



Introduction to Small Group Ministry

Goals of Small Group Ministry are to develop a growing network of small groups that:

1. Draw us into mutual ministry
2. Strengthen our congregation
3. Deepen our understanding of Unitarian-Universalist principles and values
4. Continuously develop lay leadership
5. Challenge us to action and spiritual growth
6. Express our principles and values in the community
7. Help members identify their own calling and expression of lay ministry

What the process of the SGM gatherings usually consists of:

1. Lighting the chalice
2. Opening ritual (song, chant, responsive reading)
3. Brief check-in (optional)
4. Reading(s) with evocative questions
5. Silent moment
6. Sharing on topic (radical listening)
7. Discussion (optional)
8. Close out sharing (ritual way to close: reading, song, silence, giving thanks)
9. Likes and wishes (optional)
10. Closing ritual
11. Informal socializing

The responsibilities of leaders are:

1. Gather the group. Explain the rules and responsibilities of group members when a group is forming and meeting for the first time. Also remind group of responsibilities as required (such as when a new member joins).
2. Promote awareness of the programs, activities, and governance of the church.
3. Attend monthly Leadership Community Gathering.
4. Facilitate the group process and interactions of group members, including defining the topic such that there is a meeting focus.
5. Encourage and facilitate the group's stages, including adding members, releasing members, and birthing.
6. Encourage mutual care-giving.
7. Call group members when they miss a meeting or do not call in to state they are not attending.
8. Contact minister(s) or pastoral care associate(s) when the leader has knowledge of a situation requiring support beyond the scope of the SGM group.
9. Keep meetings on track: Gently intervene when a member talks too long. Encourage quiet members to speak or ask for opinions as appropriate. Keep track of time (or have someone else help track time) for each section or portion of the meeting.
10. Facilitate choosing the topic for each session.
11. Facilitate annual group self-assessment.
12. Look for potential new members for the group and invite them. (The SGM Council assists with matching groups and new members.)
13. Look for potential new leaders within the group and within the congregation.

Leaders and co-leaders may not:

1. Allow the group to function as a therapy session. (A therapy group focuses on advice giving and personal problem solving.)
2. Promote philosophies that are contrary to UU principles and values.
3. Allow disrespectful behavior within the group.
4. Use the group as a platform for the leader's own perspective.
5. Dominate the group.

Each group member is expected to make certain commitments to

1. The group

- a. Maintain basic UU principles.
- b. Fully participate as you are able and in your own mode of expression.
- c. Be present in mind, body, and spirit.
- d. Be open to knowing others; be open to knowing yourself.
- e. One person speaks at a time, while all others listen respectfully.
- f. Maintain confidentiality when requested and when appropriate.
- g. Respect each other by asking permission to give feedback.
- h. Minister to each other.
- i. Welcome new members to the group.
- j. Commit to attend meetings for at least 6 months.
- k. Begin and end meetings on time.
- l. Let the leader and/or co-leader know when you cannot attend.

2. The church

- a. Folks participating in SGM should share, as appropriate, their experience with new members and others interested in the SGM concept.
- b. It is not a requirement to make a commitment to work on community projects to participate in a small group. However, it is believed that working as a group on community projects will enhance the SGM experience.
- c. A participant does not need to be a member of the church.

The group is expected to make certain commitments to each member:

1. Provide the opportunity to fully participate.
2. Provide the opportunity to be heard.
3. Contact a member when they do not attend.
4. Group interaction will reflect the type of activity: radical listening versus group discussion.
5. Provide a period for personal discussions after the meeting

The Small Group Ministry Council

1. The SGM Council consists of: At least one minister and representatives of teams (content, leadership, and logistics teams).
2. The SGM Council supports and guides the SGM.
3. Any individual may provide feedback to the SGM Council at any time