

SGM QUARTERLY

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News from the Network

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO THE NETWORK!

General Assembly 2009 marks the **fifth** anniversary of the UU Small Group Ministry Network's launch! Stop by Booth # 430 and help us celebrate this landmark event. Read highlights of our 5 years in this issue. We couldn't have done it without YOU!

Coming Soon: *Ten Years of UU Small Group Ministry*

An anniversary compilation of SGM articles published throughout 2008-2009, plus rediscovered articles from the earliest issues of *Covenant Group News*, beginning in 1999. Available in late June 2009.

Time to Renew?

If "Time to Renew" appears on your address label, it's time to send your annual membership fee in to the Network Treasurer so there will be no lapse in your *Quarterly* subscription. Use the membership form in this issue or download a renewal form from the Network website.

General Assembly 2009, June 24-28 2009, Salt Lake City, Utah

The Network will sponsor a consultation booth and present a workshop, *Facilitator Training: The Key to Small Group Ministry Success*, based on the Network's [Facilitator Training and Development Manual](#). See GA details in this issue.

The Mountain Small Group Ministry Conference (August 16-21, 2009, Highlands, NC) is an investment in your program's growth. The Conference provides opportunities to exchange ideas, successes, and resources among congregations. Leadership and learning come as much from participant interaction as from the presentations. We look forward to seeing you this year! Please let us know NOW that you plan on coming, and list specific programming that you would like to have included. A flier and registration form are available on the Events Page of the UU Small Group Ministry Network website. <http://www.smallgroupministry.net/events.html>

Network Member Congregations – Now on the Web!

See your congregation's name on the membership list. Find out who else in your district is a Network member and valued supporter. Consider organizing a regional SGM workshop with area congregations. The Network can help with planning the event. Write us at office@smallgroupministry.net.

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Our Mission:
"To help create healthy
congregations and a vital
Unitarian Universalist movement
by promoting and supporting

From our Members.....

Making Friends Along the Way

by Laura Gaynor, Seattle, WA

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

We take some time to ponder and soul search, then share our answers. Before I began attending covenant groups, I didn't realize the benefits of sharing my thoughts or feelings. For me, sharing does not always come easily, especially in a group setting. I've been very happy to find that the groups are accepting, warm, and empathetic. The topics help me to question areas I may not otherwise examine. I feel much more rounded after spending time studying important questions that are relevant, and I have gained wonderful wisdom from people who have had many life experiences. Sometimes it's an individual or the group's positive outlook that really energizes me to seek the positive instead of the negative in my life. That alone has been a profound experience! When my brother, who is developmentally disabled, was hospitalized with pneumonia last year, I spent about three months dealing with a very stressful situation on a daily basis. I cried a lot, and wondered every night how I would get through the months ahead. My thoughts seemed to shift frequently to the covenant group, the things we discussed, and to our church. I'm not sure how different it would have been without being in the group, but I think it helped me to move on and heal. I was motivated to get back to my normal life again. Every two weeks I pleasantly look forward to taking this special journey with my covenant group friends.

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

Who We Are:

The UU Small Group Ministry Network is a non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. We provide support to small group ministry and related congregations through developing new resources, networking and training opportunities.

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The SGM Quarterly is published four times a year and supported by donations and memberships. Archives are available on the SGM website.

Small Group Ministry at General Assembly June 24-28, 2009 Salt Lake City, Utah

WORKSHOP # 3020 – *Facilitator Training: The Key to Small Group Ministry Success*

Friday 6:45 – 8:00 PM Salt Palace – 151 BC

Sponsored by the GA Planning Committee

Small Group Ministry facilitators must be chosen wisely, trained well, and supported in their ministry. We will provide a concrete plan for designing and implementing a comprehensive in-house SGM facilitator training and development program. The minister's role in sharing and blessing this ministry will be a special focus.

- ★ Identifying and Recruiting Facilitators – Rev. Melissa Carvill-Ziemer, minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Kent, Ohio
- ★ The Initial Training – Rev. Dr. Justin Osterman, senior minister of the Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, Pennsylvania
- ★ Facilitators Meetings – Rev. Bret Lortie, minister of the First Church of San Antonio, Texas
- ★ Individual Facilitator Coaching – Diana Dorroh, SGM Program Director of the Unitarian Church of Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- ★ Leadership Recognition – All
- ★ Q & A

BOOTH # 430 – Exhibit Hall, Salt Palace Convention Center

Wednesday 3 to 6:30 PM Thursday through Saturday Noon to 6:30 PM

Sunday 10:15 AM to 3:00 PM

Your headquarters for:

- ★ Resources on facilitation and program management
- ★ Opportunities to share SGM challenges and successes
- ★ Answers to all your SGM & Covenant Group questions

ANNUAL MEETING – Saturday, June 27, 12:00 noon - 1:00pm

Join the Network Board of Directors for an opportunity to connect with other Covenant Group enthusiasts, learn more about the SGM Network, and get involved in Network activities. Meeting location and final agenda will be available at the Booth.

1. Welcome, Introductions, Opening Words
2. Minutes of the 2008 Annual Meeting
3. President's Report: SGM Network status and activities
4. Financial Report
5. Nominating Committee report
6. Election of Board Members
7. Future Plans
8. Open Discussion: SGM Network programs
9. Opportunities with Network projects & activities
10. Closing Words

In addition to being printed exclusively on white paper, which makes it easier to copy and is a cost-savings for the Network, the newsletter is now printed on eco-friendly, recycled paper.

A Decade of Small Group Ministry In Northern New England

Helen Zidowecki, Augusta, ME and Peg Herbert, Concord, NH

Small Group Ministry began here 10 years ago when the Rev. Glenn Turner, then District Executive, engaged the ministers in Maine in a year of study of the work of evangelist Carl George. This led to workshops and implementation of programs in several congregations. In New Hampshire and Vermont, Small Group Ministry started with the work of M'ellen Kennedy, who, along with Calvin Dame from Augusta and Peter Bowden from Rhode Island, started the Small Group Ministry Network in 2004.

Fast forward to the formation of the Northern New England District in 2008. Small Group Ministry that had been budding over the years is blooming! The district groups that had been working in the respective Northeast District (Maine) and New Hampshire/Vermont District brought their energy to Small Group Ministry in the new district. The core Small Group Ministry Committee has representatives from each state and additional people working geographically.

This first full year of the Small Group Ministry Committee was spent organizing, making connections, offering workshops and assessing needs within the district. There have been:

- Articles in the district newsletter, materials in packets that go to congregations
- exhibits at district events,
- a new SGM page on the new district website, and
- posting of session plans on the website, including those requested by District Staff on economics, and links to session plans on Welcoming Congregation
- ongoing workshops on development of Small Group Ministry and Facilitation by M'ellen Kennedy, and a workshop for smaller congregations by Helen Zidowecki.

We have had direct contact with 37 of the 72 congregations related to small group ministry. We have learned that there are fourteen strong, ongoing programs; eleven with programs that are just starting or are rejuvenating, and two churches that would like to start a SGM program. Rejuvenation is occurring more in the Maine churches, where Small Group Ministry started earlier, which is leading to insight about how to maintain Small Group Ministry over the years as congregations and clergy support changes.

Small Group Ministry has been important to our congregations and has also impacted the way we interact as a district. Small Group Ministry sessions are part of ministers' meetings and have been incorporated into District gatherings for several years. For example, at the District meeting May 1-2, small group sessions provided a method for reflecting on the Keynote by Rev. Dr. Rebecca Parker. Conference evaluations indicated that this was a highlight of the conference.

Is Small Group Ministry an active part of your district?

Share your stories by contacting the UU Small Group Ministry Network at office@smallgroupministry.net

Small Groups, Deep Connections.

SGM RESOURCES AND EVENTS

WORKSHOP:

The Art & Skill of Facilitation For Small Group Ministry

Saturday, June 6, 2009, 9AM to 4:15PM at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Manchester, NH.

Workshop leader is Rev. Dr. M'ellen Kennedy, a Small Group Ministry Consultant and co-founder of the SGM Network. For more information, contact Rev. M'ellen Kennedy at mellenken@aol.com or 802-453-5469.

Announcing *SMALL GROUP TUBE*:

Peter Bowden, co-founder of our Network, has launched a new small group ministry video series, making the content of his consulting and trainings available to all our congregations, a boon to church budgets. Find the new videos and subscribe to the video channel on Youtube™ at <http://www.youtube.com/smallgroupministry>

COVENANT GROUP NEWS, the *Quarterly's* sister publication, is a free interactive e-newsletter sent monthly to 1300 subscribers. Questions of the Month receive answers from readers and Network board members. Featured articles are submitted by ministers, facilitators and program coordinators. Send us your questions and share your insights and experiences with fellow practitioners. Submit them to the *CGNews* editor at diana_dorroh@hotmail.com. Read back issues and subscribe at www.smallgroupministry.net

SGM Discussion Group – Join the UUA List Serve:

The Small Group Ministry Discussion Group is the list serve from the Unitarian Universalist Association web site, listed there as *Covenant_Group_Ministry*. This list provides an opportunity for individuals and congregations that are interested or engaged in Covenant Group or Small Group Ministry to share experiences, questions, comments, problems, innovations, and insight. Subscribe to the discussion group on the Network's website.

HEART TO HEART: 14 Gatherings for Reflection and Sharing, April 2009, by **Christine Robinson**, senior minister of First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque, NM, and **Alicia Hawkins**, SGM program director at First Unitarian Church of Albuquerque. Resources for 14 group conversations on topics such as forgiveness, loss, nature, money, and friendship. A reimagined model of small group ministry, Heart to Heart offers readings, journaling suggestions, and thought-provoking exercises to help participants prepare for the spiritual practice of sharing in community. *From Skinner House Books, UUA Bookstore, www.uuabookstore.org, \$14*

Share Your Experience - Join a Network Committee:

Much of our work takes place in subcommittees – Membership, Publications, Education/Conferences, Financial, and Grants. They communicate by email and meet about monthly via phone conference. The time commitment is minimal, yet the work is vital to furthering the Network's outreach. Come join us in an area that appeals to you. Communicate your interest to office@smallgroupministry.net.

NETWORK ONLINE: www.smallgroupministry.net

The site is updated twice a month and changes are noted on the Home Page. Comments and suggestions are welcome. Contact Helen Zidowecki at office@smallgroupministry.net.

- Session plans are received on a regular basis. Has your congregation contributed?
- Check out the **Join the UU Small Group Ministry Network** section for a listing of Member Congregations. Send information about your program to office@smallgroupministry.net for inclusion in the Covenant Group News, the Quarterly, or on the web site.
- Archives for *Covenant Group News* now include 2004 to the present. Earlier editions coming soon.
- The 2009 Winter Quarterly is now posted on the site.

MINISTER'S PAGE

Looking Outward Together

By Rev. Dr. Stephan Papa

All leaders face the challenge of knowing when to insist on something and when to go with the will of those with whom you are working. The determination is best made considering the importance of the issue. Is it essential or secondary?

When we were setting up the Small Group Ministry Program at the Main Line Unitarian Church in Devon, PA in 2003, we were committed to a collaborative process; we didn't always take official votes, but we tried to reach consensus. We had information from Glenn Turner, Calvin Dame, and Bob Hill. We were taking parts from each and putting this program together as we believed it should be. One question had us divided: Should each small group be required to do some kind of service?

Some considered this requirement extraneous to small group ministry; as the senior minister, I was even accused of pushing it in order to get volunteer jobs done for the church. After making it clear that the service could be performed within the church or in the community outside of it, I insisted that at least one service project a year be a requirement. Reaching for an outside religious authority, one I used frequently in marriage ceremonies, I quoted Saint-Exupery saying, "Love does not consist of gazing at each other, but in looking outward together in the same direction." The truth of poetry won out and the service requirement was included.

We created fifteen groups with eight to ten members in each. Every group had a facilitator and the same session plan. I met monthly with the facilitators for check-in, training, spiritual centering, and to continue developing the program. Several of the small groups did not take readily to the service requirement. When asked at our monthly meetings if they had done one yet, some of the facilitators repeatedly said no; there was resistance in their groups.

Then a few of the facilitators reported doing service projects, that it felt good to be of use, and that they bonded in the process. Eventually, all the groups did some service project; some of them really got into it, and did several. They all began to see service as an important part of the meaning and value of their small group experience.

The groups did not exist just to support one another. The fact that they provide service to others is what makes them a small group ministry. Looking outward, providing service and social change for others is essential to small group ministry and to a religious community in general. Don't you agree?

Rev. Dr. Stephan Papa
Special Assistant to the President of the UUA
Organizing Association Sunday
spapa@uua.org

*Let there be silence for the voice within us and beyond us.
 Let there be joy in our coming together.
 - Carl Seaburg*

UU SGM Network Publications

Order forms available from www.smallgroupministry.net

Facilitator Training and Development Manual

The Network's most requested resource, published in December 2008. Part One is a guide for developing and implementing an in-house training program. Part Two, the *Facilitator's Guide*, is a training module on CD to customize for your program, use in your training sessions and distribute to all group leaders.

Network Members: \$15 plus \$5 shipping Non-members: \$25 plus \$5 shipping

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry June 2008

A collection of 50+ articles from 5 years of *Quarterly* Journal, Covenant Group News, and website publications. Articles are arranged by topic, from basic elements of SGM, through the minister's role in shared ministry, sustaining your program, and the application of SGM principles in multiple aspects of congregational life.

Network Members: \$15 plus \$5 shipping Non-members: \$25 plus \$5 shipping

Small Group Ministry for Youth June 2005

This dynamic format for middle and high school youth includes a session and discussion for facilitators and session plans for the Five Steps to Building Community and the Six Components of a Balanced Youth Program. Twenty-five session plans in all!

Network Members: \$15 plus \$5 shipping Non-members: \$25 plus \$5 shipping

Thank You To Our Members!

In our five years as a member-based organization, your support has enabled us to:

- Sponsor workshops and a consultation booth at General Assembly since 2004.
- Maintain an informative and up-to-date website.
- Train hundreds of facilitators, program coordinators, and ministers to launch and sustain small group ministry programs in congregations in the U.S. and Canada.
- Publish three successful books—*Small Group Ministry for Youth*, *UU Small Group Ministry*, and the *Facilitator Training and Development Manual*.
- Sponsor three SGM Summer Institutes.
- Publish our monthly e-newsletter, *Covenant Group News*, and our *Quarterly* journal.
- Maintain the Small Group Ministry list serve on the UUA website.
- Apply for and achieve tax-exempt status as a charitable organization.
- Continue the legacy of Rev. Glenn Turner, Rev. Bob Hill, and many other clergy and lay leaders who embraced the concept of small covenanted groups in UU congregations.

We owe a huge debt of gratitude to our co-founders, Calvin Dame, Peter Bowden, and M'ellen Kennedy, three visionaries who saw the need for a SGM support organization and worked to establish the UU Small Group Ministry Network in June, 2004.

It's true, membership has it's privileges!

As a member of the SGM Network you:

Get the current issue of the newsletter *before* it's on the website, provide financial support for the SGM movement, receive discounts on publications and Network-sponsored events, and have a voice and a vote at our annual meeting at GA.

Name

Address

Congregation

District

Program Coordinator

Phone

E-mail

I would like to receive the newsletter electronically; YES NO

Individual Membership (\$40 year)

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