

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY: GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2018

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network

Small Group Ministry For These Times

General Assembly Networking Workshop

Friday, June 22, 2018, 7:00-8:30pm

Room: Convention Center #2502 A

Presenters: Rev. Helen Zidowecki, Rev. Thandeka, Rev. Constance L. Grant

GREETERS: Susan Hollister, Diana Dorroh

7pm INTRODUCTION

Helen Zidowecki

Welcome to the Group

Recording protocol – using the mic.

Handout: *Small Group Ministry: GA 2018*

WHERE WE ARE TODAY....Let's *celebrate* 20 years of Small Group Ministry

This is a model of small groups with deep meaning of *community and spiritual exploration*.

It is implemented by hundreds of congregations with varying names of the groups (Covenant Groups, Chalice Circles, for example).

It is where we engage with topics of *our lives, from our hearts*.

We continuously expand Small Group Ministry, remembering the small group itself as the *dynamic core*.

Read the reflections of some early leaders [Pages 3-6]

Share what Small Group Ministry means to you.

7: 15 pm WHAT'S NEXT.....Love Beyond Belief Thandeka and Constance Grant
identify and demonstrate what distinguishes Love Beyond Belief small group ministry programs from other forms of small group ministry: the inclusion of embodied practices and the deep awareness of feelings within a spiritual context. [Pages 7-8, attached]

7:45 pm THE ROADMAP.....

Helen Zidowecki

We are connected through a dynamic form of Unitarian Universalist literature from laity and clergy -- the Small Group Ministry Session Plans! There are more than a thousand plans on (or have links on) the Network website. Many more have not yet been shared.

There are several hundred UU congregations that are contributing to and using the Roadmap

8:00pm LET'S TALK.....

A conversation with the presenters as participants share their insights and questions, their hopes and dreams for Small Group Ministry in the 21st Century.

8:30PM ADJOURN You are invited to

- Read more information on these themes in SMALL GROUP MINISTRY: GA 2018
- VISIT THE SMALL GROUP MINISTRY BOOTH # 114. There are many resources for developing and sustaining Small Group Ministry. Meet people who are involved.
- SHARE your reflections about Small Group Ministry, and the content of this workshop on office@smallgroupministry.net

SMALL GROUP MINISTRY: GA 2018

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Your thoughts about the first 20 years of Small Group Ministry, and ideas presented here, may be shared with the Network on office@smallgroupministry.net. We look forward to hearing from you.

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

The descriptions of the model give the basic overview. Congregations implement the model, from listening to covenant, from sharing to engaging topics of life, and from affinity to diversity in group formation. Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry started in local congregations, with encouragement from early founders to evolve. This was done via networking. From the very beginning, twenty years ago, there was the intention of sharing among those involved in the creation of Small Group Ministry and Covenant Groups.

We invited early leaders of UU Small Group Ministry/Covenant Groups to give us a reflection on the evolution of SGM and the role of SGM for Unitarianism Universalism in addressing the questions posed for this GA:

Who and how are we called to be at this time, individually and collectively?

How are we called to act and to live?

How does our Unitarian Universalist legacy strengthen us in living out our mission? In what ways does our legacy present challenges and impediments to answering our call?

Following are responses that have been received.

You are invited to share your reflections of Small Group Ministry, whether you have been involved for twenty years or are just getting involved. Visit the GA Booth #114, or contact us at office@smallgroupministry.net.

LOOKING BACK ON SMALL GROUP MINISTRY - Rev. Glenn H. Turner

Rev. Glenn Turner introduced Small Group Ministry to the Northeast District of the UUA through the work of Rev. Carl George, an Evangelical Christian minister, on the “meta church” concept. Glenn is retired and lives in Portland, Maine

In 1997, I began studying the concept and practice of Small Group Ministry. It was largely practiced in evangelical churches. It had to be adapted to Unitarian Universalists. Two basic needs were met with small groups: community and spiritual exploration. How much UUs needed that focus was indicated by how quickly churches developed their own small group ministry programs. The Rev. Bob Hill, District Executive in the Southeast District of the UUA, spread the word with “Covenant Group News.” We gave workshops in our Districts and beyond.

The beauty of SGM was in keeping it simple. I suggested a format for the meetings with certain basic guidelines: meet twice monthly for two hours each time, assign trained facilitators to guide the sessions, involve the ministers in overseeing the program and meeting monthly with the facilitators. The structure of the meetings themselves was: Opening Words and Candle Lighting, (which some groups followed with a five minute meditation), about a 45 minute period for check-in/sharing, and a 45 minute period for the Focus Topic with Discussion questions, and then a brief time to express likes and wishes, ending with Closing Words and perhaps a group hug. This is basically the pattern which has been followed around the country. While it only takes a few questions to get a group started in a discussion; session plans with a number of questions which make it almost like a seminar and probably invites carrying the topic over in further meetings.

I’ve been a participant, or facilitator of a small group in four different churches. I’ve been involved with a small group in Auburn, Maine, for over ten years. There are some things I hoped or predicted would happen in these groups which didn’t. For various reasons, new groups were not generated out of them, the aspect of volunteering some sort of church or community service didn’t take hold, but a vital and enduring friendship circle gave support and encouragement to the members, several of whom have been in the group for seven or so years. Echoing the words of Carl George, who did extensive work with small group ministry: “This is the way we do it, unless we don’t do it that way.”

In the small group that my wife and I belong to, the personal issues that arose for us included aging, death of spouse, sibling, or parents, death of pets, divorce, strokes, broken bones, cancer, Parkinson’s Disease, retirement, marriage, the trials, tribulations, and triumphs of children and grand-children. There were not many topics we haven’t covered and the ones we repeat with new eyes and ears. We occasionally share a meal together. We care deeply for each other.

I believe that the success of small groups is enhanced by how much the minister of a congregation supports it. Optimum is a minister training the facilitators and meeting with them regularly. Much is lost if a small group meets only monthly. I believe it is important that all the groups follow the same format, that they don’t change the balance of time which should be devoted equally to the check-in and the topic. In the check-in, each member shares uninterrupted, until everyone has spoken. The SGM meetings are a sharing, not an opportunity to or debate an issue. While our small groups can be used to explore aspects of UUism, it’s not a setting for indoctrinating or convincing someone that some particular way of thinking is right. *In these times of political and social activism, with its increasing stridency, small groups provide a safe sanctuary where civility and respect for differences can be nurtured.*

FACING CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME – Peter Bowden

Peter Bowden, a co-founder of the UU Small Group Ministry Network, consults with UU congregations on integrating worship services, small group ministry, social media, and justice efforts. He brings his group work to the secular world through the Small Group Lab, helping corporations, schools, and other organizations harness the power of human connection through small groups! (See <http://www.uuplanet.org> and <http://www.smallgrouplab.com>.)

I remember the first time I read the term "small group ministry" in a UU context. It was in 2001. It was an announcement for a workshop with the Rev. Helen Zidowecki and Rev. Calvin Dame at the Star Island Lifespan Religious Education Conference. Their congregation had been doing small group ministry with adults. The workshop title was a question: "Can we do Small Group Ministry with Children and Youth?"

Reading that question I was ecstatic! I had been using small group ministry as the foundation of our youth group at the First Unitarian Church of Providence, RI. We explored what we called Deep and Profound Mongo Cosmic Questions, and over time grew from 8 to over 60 registered teenagers. I often heard that our youth felt like they were their true selves in our group. Imagine if all Unitarian Universalists had that experience?

Understanding the transformative power of small groups brought me to that workshop, and it drove our collaboration as we launched the UU Small Group Ministry Network. Once we put resources online, it made small group ministry spread across our association like wildfire! Together, we have transformed thousands and thousands of lives. We have much to celebrate, but I think we are called to do more. We've only scratched the surface of our potential, and the world needs us to use it fully.

Our world is experiencing accelerating change. Disruptive technologies and our disrupted climate are poised to make injustice spiral out of control. We have always needed each other, but never more than over the coming years. To be there for each other, we need everything we've learned from 20 years of small group ministry. We are witnessing the social fabric of society splinter as it becomes easier for people to turn from each other to social media, opioids, and a thousand forms of distraction, entertainment, and micro affirmations on-demand.

Meanwhile, climate change is fueling unnatural disasters, causing mass deaths, and driving mass migrations. And as if that were not enough, artificial intelligence and robotics are on track to render much of the human workforce obsolete. It sounds like science fiction, but it's already in the works.

These issues are hard to face and are staggering in their scope and urgency. I know. But, that is why we need to take small group ministry to the next level. Small group ministry can build leaders, deepen understanding, strengthen commitment, inspire activism, grow our numbers, and multiply our ministry capacity. We can use it with children, youth, and adults to create the lifespan ministry model we so desperately need.

Moving beyond our congregation's walls, we can harness what we've learned to engage our communities with today's justice issues and their underlying spiritual, moral, and ethical questions. Small group ministry can be Unitarian Universalism's engine as we work to face the challenges of our time. To use it, we must take our calling, the power of this ministry, and our potential seriously.

REFLECTION ON SMALL GROUP MINISTRY (((AMPLIFIED))) – Rev. Marti Keller

Rev. Marti Keller worked with Small Group Ministry/Covenant Groups in Georgia, and was an early member of the UU Small Group Ministry Network Board. She invited the Network to join with UU Women's Federation in a GA Workshop, "Circles of Reflection: Engaging Women in Justice Work" in Phoenix, June 2012.

The beginning of my UU small group ministry work, my own participation and my evangelism (not a word I use often as a Jewish UU) for their transformative role in binding us together, coming to know and respect each other, recharging our souls, parallels the formal beginnings of this Small Group Ministry Network.

As a lay minister in our Atlanta congregation and a person on the brink of professional ministry, I was part of what we called a credo group temporarily formed to help each other develop our own personal statements of faith, much as our Coming of Age youth do. Of the four created for this purpose, one continued because we were not done with the process of discern or simply spending this intense and amazing time together. So the four of us and a few of our partners kept meeting at a local bakery café one Saturday morning a month, talking over the espresso machine, the coffee grinder and the soccer teams there for post game cocoa and sweet rolls.

Later we settled on meeting in a home one morning a month. And with some change in membership, as people moved on literally and figuratively, we were together some 20 years. The resources that began to come out of the pioneers in this small group ministry movement gave us readings and themes for this gathering, augmented by our own, as we rotated leadership. The manuals and newsletters and later website were essential to the success of what became a team of lay leaders in the more than two dozen groups I helped to form for this congregation as a minister, groups gathered by age and stage, gender identity, affinity and geography. Called covenant groups, bound by promises of right relationship, confidentiality, active listening, and suspended judgment. Bound together in a spirit of trust and belonging.

In addition to working with this UU community over a decade, I set up covenant groups in a small Georgia mountains congregation; met with interested lay leaders from other UU societies; as a board president and now minister with the UU Women's Federation, cheered on and promoted small group materials around reproductive justice; served on the UU Small Group Ministry Network Board with people as geeky as I was, as I still am about the up close and personal benefits of what psychiatrist and author M. Scott Peck has described as "a safe place precisely because no one is attempting to heal or convert you, to fix you, to change you... Free to seek your own psychological and spiritual health, free to become your own whole and holy self." Abidingly committed to creating what Parker Palmer has called circles of trust. I am still committed to these circles of trust that Palmer envisions as places where we show up and speak our truths, help each person listen to their inner teacher.

My small group work takes me into my own community: In a group called Human Conversations Atlanta, where out of fear and fury people found themselves through Face Book after the last presidential election. A place that for nearly a year an intergenerational (but mostly young parents) met to name and share their resistance, their resilience.

I am committed to amplifying our UU small group ministry movement out in the world, because as one younger woman writes: "we'll be safer and stronger together."

SHARED MINISTRY --Unitarian Universalist Community Church, Augusta, ME

The Unitarian Universalist Community Church was among the first congregations to develop Small Group Ministry programs. This transformed the congregation, and continues as a critical part in moving forward to face the challenges of changing times.

It started in 1997 when Rev. Glenn Turner, Northeast District Minister, introduced the Unitarian Universalist ministers in Maine to the work of Rev. Carl George, an evangelical Christian church consultant with the concept of “meta-church” or transformational church. Glenn presented the idea of covenant groups at workshops in the Northeast District. His talk to UUCC leadership was so compelling and made so much sense. We needed that kind of connection and intimacy in our church. The minister, Calvin Dame, was originally opposed to the project, but subsequently took opportunities to speak about Small Group Ministry in various venues around the country. After over a year of study, groups started in April 1999. We named the concept "Small Group Ministry" to describe what really happens.

In 2011 we felt the need to consider anew the role of Small Group Ministry within our congregation, including changes over the years in the *congregation* and in the *Small Group Ministry model itself*. On Saturday September 17, 2011, twenty-eight people gathered to explore what having this ministry provides to us individually and to our congregation. *What makes it different from other aspects of church life?*

Our vision of Small Group Ministry focused on relationships and how they are 'broadened', 'strengthened' and 'deepened' by participation. Qualities of Small Group Ministry have permeated our church culture, most notably an increase in civility at committee and membership meetings. We noted that unlikely friendships have developed through group participation. We have become clearer about what being a Unitarian Universalist means to us and have learned to speak up about it in many settings. The opportunity to minister to one another through group participation is a gift for both giver and receiver. We are grateful for the ability and willingness of groups to welcome and integrate those who are new to our community. In a very brief time we identified a wealth of gifts available through Small Group Ministry.

Our small groups have provided a connection to the larger church both for members who attend on a regular basis and for those who maintain a rather loose affiliation with UUCC. Some group members have developed comfort in leadership roles in the larger community, some have extended connections into other parts of the community life, and some continued connections that might not have happened without the group. As one leader expressed it, “The small group keeps us tethered to the church in a way that worked for the particular individual.” For example, Small Group Ministry provided a way for two religious educators to maintain contact with the congregation after they had resigned and were professionally stepping back to allow the new religious educator to assume leadership, one in 1999 and one in 2005. Both were invited to be part of a small group. Both continue in small groups and are involved on the SGM Committee.

We did not keep SGM to ourselves. Cheryl Ring notes that “In the next few years after UUCC launched SGM, I worked with Calvin Dame (minister) and other people in our church to make any number of presentations about SGM. I can't remember all of them, but they included General Assemblies (Nashville 2000, Cleveland 2001), and churches in Maine, Massachusetts, California, Illinois and New Brunswick.” We have appreciated the opportunity to share session plans and articles with the Network.

WHAT'S NEXT

LOVE BEYOND BELIEF SMALL GROUPS IN A UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONTEXT

Rev. Constance L Grant and Rev. Thandeka present this introduction to a new initiative to launch the next stage of small group ministry work for UUs. See : <http://revthandeka.org/love-beyond-belief-thandeka.html> for the total program.

Love Beyond Belief: Insight, reflection, and action, guided by compassion

Unitarian Universalists have a shared set of spiritual and faith development practices that enable us to side with love. The 2005 Commission on Appraisal (COA) Report, *Engaging Our Theological Diversity*, called this shared set of practices “personal experience.” The COA found that “almost universally among UUs, personal experience is considered the most important source of religious conviction.”

Theists, for example, cite personal experience to affirm the sanctity of God. Humanists, on the other hand, use personal experience to affirm the sanctity of human life. Others among us use personal experiences to affirm their Pagan, Buddhist, agnostic, Christian, or Judaic claims about the fundamental nature, value, and meaning of their lives. And still others use personal experience to define themselves simply as Unitarian Universalist. All of these personal experiences are the content of our everyday lives as we practice the heart of our faith.

The interdependent web of all existence (our UU seventh principle) can be understood to affirm the actual experience of feeling connected to all of life at once: feeling awe, wonder, and love of life itself. The access point to this state of consciousness isn't thinking; it's feeling. In this interior domain of human experience, one feels enlivening compassion, care, love, and resonance with all of life. Accounts of this inner life of the self become stories about triggered emotional values (affects).

Like other forms of small group ministry such as Covenant Groups and Chalice Circles, Love Beyond Belief small groups create within us and among us direct experiences of care, support, and love that prompt acts of lovingkindness. They are a practice of insight, reflection, and action guided by compassion. Each step begins with the discovery of connections that create awe, care, and joy. The discoveries heal broken hearts, mend injured souls, and calm restless minds because unconditional love is felt. They help us develop a deeper sense of who we are and what we can do together. They create the actual experience of Love Beyond Belief.

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.

Love Beyond Belief small groups

I. Group focus: Groups may form around a particular affinity (such as young adults or parents), interest (such as mitigating climate change), or activity (such as gardening). For some groups, the focus might be on extended check-in; for others, the focus might be on a series of topics chosen by the group. Any group might choose to shift focus after a time, based on the consensus of the group.

II. A facilitator guides each session. Facilitators also meet together regularly following the Love Beyond Belief small group model.

III. The group formulates a covenant of relationship, including holding each other's thoughts and feelings with respect, welcoming of new members, and service. (Suggested questions for formulating a covenant: Why are we here? What is important to us about how we are with each other?)

IV. Suggested "small group" size: no more than 10 participants.

V. The group meets regularly (at least once a month, ideally twice a month).

VI. Each group decides what its group activity of service to the wider community will be (linked to a chosen topic or not), and then every few months participates in the chosen activity together.

VI. Session format

A. Opening

Centering Music

Centering reading calling the group together (e.g., #418 in the grey hymnal):
Unison or responsive

Lighting a candle or chalice

Embodied practice: Breath meditation of slowly inhaling and exhaling at least five times (led by the facilitator) and then saying together "Thank you, breath of life."

B. Check-in: What's going on in your life right now? How are you? How is it with your spirit?

The Practice: Deep listening, without comment, as each person speaks. Each person should count to five silently after the person has spoken. Then the next person speaks. Persons speak when they are ready to speak, rather than follow a protocol in which the check-ins move in a linear direction.

C. Focus: Experiencing, learning, discussion, reflection, planning, and action around the group's chosen focus.

D. Check-out: How do you feel right now? How are you?

E. Closing

Closing reading and music

Extinguish candle or chalice

ROADMAP

We are connected through a dynamic form of Unitarian Universalist literature from laity and clergy -- the Small Group Ministry Session Plans! There are more than a thousand plans on (or have links on) the Network website. Many more have not yet been shared.

There are several hundred UU congregations that are or have been involved with Small Group Ministry in the last twenty years. One of the greatest successes of Small Group Ministry is the number and range of people who are sharing Session Plans and information from their experiences.

SESSION PLANS: UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST LITERATURE

By Rev. Helen Zidowecki, UU Small Group Ministry Network, *CGN, March 2018, adapted.*

The session plans for group meetings call all of us to *intimacy*, learning how to be together, and *ultimacy*, going deeper in topics of life and witness. Session plans have been created by clergy and laity, and are from congregations of all sizes, varied geographic and demographic characteristics, and settings within and outside of congregations. Small Group Ministry provides the process for deepening our listening from the heart, learning from the experiences of others. Our divergent world views both complement and clash. The wording of the session plans guide us to engage in and receive new insights, and we hone the ability to share in such a way that others can hear what we have to offer.

Let's start considering Small Group Ministry (by whatever name locally) session plans as a form of Unitarian Universalist literature that is accessible and usable, and continually being written and shared. By their very use, writers and participants are influencing Unitarian Universalist thought.

How many Small Group Ministry/Covenant Group session plans are there?

Over eight hundred in the UU Small Group Ministry website session plan directory, with more sessions for posting sent in continuously. There are several hundred more in the session plan collections that are linked from the website. Numerous session plans that have been created locally and not shared yet. So, how many? We estimate several thousand.

Who writes these session plans? The origin of a session plan should be noted, including the congregation and an individual. This includes parts that are created for a session plan by people in the local setting. We need to acknowledge the contributions to UU thought and spirituality. Several hundred people have been involved in writing session plans, as noted on sessions that have been sent for inclusion on the Network website. There are many more who have contributed. This may be a team of writers in a congregation. Also, small groups themselves develop session plans. Writers include people who have been life-long UUs, and those who are newly exposed to UUism.

Ministers have frequently been authors of such session plans, writing on their own or with lay congregants. This was particularly true in the early development of Small Group Ministry. Ministers publish collections of meditations and sermons. Will published session plans be the next type of published collection – for ministers and laity? Some congregations have compilations of session plans for distribution and sale. It is exciting to see session plans being developed based on a session plan written by another person, with acknowledgement.

Why are session plans written? There may be a story behind a session plan or a specific reason for writing it. Sometimes notes accompany the plans that are sent in for inclusion on this website. These show that the session plans develop from our experiences, literally, or engaging with a topic that impacts our lives. These notes also may provide nice historical reference for congregational life.

Is the **format** the same for all writers and congregations?

Basics: are delineated in Basic Elements and Implementing Small Group Ministry, (<http://www.smallgroupministry.net/basicelements.html>)

Session plans include local preference. Some session plans are written to be used spontaneously; others have pre-session readings or questions for reflection. Groups have various ways of interacting to allow openness without interference. Some groups have the check-in/sharing before the opening words, though most use the opening words to move into the sharing. The variations can be seen by looking at a variety of sessions on the Network website (<http://www.smallgroupministry.net/public/sessions/index.html>)

Benefits to writers

Developing a session plan with a broad introduction to the topic and questions that open into new visions is a creative act. It allows participation from all levels and corners of the community and denomination.

Considerable thought and intention are required to present an idea so that another person can connect with it. You write the session without knowing the result. This is precisely the difference between a session plan and a lecture. Set the stage but not the result. Invariably I find that perceptions and ideas that I never would have imagined emerge from what I have written. Small group ministry sessions encourage a sense of openness and adventure.

What topics are included?

We are continually trying to organize the sessions for ready accessibility. Some of the broad categories are:

- Life and life issues
- Spiritual journey, beliefs
- Community relations and life, covenanting
- Social Justice, witness
- SGM group practices and dynamics
- Celebrations

These are always changing as we write for a new time and focus.

What are your thoughts about Session Plans as a form of UU Literature? Share your thoughts at the UU SGM Network Booth #114 or send them for publication in Covenant Group News.

cgeditor@smallgroupministry.net

WHO IS INVOLVED WITH SMALL GROUP MINISTRY?

The UUSGM Network has been noting involvement of individuals and congregations in Small Group Ministry. Our incomplete counts show this involvement:

Congregations: Over 300 hundred congregations known to the Network
Session plans: Over 1000 session plans on/linked to the Network website
Authors of articles: over 400 articles involving at least at least 200 individuals
Subscribers to Covenant Group News (CGN): 600
Network Face Book: 263.

While there is duplication in this count, it gives an idea of involvement. We are continuing to refine the data, including looking at who is involved – who is missing. And we have yet to include data from the UUA website and other sources!

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry is a living example of networking that started within congregations sharing as the concept evolved, adding experience and understanding to the basic model and sharing successes and challenges of Small Group Ministry as part of Unitarian Universalist life.

Over three hundred congregations have been involved, as evident in present or previous membership in the Network, submission of session plans and articles for the Network website or publications, namely *Covenant Group News* and the *SGM Journal*, and conversations at the Network booths at General Assembly. Electronic media is a major networking tool with 600 subscribers to CGN and 263 Face Book members. The Network website (www.smallgroupministry.org) is a major resource for networking, accomplished by sharing session plans and articles, and listing events.

Over two hundred people have written articles for the UU Small Group Ministry Network publications, namely CGN and the SGM Journal. In addition, a number of writings are included on the UUA website (<https://www.uua.org/small-group>). Articles appear in congregational newsletters, and there are various books and collections. There have also been workshops, conferences and institutes in congregations; regional conferences; and denomination-wide events.

Several hundred people have been involved in writing session plans. Originally, ministers were frequently the authors of such session plans, writing on their own or with lay congregants. The over 1000 session plans on the Network website have been written increasingly by laity. With the availability of session plans, such as on the Network website, there is an opportunity to start with a session plan and develop it more or differently, with attribution to the original writer. It is exciting to see a notation such as “This session is based on that of (original author).” The attention to the gift of the original session plan and the acknowledgment are affirming parts of networking.

Networking challenges: Increased inclusivity and awareness of the range of diversity

1. We frequently measure impact by the number of groups and number of participants in those groups. Counting the number of people who *engage with SGM* in the small groups would give a broader picture of impact. Everyone who comes in contact with SGM is part of the networking. Using statistics to define or demonstrate effectiveness or impact undermines the impact.
2. With the diversity of writing about Small Group Ministry, there are still voices that are not being heard. Let’s write session plans with the background question in mind: Who is included in the audience for this session? Who is excluded by either the topic or the writing? Let’s acknowledge when a session plan is written for a target audience.
3. The diversity that the broad range of writers presents will naturally bring session plans that differ in focus or perspective. We may tend to dismiss the writings that we do not agree with, rather than consider differing opinions as new awareness or new learnings. This goes for writing style as well as content.



UU SMALL GROUP MINISTRY NETWORK

*Creating healthy congregations and a vital Unitarian Universalist movement
with Covenant Groups and Small Group Ministry*

Network Items

Website at www.smallgroupministry.net with access to resources, session plans, articles

Publications: *Covenant Group News (CGN)*, the *SGM Journal*, other items

Small Group Ministry Network Membership connects individuals and institutions interested and involved with Small Group Ministry and Covenant Groups. *Your membership acknowledges your contribution to strengthening Unitarian Universalism.*

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP:

- Members are subscribed to the *SGM Journal* and receive the latest issue on joining. Articles from the *SGM Journal* are published on the website six months after *Journal* publication.
- Members receive the latest edition of *Implementing Small Group Ministry*. Congregational members may forward copies of the *Journal* and *Implementing* to members of their congregation or organization. Individual members use the publications themselves. (*Implementing* is available in print or CD at <http://www.smallgroupministry.net/forsale.html>)
- Discounts on Network publications and Network events are available.
- Consultation in program development is available from experienced leaders.
- Members are part of a Members Section of the Network website, where members share information about their programs.

The Small Group Ministry Network provides support to UU congregations through networking, training opportunities, and new resource development.

Resource: *Ten Years of UU Small Group Ministry, UU SGM Network, June 2009*: Imagine joining a group that was meaningful to you. Then imagine finding that its beginnings and development is even richer than you thought. That is what happened when we reviewed the archives of the early years (1998-2004) of the Small Group Ministry and Covenant Groups. Included are writings by Rev. Bob Hill and others in the *Covenant Group News*, several classic articles and formative conference proceedings. <http://www.smallgroupministry.net/forsale.html>

Reflections:

Rev. Glenn Turner: I am impressed with the work of the Small Group Ministry Network in connecting congregations and small groups with vital resources. Again, my advice is to keep the format simple and consistent, open your hearts, share from the depths of your souls, listen, and be open and respectful to each other's opinions and experience.

Peter Bowden: I'm grateful for all who have worked to bring small group ministry to this point, from the dedicated leaders of the UU Small Group Ministry Network to those facilitating groups across our association. Together may we use our knowledge, skills, and passion to continue this revolution.