

U.U. Small Group Ministry Quarterly



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From the New President Of the Small Group Ministry Network

Diana Dorroh, Baton Rouge, LA

The Annual Meeting of the UU Small Group Ministry Network occurred in June at the Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in Portland, Oregon. At the meeting, I was elected to serve as President of the UU Small Group Ministry Network. I am honored and excited to serve in this capacity. You are all doing very important work for your own congregations and for the growth and health of our liberal religious movement. The Network exists to support and enhance this work. The Network was founded three years ago by Rev. Calvin Dame, Rev. M'ellen Kennedy and Peter Bowden. Calvin has served as president since the Network started and his inspiration and hard work helped lay a solid foundation. He provided consistent leadership over these years, established the connection that made our week-long workshops at Ferry Beach possible, wrote many of our excellent resource materials and so much more. It is very humbling to follow him as president. **We extend our gratitude to Calvin as he completes his time on the Board.** The other founding members, M'ellen and Peter, remain in staff roles. At the Annual Meeting we also **elect three wonderful new Board members: Mary Ann Terry, Anne Haynes, and Steve Becker** (see their bios on page 2). Susan Hollister, Walter LeFlore, and Rev. Helen Zidowcecki continue to serve. **We wish to thank Rev. Marti Keller for two years of service, as she steps off the board this fall.**

Also at General Assembly this year, I had the fun of spending some time in **the Network's booth in the Exhibit Hall.** It was very exciting to talk to so many people about their small group ministry programs. I estimate that I talked to about seventy ministers and lay leaders. Nobody was saying to me "This doesn't work. We tried it and it failed" or even "We want to start some groups and don't know where to begin." Instead, **we were hearing about healthy, vibrant programs** and were being asked specific questions about how to make them better. Questions like: "How should we train our facilitators?" "What should the role of the minister be?" "Where can I get some session materials?" and "What do we do with especially needy members?" It was invigorating being in the booth and engaging in these conversations. Our two workshops were also well attended. Susan Hollister, Treasurer, and I had to sit on the floor for the workshop entitled "Emerging Models of Small Group Ministry."

(Continued on page 2)

Suggestions for Facilitators On Developing Relational Ground Rules For Small Group Ministry Groups

Rev. M'ellen Kennedy, Bristol, VT

One of the foundations of Small Group Ministry is that each group abides by a set of relational ground rules. **The point of the ground rules is to help the group accomplish its goals of building friendships and deeper spiritual exploration or intimacy and ultimacy.**

Whenever you find groups -- in the congregation, at work, or in the community -- it's a given that groups have rules. **Quite often, the rules are unstated or implicit, but they still exist and influence the dynamics of the group.** In Small Group Ministry we aim for explicit and overt ground rules. There are many problems that result from implicit and covert rules.

Implicit or Covert Rules Lead To:

- * An "in group" versus an "out group"
- * Anxiety for those in the "out group"
- * An unwelcoming environment especially for newcomers
- * Control of the group by the "in group", usually unintentional
- * Lower level of comfort, participation and risk taking
- * Lower level of shared leadership
- * Less likelihood of accomplishing the purposes of intimacy and ultimacy

By contrast, explicit and overt ground rules create a more open, relaxed and friendly environment.

The Benefit and Value of Explicit and Overt Ground Rules

- * Everyone is in the know
- * Increases comfort level
- * Creates safe environment for deeper sharing
- * Newcomers integrate more easily and quickly
- * Shared leadership is encouraged
- * Higher level of participation
- * More dynamic and vital groups
- * We learn how to create community together
- * More likelihood of accomplishing the purposes of intimacy and ultimacy

One approach to developing ground rules is to have each group come up with its own ground rules. **Members are much more involved and have a sense of ownership when they do this important work themselves.** The process helps to build shared leadership and dynamic groups. Members are much more likely to understand and

(Continued on page 4)

The UU Small Group Ministry Network (UUSGM Network)

Our Mission:

*"To help create healthy congregations and
a vital Unitarian Universalist movement
by promoting and supporting
Small Group Ministry."*

The UU Small Group Ministry Network is a membership-based organization. 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.

Board & Staff

Diana Dorroh, President
Steve Becker, Vice President
Rev. Helen Zidowecki, Secretary
Susan Hollister, Treasurer
Anne Haynes
Walter LeFlore
Mary Ann Terry

Advisory Board

Rev. Bob Hill
Rev. Glenn Turner



Co-Coordinators

Peter Bowden
M'ellen Kennedy

District Connections

For Small Group Ministry

The UU Small Group Ministry Network is working on establishing connections in each of our districts to promote Small Group Ministry throughout our liberal religious movement. Offering workshops and information tables at the annual district meetings is one avenue for doing this. If you would like to help in this effort, please contact M'ellen Kennedy at mellen@smallgroupministry.net.

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? Please send your submissions, your ideas and requests for topics to mellen@smallgroupministry.net.

Stay in the Loop!

Subscribe to Covenant Group News

Covenant Group News is a free electronic newsletter on Small Group Ministry and Covenant Groups read by 1300 forward-looking Unitarian Universalists. CGNews is edited by Peter Freedman Bowden and distributed by the UU Small Group Ministry Network. Topics covered in recent issues are: Using small groups in coffee hour to welcome TIME reading guests; Soliciting stories on how small groups help congregations through times of stress and trauma.

To submit your ideas for future topics, contact peter@smallgroupministry.net. To subscribe send an email with the word "subscribe" in the subject line to Cgnews-request@smallgroupministry.net

What Is Small Group Ministry?

Small Group Ministry (SGM) or Covenant Groups are revitalizing our congregations. The groups provide an opportunity for community building and spiritual exploration for their members. The groups serve both newcomers and "old-timers" in our congregations who may not yet have found a way to connect deeply in our congregations.

In recent years, many Unitarian Universalist congregations have started Small Group Ministry Programs. **A typical group has about ten members, is guided by a trained facilitator, meets at least once a month and creates and abides by a covenant or set of ground rules.** Facilitators usually meet regularly for ongoing support and training.

The **group meeting format** includes a time for centering, an opening reading, a check-in, usually a discussion of a topic agreed on by members, thought-provoking questions, check-out and a closing. Each group develops a way to welcome new members, stays connected with the larger congregation, and participates occasionally in service projects to benefit the congregation and/ or the larger community. The kinds of topics that groups explore are far ranging and are usually tailored to the interests of participants. **Small Group Ministry is creating new opportunities for connection, growth and depth for our visitors and members.**

Written by M'ellen Kennedy

Enhance Your Small Group Ministry Program With A Local or Regional Training

Congregations with existing Small Group Ministry Programs often find that they periodically need a “tune up” to keep the vision of SGM alive and to continue offering high-quality training for successive generations of facilitators. In addition, congregations starting a new program or re-starting a dormant program often desire encouragement and assistance from experienced leaders in the movement. Do these needs resonate with your experience? If so, consider hosting a regional or local SGM conference.

A regional workshop gives the perfect opportunity for congregations in a given geographic area to get together, to receive training and guidance from experienced old-timers and experts, and to hear about each other’s program successes, challenges and ideas.

The UU Small Group Ministry Network helps local leaders plan such conferences tailored to the current needs of the congregation(s) attending. Following is a comment from an attendee at a workshop at First Congregational Unitarian Church, Concord, NH, Fall 2007.

“The workshop was utterly amazing -- informative, helpful, and inspiring! I am so grateful to you for offering the workshop, and look forward to spreading the word and the concepts. SGM has such great potential to strengthen, and deepen, the relationships and spirituality, in our congregation. Thank you, thank you, many times over.”

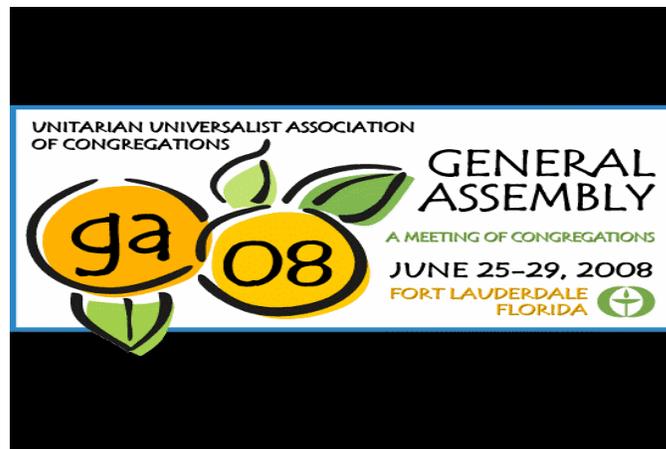
To explore the possibility of a local or regional conference in your area, please contact us at conferences@smallgroupministry.net.

Beyond The Basics: A Gathering and Training for Leaders of Mature Small Group Ministry Programs

**February 23, 2008, 10 AM-4 PM
First Universalist Chapel Society
Woodstock, VT**

This workshop is aimed at lay and professional leaders working with functioning SGM programs -- that is programs that have been in existence for at least a year. It will be an opportunity to gather for mutual support, in depth sharing and advanced training. Registrants will be asked to bring materials to share from the successes and challenges of their programs. For more info contact M’ellen Kennedy at mellenken@aol.com.

**Small Group Ministry
At General Assembly
June 25-29, 2008
Fort Lauderdale, Florida
For more info, visit uua.org**



The UU Small Group Ministry Network will present the following workshop at General Assembly this year. In addition, we hope to offer a booth in the Exhibit Hall.

Strategies and Solutions For Small Group Ministry Challenges

Many congregations are using Small Group Ministry to meet the needs for intimacy and spiritual growth. We will provide strategies to successfully run programs to prevent and avoid common pitfalls. We’ll focus particularly on handling “extra grace needed” members, and hidden cultural biases that can limit program effectiveness.

Building and Sustaining A Strong Small Group Ministry Program Saturday, January 12, 2008, 9:30 AM-4 PM

Snow date: Saturday January 19.

Northshore Unitarian Universalist Church, Danvers, MA

This workshop is for both those starting new programs and those with existing programs. The following topics will be covered: the power and purpose of Small Group Ministry; the essential components of a Small Group Ministry program; addressing common challenges in an SGM program; developing shared leadership within a small group; development stages or facilitators and groups; handling group difficulties; and a hands-on experience in an actual small group.

The workshop leader is the Rev. Dr. M’ellen Kennedy, a UU community minister and community psychologist with over 20 years experience training lay and professional leaders. The cost of the workshop is \$40 for one member of a church to attend and \$35 for each additional person from the same church. Lunch is included. For more info contact Judy Putnam of the Northshore UU Church (judyputnam@comcast.net).

U.U. Small Group Ministry Network

3133 Goshen Road
Newton Square, PA 19073
Fall, 2007

Dear Small Group Ministry Friends,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network because we all share a common passion: making our congregations healthier and happier through Small Group Ministries or Covenant Groups.

The mission of the Network is “to help create healthy congregations and a vital Unitarian Universalist movement by promoting and supporting Small Group Ministry.” We do that by developing new resources, training leaders, and providing opportunities for small group participants to get together and share experiences. Our website has a wealth of free, practical resources such as session plans, event listings, the monthly Covenant Group e-Newsletter, and the SGM Quarterly journal. Please visit us at www.smallgroupministry.net.

In the three years since it was founded, the Network has developed a reputation for excellent workshops and materials. The producers of the UU “Lay Leader Drive Time Essays 2” named the Network as one of the top ten resources for Unitarian Universalist congregations. The Network was initially funded by the Fund for Unitarian Universalism, but we receive no other Association funding. Most of those doing the work of the Network are volunteers. Support for this important ministry has to come from gifts, and individual and congregational memberships.

Now we need to ask for your help. We know that many of you take a special collection monthly in support of various causes. Many of you also hold an annual Small Group Ministry Sunday in which you recognize and honor the facilitators and participants who make up your small groups. (If you don't do that now, we hope you will consider scheduling such a Sunday program.) Our request is that you pass an open plate for contributions to the small group ministry program, yours and ours, during your Small Group Ministry Sundays. We ask that you forward part of that collection to the UU Small Group Ministry Network so that we may continue to help congregations start Small Group Ministry programs and to support these programs where they are already helping our congregations expand and deepen.

All of us associated with the Network appreciate deeply your continued leadership in the Small Group Ministry movement.

Sincerely yours,

Rev. Glenn Turner,
Rev. Robert L. Hill,
The Advisory Board of the U. U. Small Group Ministry Network

**Time To Renew?
Check Your Mailing Label!
Do You Want
to Subscribe to this Quarterly?
Become a Member of
The UU Small Group Ministry Network!**

Individual: \$40US Annually (1 copy of Quarterly)
Congregation: \$100US Annually (6 copies of Quarterly)

We need your donation beyond your annual membership fee to make our larger efforts possible -- such as research and development of resources.

Additional Donation: \$100 \$250 \$500 \$ _____
Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Congregation _____

District _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Please complete the form above and mail with your check made out to "UU SGM Network" to the UU SGM Network, Attn: Susan Hollister, 3313 Goshen Road, Newton Square, PA 19073.

You can also join and renew on-line: smallgroupministry.net

**UU Small Group Ministry Network
3313 Goshen Road
Newton Square, PA 19073**

Benefits of 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. Receiving registration discounts when you attend UU SGM Network sponsored events.
4. Receiving assistance when you plan and offer a regional small group ministry event.
5. Participating as a voting member in the UUSGM Network Annual Meeting at General Assembly.

Please Consider Giving a Gift to the Network.

To continue developing excellent resources to promote and enhance this movement, we need your support.

The UUSGM Quarterly

Editor: M'ellen Kennedy

Please let us know what topic would you like to see covered in feature articles in future issues.
