

SGM AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2018

Small Group Ministry was one of the Networking Sessions on Friday evening at General Assembly in Kansas City. During this session, Thandeka and Connie Grant introduced their new venture, Love Beyond Belief.

Like other forms of small group ministry, Love Beyond Belief small groups create within us and among us direct experiences of care, support, and love that prompt acts of lovingkindness.

What distinguishes Love Beyond Belief small groups from other forms of small group ministry? The inclusion of embodied practices and the deep awareness of emotion within the spiritual context. Love Beyond Belief small groups establish a setting in which the entire group holds each individual in an environment of love. This experience of Love Beyond Belief prompts acts of lovingkindness for self, others, and the world.

An embodied practice may be deep breathing, or guided meditation to a deeper place of focus. It is from this place that a sense of energy of love permeates sharing and interacting. See <http://revthandeka.org/lovebeyond-belief-thandeka.html> for the total program.

The Exhibit Hall Booth provides for a variety of conversations. Since 2013, over forty percent of the four hundred twenty-five congregations that are known to the Network to be involved with Small Group Ministry have connected at the GA SGM Network Booth, some for several years.

Several people from smaller congregations asked how Small Group Ministry could help them. This is a change from, "I'm from a small congregation, so we don't need SGM." Booth visitors also confirmed how Small Group Ministry created deeper connections within smaller congregations.

It was exciting to hear people who were part of SGM in one congregation talk about moving and experiencing SGM in another congregation. Some waited to see what the new congregation's program would be like. Others shared from their previous experience in their new location. And at least one used previous experience to start SGM in the new location. This is true networking!

That Small Group Ministry is part of daily life was evident in hearing people talk about "scheduling around" the time that their groups meet. People also mentioned resources that they have used in session plans, such as Heart to Heart, Soul Matters packets, and others. The question that was specifically raised by one person was, "What do we use after we use (a specific resource)?" We discussed the concept of creating their own program, using session plans and other resources from congregations that are on the Network website. So many options!

We look forward to seeing you at General Assembly in Spokane in 2019!

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