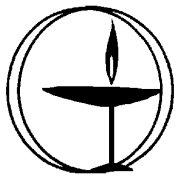


U.U. Small Group Ministry Quarterly



Vol. 2, No. 1, Summer/G.A., 2005
Published by the U.U. Small Group Ministry Network

Small Group Ministry in Small Congregations By Rev. Marti Keller Decatur, GA

Small Group Ministry or Covenant Groups offer tremendous gifts and also presents specific challenges to small congregations. Small churches have been defined variously as those under 150 total members, or those whose average Sunday attendance is 50 or less. These small churches are often labeled family size churches. They resemble a large extended family in terms of their activities and how they operate as a system. Typically these congregations get together for Sunday services, over shared meals, and to recognize rites of passage such as births, graduations, marriages, and deaths. Members know each other by first name and know each other's histories, or at least they believe they do.

I have pastored two congregations of 70 or fewer members who have been admirably ambitious at times in their programming: forums, adult education group, itty bitty Sunday Schools, choirs and social action projects. These extra activities are typically quite challenging to the active core of members who hold everything together. These leaders are often exhausted by the numbers of responsibilities they take on, from painting the sanctuary, to preparing the potlucks, to being worship service leaders. **By the time it comes to personal theological exploration, spiritual growth, and building intentionally intimate community, these stalwarts have run out of steam.**

That's where Small Group Ministry comes in. **It provides safe, regular, structured opportunities for reflection and self-care.** As one member put it, **it's an oasis in a sea of upkeep and crisis.** Members in some small congregations
(continued on page 2)

Small Group Ministry in Medium-Size Congregations By Rev. Calvin O. Dame Augusta, ME

Small Group Ministry/ Covenant Groups provides the same opportunities and advantages to medium-size congregations as it does to larger or smaller congregations: **a way to get to know people in a more intimate and full fashion, an opportunity for a deeper reflection and exploration of the spiritual questions that are a part of our religious journey, and a path and means of service which is an essential part of a life of faith.** But Small Group Ministry offers particular advantages to congregations of every size, and so there are ways in which it can address the particular dynamics of medium-size congregations.

Alice Mann, the writer and consultant on church size and church transitions, counts congregations with 51 to 150 child and adult attendance as pastoral-size congregation, and 151 to 400 as a medium-size or program-size congregation. The congregation I serve has grown from one size to the next and in this article, I will explore how Small Group Ministry can serve both.

The signature element of the pastoral size church is that **everyone has or expects a personal relationship with the minister**, and the minister is the primary provider of pastoral attention, leads most classes and other activities. **This is a common and comfortable size for many congregations and ministers.** But for congregations that feel called to share their good news, to welcome and to incorporate visitors and to have a more effective presence in their communities (to grow, in other words), **the dynamics of the pastoral-size congregations are severely limiting**

(continued on page 2)

Covenant Group Ministry at Large Congregations By Elizabeth Barrett Madison, WI

Beginning, growing and maintaining a Covenant Group Ministry program in a large congregation is **vital to the health of a large congregation, but by no means an easy task.** According to Stefan Jonasson, the Unitarian Universalist Association's Coordinator of Services for Large Congregations (550+ members), Covenant Group Ministry programs have been most successful in medium-size Unitarian Universalist congregations. **In a large UU church, it is rare to have more than 25% of the members in Covenant Groups.** At my congregation, First Unitarian Society of Madison, WI (1400 members as of March 2005), about 10% of our members are involved in our Chalice Groups Program, as we call it.

Since we started the program four years ago, we've noticed subtle shifts in the culture of the congregation. **We are less of an anonymous group of strangers than we were four years ago, have a better understanding of what shared ministry means, and are better able to welcome new people into our congregation.** Many of our new members are already members of a Chalice Group by the time they sign the book. In addition, the people who have been in a Chalice Group have a greater awareness and comfort with the idea of being in covenanted communities and with the practice of respectful listening. Our facilitators have a greater understanding of a new (old) way of facilitating a small group that is not leading it or coaching it, but welcoming shared ownership. They are even demonstrating a greater familiarity and comfort with leading or participating in spiritual practices.

(continued on page 3)

Small Group Ministry in Small Congregations

By Rev. Marti Keller

(continued from page 1)

tend to get locked into roles based on how long they've been involved in the congregation. **Small Group Ministry is highly effective in mixing people together** so that the informal and formal leaders can be involved as peers with those who have wandered in more recently. In addition, instead of just cycling through endless chores to maintain the congregation, Small Group Ministry can make it easier for members to **take on simple service projects inside the congregation**. In planning service projects, members old and new share the visioning and the responsibility. They also experience the reward of a tangible, completed project. Small Group Ministry in these tenacious communities can also **inspire targeted involvement outside the congregational walls** through their service projects. In their groups, members research, develop, act on, and reflect together on their experiences serving the larger community.

In supporting a Small Group Ministry program, the role of the minister or designated leader in a lay-led small congregation is crucial. The minister can urge deliberate conversations, offer an inspiring vision of Small Group Ministry, create the groups, and train the facilitators. In contrast to a large congregation, in a small congregation typically there is less history and routine around activities that are not done as a whole body. Thus in a small congregation, the minister's role is just as significant if not more so, in forming and sustaining a Small Group Ministry program.

In the two congregations where I witnessed and helped with Covenant Groups, I noticed several challenges. The primary pitfall is the tendency of **members to resist breaking up into a group any smaller than the number that typically shows up for worship and potlucks**. The challenge in these congregations is for members to begin to change their culture and **to see the benefit of deeper connections among even fewer people**. Geography can be a problem for the many small congregations in rural areas, where members must travel great distances to be with each other. Many members are reluctant, understandably, to travel more than once a week to attend a function besides the galvanizing Sunday morning event. To minimize the travel distance, groups have been formed based on the geographic location of members. A downside of this approach is that some of the benefits of random mixing of people can be lost. An additional issue is ensuring that these geographically based groups stay connected to and feed into the whole congregation and liberal religious movement.

Another challenge is that of pastoral care. Pastoral care in small congregations is usually performed by the minister, informally by lay leaders in the "extended family" of the congregation, and sometimes by a caring committee. There is a tension between having the pastoral care needs be handled at the most local level by the members of the small group versus keeping the minister, lay leaders and the caring committee in the loop. On more than a few occasions, I only heard of a serious health situation after it had gotten critical. The challenge is for groups to stay in regular conversation around pastoral care to ensure effective ministry for all.

When Small Group Ministry is thriving in a small congregation, every aspect of the religious community is enriched. Members are coming to know each other better and are forming deeper connections. Individuals are being spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually fed on a regular basis. Service projects benefiting the entire congregation are being undertaken by more individuals, lessening burnout among the few. These small and mighty beacons of liberal religion are more energized to imagine acts of social justice, now possible through the bright cells of connection and compassion that Covenant Groups generate.

Small Group Ministry in Medium-Size Congregations

By Rev. Calvin O. Dame

(continued from page 1)

A Small Group Ministry Program can not only strengthen the bonds of intimacy and deepen the spiritual resources for those already present, **it can change the dynamics that limit growth**. As people experience intimacy and spiritual nourishment in groups, without the presence of the minister, **the expectation that church is only happening when the minister is present begins to fade**; groups can provide spiritual nourishment and pastoral care within their groups and beyond. **I like to think of this as empowering the laity for the ministry of the church.**

Additionally, as with every Small Group Ministry Program, **newcomers who are welcomed into groups more quickly find a place in the life of the church**, and a congregation can increase the percentage of visitors who are assimilated into the life of the congregation, which is a key to growth. (It is my contention that most of congregations do not lack visitors, they lack an intentional approach to assimilating newcomers into the active life of the church).

In a program-size congregation, according to Mann, the ministry and leadership of the congregation is more widely shared, the role of the minister is to train, equip and inspire the lay leadership of the congregation. Well, what could be more useful in that paradigm than Small Group Ministry. If Small Group Ministry didn't work so well for small and large churches, **you'd think it had been imagined into being just to meet the needs of the program-size congregation**. And, of course, the usual benefits are present: a place for making friends, a venue for religious and spiritual growth, an avenue for service and a means of assimilating newcomers into the vibrant life of the congregation.

There is one particular element that addresses the specific needs of the program-size congregation. As a medium-size congregation nears a weekly attendance of 400 children and adults, the larger end of this category, a common problem is that **the need for more professional staff to serve the congregation lags behind the numbers needed to support that staff**. It is my conviction that at this point, an investment to support a vital Small Group Ministry, by creating say a half-time lay coordinator, can leverage the resources of the congregation to effectively empower people for the work of the church. While the minister needs to stay involved, some of his or her time can be freed up for the other important aspects of ministry and the membership can maintain the core of health and connection that is essential, if the congregation is

(continued on page 3)

Medium-Size Congregations

(continued from page 2)

interested in growth, for the continued growth of the church.

All that being said, my experience in Augusta, is that as we made the transition from pastoral to program-size, Small Group Ministry has been essential for all of the reasons listed above. And, additionally, the ongoing, regular connection of people in small groups where they share their lives in the context of our religious faith, **has woven a kind of health and resiliency into the fabric of our community that has made us a better church and made me a better minister.**

Covenant Group Ministry at Large Congregations By Elizabeth Barrett

(continued from page 1)

The work of beginning and running a Small Group Ministry Program may be more difficult in a large church because you need to do very careful planning before launching the program, will need to accept that this is a long-term strategy, will need resources (namely money), must have clear communication between all the different levels of your program, and be intentional about welcoming the stranger.

Be prepared for the pre-launch stage to take more time – it took us over a year. We knew that we could not begin by starting one or two Covenant Groups, the way some small congregations do it, because in our congregation that would immediately set up the appearance of an “in” group. Instead we wanted to begin by offering ten Covenant Groups right away, enough to accommodate about 100 people. Because of this, we were compelled to get the whole structure in place first, with an administrative task force, a formal registration process, all three of our ministers enthusiastic, our Board of Trustees okay with the idea, and ten or so trained facilitators ready to begin. We had our launch in the fall of 2001 to introduce the program at our three worship services, with a reception after each service.

During the first three years of our Covenant Group Ministry program, I sometimes heard the phrase “Is that all?” when I would explain how many Chalice Groups we had or state the total number of people involved in our program. Because Covenant Group Ministry is designed to begin rather small and grow organically, **in a large congregation it requires a long-term strategy and commitment. Stefan Jonasson says that it takes three to five years or more for a program to grow enough to change the culture of a large church.** That means that it will take a lot of enthusiasm, determination and patience to see it through.

We’ve seen some growth of our program each year, having begun with nine groups. We set up our fourth year with 15 Covenant Groups meeting once or twice a month, three groups of facilitators meeting with a coach and a minister each month, the three coaches meeting each month, and our coordinating team working to administer and steer the program. **Our coordinating team consists of eight people who have one or more roles in our program.** So that at our meetings, we have in the same room the heart and brainpower of two ministers, three coaches, two co-chairs, three facilitators, one Covenant Group member, our Director of Member Programs, and one FUS member-at-large.

Why don’t we have more Covenant Groups in our large churches? **Stefan Jonasson** remarked in a workshop that the **“short answer is that we think Covenant Group Ministry should be free.” At a large church, it will take resources – mainly staffing – to have a vibrant program.** Stefan, who spends a lot of time visiting large Evangelical churches, says that these churches put monetary resources toward their Small Group programs. **With the proper resources, there would be virtually no burnout** for facilitators, coaches, administrative staff or ministers because the work would be evenly distributed. **A fully staffed Covenant Group Ministry program would probably need a full-time Covenant Groups Minister, an administrator or two, and a large group of paid coaches.** According to Stefan Jonasson, when a church becomes very large – 1500 members and above – it needs a large Covenant Group Ministry program (with 40% or so of the congregation involved) in order to continue to thrive and meet the spiritual and pastoral care needs of its members.

Getting the word out about Small Group Ministry is quite a challenge in a large congregation! We publicize our program in numerous ways and it’s never really enough. I continually find that many people need a personal invitation, that lets them know that they’re welcome to join.

The other part of communication is making sure that all the different levels of our CGM program – ministers, administration, coaches and facilitators – are in agreement about how to do Covenant Group Ministry. Perhaps in a small congregation, it is easy to meet in one group, but we do not. I do recommend getting all the facilitators, coaches and ministers together as a large group at least once a year, perhaps for a training session in the fall. The rest of the year, we must be diligent about remembering to share information amongst us all, through our coordinating team and via e-mail.

Whenever I place someone in a group, I let him or her know the names of the other group members. The vast majority of the time, the new person knows no one. **Sometimes, people who have been members of FUS for fifteen years or more meet each other for the first time in a Chalice Group!** Some of our group members say that it is terrific to have someone to sit beside at a worship service, but this is by no means a given in a large congregation. Since we have three worship services, we may not see the members of our Covenant Groups at church. This can be upsetting to some, because they finally know nine people (rather than none) and still don’t get to sit with someone they know!

Many of our groups combat this feeling of isolation by meeting twice a month rather than once. We even have a couple of groups that meet every other week, though it takes diligence to schedule meetings that way. Meeting more often helps people learn each other’s names and faces faster. For me, an occasional miracle occurs at my church which brings us together: In April, I was at our Saturday worship service to do a lay reading and was overjoyed to find that five members of my Chalice Group were there! Only two of them are regular Saturday attendees – the rest just showed up because the sermon topic appealed to them. The topic? Silence.

An expanded version of this article is available on our website www.smallgroupministry.net

Regional Conferences On Small Group Ministry



An Interview with Rev. Bob Hill By Rev. Calvin O. Dame

The UU Small Group Ministry Network is collaborating with local congregations to offer regional conferences in the U.S. and Canada. **Would a regional conference help your congregation, region or district to strengthen its Small Group Ministry programs?** If so, contact us! A regional conference is an opportunity for area congregations at various stages in development --from those just considering to those already well established -- to receive help and encouragement in developing successful programs. Here are the conferences scheduled thus far:

Los Angeles, California – October 29, 2005

We are pleased to announce that District Executive, Ken Brown and others in the L.A. area are planning a regional conference for the fall. For more information contact Ken at UURev@aol.com or Mellen Kennedy at mellen@smallgroupministry.net.

Madison, Wisconsin – November 4-5, 2005

Presented by The Central MidWest District and the UU Small Group Ministry Network

A Regional Conference and
Enrichment Program for Small Group Leaders
At First Unitarian Society of Madison, WI
Friday, November 4, 7-9 PM
and Saturday, November 5, 2005
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM

Save the date for this daylong Small Group Ministry enrichment program for lay and professional Unitarian Universalist leaders! We've designed this program to help UU congregations with Small Group Ministry programs take the next step in deepening and expanding these ministries. Ministers, DRE's, lay coaches, facilitators, facilitators-in-training, and lay ministers of every label and classification - we welcome you. Calvin Dame and Mellen Kennedy of the UU Small Group Ministry Network will lead this day of exploration, problem solving, connection, inspiration and growth. Topics will be based on emerging patterns in small group ministries throughout our association and issues raised by participants. Contact Mellen Kennedy at mellen@smallgroupministry.net

Oak Ridge, Tennessee – September 17, 2005

The Eastern Tennessee Cluster Fall Conference will focus on Small Group Ministry. The keynote speaker and workshop presenter will be Dr. Mellen Kennedy. For more information contact Jake Morrill at revjakebmorrill@bellsouth.net or Mellen Kennedy at mellen@smallgroupministry.net.

Portland, Oregon – October 7-8, 2005

We are pleased to announce that a regional conference is planned for congregations in the Portland area. Presenters will be Rev. Calvin Dame and Dr. Mellen Kennedy. There will be a Friday evening reception and talk followed by workshop all day Saturday. To register contact Katie Radditz at kradditz@firstunitarianportland.org.

Rev. Bob Hill, one of the earliest proponents of Covenant Groups in our movement and author of *The Complete Guide to Small Group Ministry*, is leaving his position as District Executive for the Southwest District after seven years. He's moving to Brisbane, Australia where his wife, Dr. Kristi Heesch, is taking a three year research-oriented position at the University of Queensland in the field of health promotion and public health. Calvin Dame, President of the UUSGM Network saw this as an opportunity for an interview.

Calvin: What got you interested in Covenant Groups?

Bob: The simple answer: **Glenn Turner.** In 1997 I attended a meeting in Boston with Glenn, a fellow District Executive and long-time friend of mine, and he was all excited about the possibilities of Carl George and something called "**meta-church.**" The more complex answer is that I was primed and ready for what Glenn told me because of my growing belief that **one of the failures of our movement was our inability to be hospitable.** We had not been very open or friendly, ministers and lay people alike, in my opinion, and we'd been too contentious, more interested in debate than in community. Glenn's description of the meta-church techniques led me to a lot of reading and, very soon, an "Ah Ha!" by showing me a **way for us to begin to share stories and listen to each other and to our guests.**

Calvin: What changes have you seen in our churches as a result of Covenant Group work?

Bob: I think there's been some change in the attention we give to those who have not yet found us and those who are just coming through our doors. **We have perhaps become better at listening instead of talking.** And I see a deepening of commitment by our members to their churches. **Small Group Ministry/Covenants Groups have helped to strengthen and grow our congregations.** We're seeing some of the results here in the Southwest District. **Our adult membership passed 10,000 this year for the first time and SGM has been a part of the growth of many of our congregations.**

Calvin: What are you happy with?

Bob: I am pleased that most of our **ministers coming out of seminary have a good grounding in Covenant Groups.** They expect to make these groups a part of their ministries.

Calvin: What are you discouraged with?

Bob: One of my early fears has come true. I worried that I would be going around to churches and hearing folks say "Oh yeah, small groups, we did that. Didn't work for us." I'm hearing some of that now and when I ask how their groups were conducted, **I find, just as I suspected, they didn't really try Covenant Groups. They omitted or changed key elements.** There are even covenant-free Covenant Groups, I'm told, but my view is that without a covenant agreed to by the participants and regularly reviewed, you don't have a Covenant Group. There are elements that are essential to the "magic," to the success of Small Group Ministry. I've also

(continued on page 5)

Small Group Ministry At General Assembly 2005

This year's General Assembly (or GA) In Fort Worth, TX, June 23-27 will feature a number of opportunities for Small Group Ministry or Covenant Groups.

For more info, visit uua.org.

Visit the UUSGM Network Booth!

Booth #718 (next to Congregational Services)

Thursday through Sunday Noon to 6 PM

Monday 9 AM to 1 PM

The UU Small Group Ministry Network will once again host a booth in the Exhibit Hall. Be sure to come by for a visit and tell us about your program! You'll be able to talk with the Board and Staff of the Network. We'll have for sale new materials that have just been developed including sessions for working with youth groups, coaching sessions for your monthly facilitator meetings and a new manual for facilitators. You'll be able to join **the Network or Renew Your Membership**, sign up for our workshop at Ferry Beach and sign up for Covenant Group News. We'll also have for purchase current and past issues of the Quarterly in case you missed any of the valuable info in past editions. You'll also be able to make a donation to the Network to support future programs and projects to continue strengthening this grassroots movement!

Small Group Ministry: Beyond the Basics Workshop Saturday, June 25 from 2 PM to 3:15 PM & Repeat Programming Sunday, June 26 from 3 PM to 4:15 PM

The UU Small Group Ministry Network will provide energizing information and ideas to help you move your Small Group Ministry program to a deeper level of health and vitality. We'll discuss integrating Small Group Ministry into the life of your congregation, deepening facilitator training, understanding various models of Small Group Ministry, and more! Presenters are Rev. Calvin Dame, Dr. Mellen Kennedy, and Peter Bowden.

Creating an Effective Small Group Ministry Network: Annual Meeting of the UUSGM Network Saturday, June 25 from 3:45 PM to 5 PM

Small Group Ministry is re-vitalizing our movement. This Annual Meeting of the UU Small Group Ministry Network (UUSGMN), is an opportunity: to connect with other SGM fans; to learn how we can help each other create vital SGM programs; and to learn about and get involved in the UUSGM Network. Presenters include Rev. Calvin Dame, Dr. Mellen Kennedy, Peter Bowden, Elizabeth Barrett and other members of the UUSGM Network Board. At this session members will vote on the Network by-laws and also vote on a slate of officers. Details of the business part of meeting (which will be short) are available for members on our website

www.smallgroupministry.net

UU Small Group Ministry Network

Board:

Rev. Calvin Dame, President
Elizabeth Barrett
Susan Hollister, Treasurer
Rev. Marti Keller
Sue Stukey, Secretary
Rev. Helen Zidowecki

Co-Coordinators:

Peter Bowden
Mellen Kennedy

Advisory Board:

Rev. Bob Hill
Rev. Glenn Turner

Other SGM Programming at G.A.: Small Group Ministry Success Stories Friday, June 24 from 8 to 9:15 AM Offered by the UUA Staff

Learn from those who have succeeded. Bob Hill, SWUUC District Executive and author of our Skinner House book *The Complete Guide to Small Group Ministry: Saving the World Ten at a Time*, will chair a panel of practitioners from Madison, WI, (1,400 members), Baton Rouge, LA (310 members), and Red River Church in Denison, TX (60 members).

Covenant Groups Will Be Offered At GA

However, there is no on-site registration. If you are pre-registered, the orientation for Covenant Groups will be Thursday, June 23 at 5:15 to 6:30 PM.

An Interview with Rev. Bob Hill

By Rev. Calvin O. Dame

(continued from page 4)

been disappointed by the absence of support or lukewarm support from some ministers. And **I think lukewarm support may be worse than no support at all.** Ministers need to catch the vision. **When Small Group Ministries fail or drag along, it's usually for one of those two reasons: omission of key elements or insufficient ministerial support.**

Calvin: What is left to do?

Bob: Continue to spread the gospel and stay on message: **"Small Group Ministry can save our churches and help to save the world. The Small Group Ministry Network work is vital! You're saving souls."** One other point: Small Group Ministry needs to be institutionalized as an integral part of our General Assemblies, as an ongoing, continuing demonstration of the power and potential of small groups of this particular kind. **We had great cooperation from the President and the Moderator and the Planning Committee last year, we're getting that again this year,** and now I'd like to see us move to the next level of having Covenant Groups for delegates made an integral part of staff and Planning Committee work. Delegates need Small Group Ministry and our churches need their delegates exposed to the power of Covenant Groups. **This needs to be woven into the very fabric of G.A.**

Calvin: Bob, thanks so much for your work, and best wishes in the future. If they've got email there, be sure to stay in touch.

Bob: I checked for high-speed internet service first thing. I'll be watching your progress from afar and cheering you on, mate.

Service Projects from A to Z!

By Peter Freedman Bowden

Newport, RI

Service is an essential component of an effective Small Group Ministry Program. **Yet some congregations find it challenging to actualize this aspect of their program.**

Group members often find it helpful to have a list of service project ideas to look at when discussing what their group might do. To that end, we have developed the following list in hopes that it will help and inspire you and your group. As you explore engaging in service remember that there are many ways to serve! You may engage in service projects large and small, within your congregation or in the larger community. We hope this list is a useful springboard for discussion.

Adopt. Volunteer to adopt a highway, park or simply the church sidewalk. Keep it clean for a designated period of time.

Blood Drive. Give blood or even organize a church blood drive. Those who can't give can keep others company.

Collect food for a local charity.

Denominational Affairs. Check in with the denominational affairs committee of your church to see what opportunities are available for service.

Environment. If your church does not recycle see if there is a way your group can assist to make this happen. Often a church will have people take recycling home.

Fellowship. Volunteer to help set up and clean up for the coffee hour or another fellowship event.

Groundskeeping. Volunteer to tackle a grounds keeping project such as raking Fall leaves.

Handy work. Volunteer as a group to spend a morning or afternoon doing handy work (repairs, etc...) for either the church or a member of the church in need.

Is for INSPIRATION and INNOVATION. Be creative when considering project ideas.

Join a larger project. There are many organizations coordinating larger volunteer efforts. See if you can help out a given day with a larger effort.

Know-how! What do your group members know how to do? Figure this out and then put it into action!

Lay Ministry. See if your group can assist with your lay ministry or care giving community in some way.

M is for MINDFULNESS. While you are working on your project be mindful of how doing this work makes you feel and how it transforms the group

New Members. Volunteer to help with a new member event, be it clean up or hosting. You might also volunteer to help welcome guests on a Sunday.

Organize something. Check in with your congregation's staff and lay leadership to see if there is an event or project you can help organize.

Paint. Volunteer to paint a room or some other part of your church facility. Try and keep projects to one day.

Q is for Quick. For your first project try selecting something that can be done quickly!

Religious Education. Offer an adult religious education class as a group.

Sunday Service. Volunteer to help with one of the Sunday Services. If you have lay led Summer Services perhaps your group could lead one together.

T is for TEDIUM. Try not to take a long time to plan your service project. Make sure you have a clearly outlined and agreed upon process for selecting it up front.

U NICEF. Help with your congregation's UNICEF card sales or Guest at Your Table boxes.

V is for VISIBLE. Consider identifying a project that makes your group and church visible to the larger community.

Write a Session Plan. Work as a group to create a complete session plan to be shared with the other groups.

X is for EXCUSES for not engaging in service. Identify them up front and people will be less likely to use them.

Y is for YES! Make sure you get the appropriate permissions to undertake a project!

True story: Once a group decided to fix the old decrepit church handicap ramp. They took it down not realizing it was grandfathered in as is. The church ended up having to spend \$10,000 to bring the new one up to code. Oops!

Zero In. Try to zero in on a real need within the church and community. Put your time and energy to good use!

Special thanks to Main Line Unitarian Church in Devon, PA, for sharing their great list of service project ideas. Their list inspired this A – Z list. If you have ideas you'd like to share write to peter@smallgroupministry.net.

Need More Help With Service Projects?



Check out the Spring, 2005 Issue of this UU Small Group Ministry Quarterly with four valuable pieces on Service Projects:

☆ **Service: An Essential Element of Small Group Ministry by Rev. Calvin Dame**

☆ **Using the Action-Reflection Model for Service Projects by Elizabeth Barrett & David Blough**

☆ **Our Members Write About Service Project Success Stories, and**

☆ **An Interview with Rev. Michael McGee of the UU Church of Arlington, VA**

You're Invited to A Week Long Workshop
***Transforming Congregations
Through Small Group Ministry
At Ferry Beach in Saco, Maine
August 13-19, 2005***

**Would you like an opportunity to deepen your understanding
of Small Group Ministry or Covenant Groups?**

Or maybe you need a primer on what Small Group Ministry and Covenant Groups is all about?

You're in luck! The Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network (UUSGMN) is delighted to offer an opportunity to individuals and teams from congregations of all sizes to learn and practice the art and skills of Small Group Ministry with experienced practitioners and leaders. Join us at Ferry Beach to combine exploring Small Group Ministry with time at the beach, ecology walks, campfires, worship among the pines, relaxing on Quillen porch with a good book, and lots of good company.

Resource people will include: Rev. Calvin O. Dame, Rev. Helen Zidowecki,
Dr. Mellen Kennedy, M. Div, & Peter Bowden.

**In addition to basking in the beauty of the surroundings,
Activities for the week will include:**

- * Presentations by Denominational Leaders
- * Introductory and Advanced Tracks
- * Hands on Small Group Experience
- * Sharing Successes

Topics will include:

- † Starting SGM from scratch in a congregation
- † Expanding and enhancing existing SGM programs
- † Establishing relational religious education with SGM practices
- † Enhancing Facilitator Skills
- † Revitalizing congregations with SGM
- † Writing effective SGM sessions
- † Shaping ministry for SGM programs



There will be plenty of time to enjoy the afternoon and evening Ferry Beach attractions.

We look forward to seeing you there!

**For more info contact Ferry Beach at 5 Morris Avenue, Saco, ME 04072
Tel. 207.284.8612 Fax: 207.283.4465 or ferrybeach.org
On-line registration is open!**

**The UUSGM Network is an independent affiliate of the Unitarian Universalist Association.
This project is funded in part through a grant from
the Fund for Unitarian Universalism.**

**Do You Want
to Subscribe to this Quarterly?**

**Become a Member of
The UU Small Group Ministry Network!**

Individual: \$35US Annually (1 copy Quarterly)

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

New & Existing Members: To make our larger efforts to support this ministry possible, such as development of resources, and our General Assembly programming, we welcome your donations above your annual membership fee.

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

Total Enclosed: \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

Congregation _____

Phone _____

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 on-line at
www.smallgroupministry.net**

We Welcome Your Gift to the Network!

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

The 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. Accessing great new 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 or cluster Small Group Ministry event.
6. Participating as a voting member in the UUSGM Network Annual Meeting at General Assembly.

The UUSGM Quarterly

Editor: Mellen Kennedy

This UUSGM Quarterly provides information, explores issues, shares resources and publicizes events on Small Group Ministry or Covenant Groups. It is funded in part by our members like *you*, and by a grant from the Fund for Unitarian Universalism. Do you have a SGM experience to share, a testimonial, or an exciting aspect of the SGM program in your congregation? We welcome your submissions!

Email your submission to mellen@smallgroupministry.net

Subscribe to the Covenant Group News

Keep up on news about Small Group Ministry and Covenant Groups with the monthly 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/cgnews