

Connecting Through Small Group Ministry

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As the UU Small Group Ministry Network's membership coordinator, I correspond with new and renewing members and often get to meet and talk with them at the Networks' booth at UU General Assembly. Having this personal relationship with Network members is very meaningful to me and energizes my work with small group ministry.

Small Group Ministry is built on personal interactions and deeper connections, the very essence of intimacy or a sense of community and belonging. Twenty years ago, Covenant Groups and Small Group Ministry evolved in UU circles with the enthusiasm and sharing of a small group of people, primarily ministers. This relationship broadened as lay leadership developed to be more of shared ministry. Much has been written about the connections found in Small Group Ministry and Covenant Groups that have changed lives and congregations.

A gift of small group ministry is that everyone involved can give and receive. Articles have been contributed to the Network publications, including Covenant Group News (CGN) and the SGM Journal. Session plans have been sent in for the online directory. This June at General Assembly SGM Booth in the Exhibit Hall, we noted comments that were heard several times.

Several people had been involved in groups in more than one setting and carried experiences from setting to another, sharing ideas and learning along the way. This includes people moving to a new place and starting groups.

Congregations use materials from other congregations, such as session plans. When these are adapted, increasingly acknowledgement is given to the original source.

Small Group Ministry was noted in planning calendars, such as, "I can't do it at this time because that is when my small group meets." Commitment to being part of the group is increasingly evident.

How have you shared and what have you received? Your presence and sharing in your own group is a gift of yourself, and an expression of openness to others. When have you talked about the importance of your group to your own life journey with someone, possibly encouraging them to participate? When have you given a testimonial about the experience? Or written an article for your congregation's newsletter?

Your thoughts about the strengths and challenges of Small Group Ministry, whether you have had groups for years or are just starting, and how small group ministry keeps people connected with the community can be shared in workshops and conference. You are invited to join SGM Network Facebook and interact with other participants. Inquiries that you have may be directed to office@smallgroupministry.net. We look forward to talking with people at the SGM Booth at General Assembly. This gives us ideas about trends and things that are evolving in Small Group Ministry.

New and renewing members of the UU Small Group Ministry Network receive a copy of the latest SGM Journal, along with *Implementing Small Group Ministry*, and are provided with information about the Network and the website. This is also an opportunity to make the personal connections that are so vital to enhancing small group ministry as it evolves. It also gives the Network an idea of resources

needed.

The Network is increasing the opportunity for members to interact. Information that accompanies your membership and renewal is added to the Profile of your program on the Members Section of the Network website. You will be given a code so that you can see the information that other members have submitted, and they can see your information. Members can follow-up with other members on items of interest.

-Taken from the Small Group Ministry Network Journal, Summer 2018