those wanting concrete help in how do this appropriately and well.** This resource includes a session for facilitators, and discussion and session plans for The Five Steps to Building Community and Six Components of a Balanced Youth Program. **A total of 25 session plans are included.** The resource costs \$25 plus \$5 shipping and handling. All proceeds from this resource, in excess of development cost, go to support the ministry of the UUSGM Network. You can order the resource on-line at smallgroupministry.net or contact Peter Bowden at (401-855-0037).

News From Our Members: How We Saved the Earth

Nancy Orcutt, Sarasota, FL

None of us knew quite what to expect of our congregation's first Small Group Ministry. Our church is medium-sized, with about four hundred members, counting friends, and "snowbirds." This was an opportunity to meet and interact more closely with one another. **We all shared an interest in environmental issues**, the topic our leaders, Lea Hall and Klaus Obermeit proposed.

Eleven of us gathered in our co-leaders' home. A candle was lit; there was a reading and we listened to some chosen music. We were read "the rules." The "don't interrupt" rule and mindfully listening around the circle made some of us, used to jumping in with an idea, uneasy and tentative.

Speaking one at a time, we found early on that we all were intensely interested in the issue of **global warming**. We began to list all of our concerns and fears. Nearly all of us felt overwhelmed; several suggested there really wasn't anything we could *do*. Was there? That was the major question. Some said, "We can take some small action." We weren't so sure.

By the second and third gathering (we met twice a month for four months last spring), we'd developed a long list of possible actions for our church and for the community. Each one took on tasks: contact all the churches in Sarasota to see if we could join forces; design bumper stickers; do some serious reading and internet research; help some members with an existing trilogy of church services to be called "The Earth Trilogy"; contact local environmental groups.

Half way through our small group meetings, our attitudes changed completely. The daunting task of learning the harsh realities about the potential effects of global warming, along with educating both ourselves and others about the still possible limitations of that change with our own actions, led us all to believe we could effect change. **Our sessions became more animated, even jovial, as we worked together and put our energies into specifics. Not every one of our efforts worked out, but most did.**

Was our Small Group Ministry unusual, given its serious focus? Perhaps, but perhaps not. After all, we did follow through on our stated goals and the goals of SGM. We passed on meaningful information and action and each of us, enjoying each person's passion, energy and wit, ended up learning about and appreciating each other. **I certainly look forward to my next experience.**

The "Ministry" in Small Group Ministry

Dr. M'ellen Kennedy (continued from page 1)

If Mike had not joined the group, the Documentary Series would not exist. Through SGM we create a place at the table and help people feel welcome. In that open group setting, folks can discover their own calling. Where does it lead? It unfolds in unknown ways and with wonderful surprises such as this movie ministry, through which Mike is helping heal and change this broken world one viewing at a time.

Resources & Reviews for Religious Professionals

Southeast UU Ministers Create Circles of Trust

Rev. Marti Keller, Decatur, GA

As small group ministry takes hold in our liberal religious faith movement, our religious professionals are looking at ways to familiarize themselves with the notion and structures of these groups, to understand their power in shaping individual spirituality and community, and to model this practice. **The Spring program at the Southeast UU Ministers Association (SEUUMA) meeting was an introduction to and direct experience of Circles of Trust, developed by educator and social commentator Parker Palmer.** Palmer's latest book, "A Hidden Wholeness" and his earlier book, "The Courage To Teach," both describe these small groups.

For background, the approximately thirty ministers participating were asked to read about circles of trust in Palmer's own writings. I introduced his work briefly and described his central premise. **We live in a society where hiding our authentic selves, "our shy souls" as Palmer calls them, is the norm, and that opportunities for safe places and spaces for intimate truth telling are rare.**

My colleague, Rev. Dr. Glenda Gray, and I then outlined the **conditions for creating circles of trust:** that they need not be the singular matrix of our lives, in that we belong to other communities; that they can be embedded in a setting, like a UU congregation which has an ongoing institutional life; that they have a skilled leader or moderator whose role is to be first among equals in creating and protecting a space where everyone's soul can feel safe; and that there is an open invitation, but not a demand, for participation at any time.

Most striking in Palmer's circles is the use of silence. Sessions begin with silence and the invitation for individuals to share responses to the question of the day or the readings that have been prepared. Silence is used to bring the group back from distractions and interruptions, or to allow time to ensure that all who wish to speak have the chance. Graceful ambiance is important to Palmer and his small groups. We are asked to look around to see whether there is enough air, light, and touches of beauty.

The SEUUMA ministers divided into small groups or circles to respond to a single question, and following this we asked for the questions that were burning for them in their lives as religious leaders and seeking individuals:

When did you feel safest as a child?

When do you feel safe now?

What restores you?

What has been your greatest learning in this lifetime so far?

Are you living your life in a way that honors your deepest commitment?

Where does your strength come from?

What is a source of authority for you?

How would you define living a UU "undivided life"?

What fills you with passion?

These and other questions may guide our next times in a circle of trust, either in our own congregations or when we meet in the fall for our semi-annual gathering.



Small Group Ministry At CENTER Day in St. Louis, MO, June 19-21, 2006 For more info, visit uuma.org

The UUSGM Network will be offering the following workshop for religious professionals at CENTER Day on June 20, 2006.

The Possibilities and Perplexities of Small Group Ministry

More than half of our congregations have tried Small Group Ministry (SGM) or Covenant Groups as a way of meeting the needs for intimacy and spiritual growth. Groups hold the promise for revitalizing our churches. Yet many of us are encountering challenges and frustrations as we use this approach. This session will provide a candid review of SGM and explore ways to successfully run programs to prevent and avoid some of the common pitfalls. We'll explore the hidden, cultural biases that can limit program effectiveness. We'll invite sharing with colleagues on their views of and experiences with SGM.

Presenters will be Dr. M'ellen Kennedy, MDiv, Rev. Helen Zidowecki, and Rev. Marti Keller. The time of the workshop is yet to be determined.

If you are planning a SGM event at CENTER Day, let us know and we'll publicize it in upcoming issues of this Quarterly.

LREDA Liberal Religious Educators Association Fall Conference Report

Rev. Helen Zidowecki, Litchfield, ME

Small Group Ministry was an integral part of the LREDA Fall Conference which was held in Philadelphia on October 21-24, 2005. A Small Group Ministry session was part of the orientation at this continental gathering of 180 Unitarian Universalist religious educators. The groups then had several additional session plans for meetings during the conference. The material for each sessions was developed to complement the presentations of the theme speaker, Rev. Lawrence Peers, Consultant, The Alban Institute, whose theme was "Mapping Uncharted Territory: New Directions for Growing Learning Congregations." **The session plans are available on my web site at www.hzmre.com/sgm and look under LREDA Fall Conference 2005.**

*"I pin my hopes to small circles and quiet processes
where vital and transforming events take place"*

Rufus Jones

Conference Reports and Planning

Regional Conferences On Small Group Ministry

The UU Small Group Ministry Network is joining with local congregations and districts to offer regional conferences in the U.S. and Canada. **Could your district, congregation, or region benefit from a conference on small group ministry? If so, please contact us at conferences@smallgroupministry.net**. A regional conference is an opportunity for area congregations just considering the idea, as well as congregations with already existing programs, to receive help and encouragement to be successful in their endeavors. If your congregation is needing help to launch a program or to invigorate an existing program, we also provide trainings for individual congregations.

We are getting great feedback from our conferences. **We want to extend a big “Thank You!” to all of those who helped make these conferences a success.** This includes the many small group members and lay and professional leaders at each site who contributed time, energy and food to make these conferences fly. Here are some reports and comments from recent conferences.

Oak Ridge, TN September 17, 2005

The East Tennessee Cluster of UU Churches offers an annual fall gathering for their congregations. This year’s featured topic was Small Group Ministry with a presentation by Dr. M’ellen Kennedy. About thirty-five people attended from five congregations. Here’s a comment from Rev. Jake Morrill of the Oak Ridge UU Church which has just launched their SGM program this fall.

“Thank you for your inspirational visit. It was a great success. Thank you for getting us off on the right foot.”

Los Angeles, CA October 29, 2005 A Report from Carol-jean Teuffel, Santa Monica, CA

On October 29, 2005 the Pacific Southwest District presented, and our Santa Monica Small Group Ministry (SGM) program hosted the workshop “Possibilities of Small Group Ministry” with Dr. M’ellen Kennedy. As a co-founder of the UUSGM Network, M’ellen is passionate in guiding this program’s growth. **Seventy-five people attended** from Santa Monica, San Diego, Sacramento, Fullerton, Santa Barbara, West Hollywood, and from Arizona. We enjoyed a daylong instructional workshop for UU churches starting and nurturing Covenant Groups (CG). As a CG has a distinct purpose and a unique structure, stressing support through deep respectful listening, it takes dialogue and practice to help leaders fully understand why and how to proceed. M’ellen highlighted having a clear purpose, format, and commitment to agreed upon ground rules, and shared leadership among all members.

This workshop helped us understand how these small relational group assist people to connect, engage in shared spirituality and draw newcomers in, giving them “a place at the table.” In these groups, members become a lay ministry to

one another through honoring and supporting one another, service, and joyful celebration of life. **This training energized and helped us grow in our understanding and practice of Small Group Ministry.**

Madison, WI November. 4-5, 2005

With forty-nine people in attendance from five states in the Midwest, this conference was a big success. It included a Friday evening and all day Saturday program led by Rev. Calvin Dame and Dr. M’ellen Kennedy.

Here are some comments from attendees. Seminary intern Bret Lortie of the UU Society of Geneva, IL, attended with a lay leader, Tom Peters. Bret reports:

Tom and I came away from the conference energized and armed with some great ideas.

Since I’m an intern, I’m glad to have brought a key lay leader along: he’s going to be able to follow up more than I can since he’s here for the long haul.

Dick and Mary Ramsdell, Board members of the Unitarian Congregation of Rock County, Janesville, WI, write:

“Thank you so much for the workshop. We are members of a small, emerging church where each of us wear many hats and are becoming tired out. **Your presentation on Small Group Ministry has been energizing and instilled us with a desire to bring this program to our congregation. Thank you for sharing your enthusiasm and expertise.**”

Joyce Carey, of First Unitarian Society of Madison reports:

The highlight for me was a one-hour mini-covenant group, one of seven that met in various locations in the church. We had a clear agenda to follow, from opening reading, through check-in, discussion and closing. We followed the recommendation that check in be SHORT, and then dove right into the topic, which was fear. Having such a short check in made us think carefully about what we said. It also left most of the hour for discussion, which grew surprisingly deep considering that we were all strangers to each other. **It was a great example of how well the recommended format for small groups works in action.**

Future Conferences

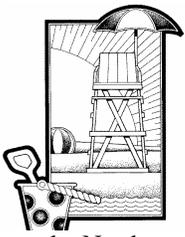
The UUSGM Network has received requests to explore the possibility of regional conferences in the following geographic areas.

Northern New England	Spring 2006
Pacific Northwest	Spring 2006
Heartland District	Fall 2006

If you would like to attend or assist in the planning process please contact M’ellen at mellen@smallgroupministry.net

Note: World Article on SGM

Did you see the recent article in the UU World Magazine? Don Skinner’s Congregation Life page titled “The Joys and Challenges of Covenant Groups” appears on page 16-17 in the Winter 2005 issue. You can also link to it from our website.



Reports from Ferry Beach, 2005

From August 13-19, 2005, the UU Small Group Ministry Network offered the first ever, weeklong UU training on Small Group Ministry at the UU camp, Ferry Beach in Saco, Maine. **The week was a complete delight!** Thirty-five lay and professional leaders attended from as far away as Washington state, Arizona and Louisiana as well as the Northeast and Midwest. The week was such a hit, the Ferry Beach Staff has invited the Network back to offer a similar training for Summer 2006. Details on the 2006 program are on the next page. Below are reports from attendees of the 2005 Training.

Report From A District President Ken Wagner, Marlborough, MA

This past summer, I had the great fortune to participate in Small Group Ministry Week at Ferry Beach. The week featured perfect weather, good fellowship, and most of all, the opportunity to participate in a workshop entitled **“Transforming Congregations With Small Group Ministry”** facilitated by the Small Group Ministry Network.

I attended the workshop as one of a team of eight small group facilitators from our congregation, First Parish Church of Stow & Acton, Massachusetts. Our SMG program is about a year into its life, with about 100 of our approximately 250 members participating in groups since January. **We committed as a group to attend the workshop to benchmark our progress against successful programs from other congregations; to increase our awareness of the challenges we will face as our program evolves and matures; and to gather the insight and wisdom of our fellow Unitarian Universalists** who share the vision that SGM, when done well, has the potential to transform, not only congregations, but the communities around us.

During the week, we had the opportunity to learn the essential elements of a successful SGM program, how to plan and implement a new program, how to expand and enhance an existing covenant group program, how to identify and train facilitators, how to write effective SGM sessions, and how to incorporate SGM practices into relational religious education. Apart from the formal sessions, we had a wonderful time sharing stories, moving experiences, hilarious mistakes, astonishing songs, exotic haikus and quiet walks on the beach.

However, the most moving and powerful experience of the week was a feature very inconspicuously described in the SMG Network materials as “Hands on Small Group Experience.” We were formed into small groups, and conducted actual one hour sessions each day using common small group topics. Despite being together for less than a week, and despite the workshop nature of the exercise, I emerged connected to six very special people in a way I wasn't before Ferry Beach. **If any of us didn't fully grasp the power of small groups before this experience, we certainly came out the other side comprehending it.** We need to enlist this power in our religious life.

Fifteen years ago, I found an authentic religious experience in Unitarian Universalism, one that has changed my life and re-energized a passion to seek truth, not only in solitude, but in the love and support of a religious community. I am grateful to those who directed me to this religious tradition; **I am disappointed I didn't find it sooner.** I don't think my experience is unusual or uncommon - we owe it to others to let them know we are here.

Within the Clara Barton District, we have begun a conversation about the **growth** of our denomination within the district, whether that growth is thought of in terms of numbers, depth, influence or impact on the world. As the president of the district, I am convinced that any growth strategy must include programs to strengthen our congregations, to feed people what they hunger for within our religious communities, and to strengthen our visibility within and our impact on our wider communities. **The world needs our tradition and our message. Small Group Ministry is an answer.**

Report From a Reluctant Minister Rev. Bill Breeden, Bloomington, IN

When my co-minister, Rev. Mary Ann Macklin suggested that I should attend the SGM training at Ferry Beach, Maine, she might as well have suggested I go to a Chinese Restaurant and have a dose of MSG. Unlike Mary Ann, I am not a fan of Chinese cuisine even without MSG, and, unlike Mary Ann, **I am not a fan of training programs.** I envisioned being asked to role-play and otherwise overcome my introversion in ways that drives me to the boundaries of my willingness to be nice. My love of the sea and the voice of the tides provided little comfort as I boarded the plane to join those small group ministry advocates for a week. “Jesus! Can't this be done in a couple of days?”

Having grown up in fundamentalism, I know what conversion is. **Consider me converted. SGM is one of the most powerful, invigorating ways to “be a church”**, and it is no wonder the mega-churches across this country are growing astronomically. It is time for the liberal religious tradition to rediscover what it means be with one another and to love one another. As Francis David said, “We don't have to think alike to love alike.” I would add that we cannot love alike so long as our primary way of being together is defined by our thinking rather than our loving, our differences rather than our common humanity. SGM provides a structure for “being” together in a new way.

I encourage the professional ministers in the UUA to give SGM serious consideration. Be forewarned, once started, it may be difficult to contain. My Pappy used to say, “If a church gets on fire for Jesus, folks'll come around to watch 'em burn.” Well, my theology has changed radically since I heard Pappy say that, but the principle is sound. When people find good news they tend to share it and others come to the fire to be warmed.

Come on in from the cold. **Small group ministry will give you a fire around which to gather and to be. It has the potential to make Unitarian Universalism a revolutionary rather than a resolutory movement.**

Small Group Ministry Network Institute

August 12 – August 18, 2006

Ferry Beach, UU Conference Center

Saco, Maine



The Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network is delighted to offer an opportunity for teams and individuals from congregations of all sizes to learn and practice Small Group Ministry (SGM) with experienced practitioners and leaders. The week will include presentations, hands-on workshops, small group ministry experience, sharing, networking, music and art. Topics will include:

- ❑ **Starting SGM from scratch in a congregation**
- ❑ **Expanding and enhancing existing SGM programs**
- ❑ **Exploring SGM in Lifespan Religious Education**
- ❑ **Preparing and supporting facilitators in their important work**
- ❑ **Revitalizing congregations with SGM**
- ❑ **Creating effective SGM sessions**
- ❑ **Helping ministers work comfortably and constructively with SGM**
- ❑ **Using art, music, movement and alternative approaches in SGM**
- ❑ **Exploring SGM as related to Social Justice and Faith in Action**
- ❑ **Sharing materials that participants bring from their congregations**
- ❑ **Taking home a vision and action plan for SGM**

Mornings will include presentations, discussion and workshops; evenings will have further optional programs and related activities. Afternoons are for relaxing on the beach, lounging on the porch, exploring the environs through organized outings, and other activities. **Participants will have the unique and uplifting opportunity of meeting daily in a hands-on small group.** The conference will be especially effective for groups representing their congregations and all are welcome.

Instructors include: Rev. Calvin O. Dame, Rev. Helen Zidowecki, Dr. M'ellen Kennedy, MDiv, Peter Bowden, Elizabeth Barrett, Rev. Marti Keller and others.

Imagine enjoying the beach, worshipping among the pines, making new friends, sensing our history, and participating in rejuvenating our Unitarian Universalist movement with Small Group Ministry – all in a week this summer!

Comments From Last Year's Ferry Beach Attendees:

“Outstanding presenters. It went beyond my expectations. Great conference and facility.”

“It offered experiences I did not expect – surpassed my expectations. Small groups were wonderful.

I'm taking back a deeper sense of what is possible for how we relate with each other, for our program, and what transformation might look like for our church community.”

“In general I loved the flow of this conference. The small groups were awesome. Perfect amount of people, perfect amount of time.”

“I'm bringing home more organization for our SGM program, and inspiration and tools to make it better.”

“I came to increase my skills as a facilitator. Now I feel I will be able to be a good coach as well.”

For more information, visit www.ferrybeach.org

Time To Renew? Check Your Mailing Label!

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to Subscribe to this Quarterly?**

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Congregation: \$60US Annually (6 copies of Quarterly)

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Additional Donation: \$100 \$250 \$500 \$ _____
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Email _____

Comments _____

Please complete the form above and mail with your check made out to "UU SGM Network" to the UU SGM Network, Attn: Peter Bowden, 155 Evarts Street, Newport, RI 02840
You can also join and renew on-line: smallgroupministry.net

We Welcome Your Gift to the Network.

**UU Small Group Ministry Network
155 Evarts Street
Newport, RI 02840**

The Benefits of Network Membership:

1. Experiencing the joy of helping our grassroots Small Group Ministry movement flourish!
2. Getting the SGM Quarterly mailed to your home or congregation four times each year.
3. Accessing great members-only resources through our website.
4. Receiving registration discounts when you attend UU SGM Network sponsored events.
5. Receiving assistance when you plan and offer a regional small group ministry event.
6. Participating as a voting member in the UUSGM Network Annual Meeting at General Assembly.

The UUSGM Quarterly

Editor: M'ellen Kennedy

→ **Feature Articles in Future Issues**

Winter 2006 Social Justice and SGM
Spring 2006 The Language of Reverence
Summer 2006 How SGM Impacts the Congregation

Subscribe to the Covenant Group News

Keep up on news about Small Group Ministry and Covenant Groups with the monthly free e-news, "Covenant Group News." The newsletter was started by Bob Hill and is now published by the UU Small Group Ministry Network. If you're not already a subscriber, to sign up, visit our website www.smallgroupministry.net

Our Mission

The UU Small Group Ministry Network's mission is to help create healthy UU Congregations by supporting small group ministry and related shared ministry models. Through the production of resources and training materials we are helping Unitarian Universalist small group ministries thrive.

Your individual or congregational membership will support the development of these resources and trainings. Help us transform individual lives, congregations and our liberal religious faith.

Join the UU Small Group Ministry Network!

Join online at <http://www.smallgroupministry.net>

Benefits of Membership

- Get our new journal, *the SGM Quarterly*.
- Access Member-Only resources on our website, www.smallgroupministry.net
- Receive discounts at designated UU SGM Network sponsored conferences and events.
- Receive help organizing a regional conference of cluster event in your district.
- Feel the joy of knowing that you are advancing our grass roots Small Group Ministry movement!

Please select a membership

- Individual Membership \$35 Includes 1 copies of the SGM Quarterly
- Congregational Membership \$60 Includes 6 copies of the SGM Quarterly

Name _____

Phone _____

Email Address _____

Congregation _____

Mailing Address _____

Resource Development Fund

I / we would like to make an addition contribution of \$ _____ to the UU SGM Network resource and training development fund.

General Assembly Fund

I / we would like to make an addition contribution of \$ _____ to help fund our UU SGM Network booth at General Assembly and other efforts to promote small group ministry at General Assembly.

Make checks payable to "UU SGM Network"

TOTAL: \$ _____

Questions about membership or our Network? Please contact Peter Bowden, UU SGM NET Co-Coordinator, at 401 855-0037 or email him at peter@smallgroupministry.net . Send your completed membership form with your check made payable to "UU SGM Network" to the following address:

Attn: Peter Bowden
UU SGM Network
155 Evarts Street, Newport, RI 02840