

What is Small Group Ministry Peggy Herbert

What is Small Group Ministry? They are intentional lay-led small groups that deepen and expand the ministry of a congregation. These groups offer a way for us to connect with one another, to explore issues around meaning and purpose and help us tap into core values which then can inspire action. They also have the potential to grow our church in numbers, in leadership, in cooperation and in generosity.

Some UU churches call them Chalice Circles, some call them Spiritual Enrichment Groups.. Here in Concord we call them Covenant Groups. No matter what they are called, they all share vision of offering a safe place where we can share with one another profound questions and feelings. Where we each can speak and be heard. They are not support groups—although we do support one another nor are they intellectual discussion groups.

Groups share a similar format; They each have a facilitator who guides the discussion. There is an opening reading, lighting a chalice, a time to check-in with one another followed by a topic to discuss. In some churches every group has the same topic. In others, each group generates their own topics.

Our church continues to be in the forefront of this movement . Many UU churches began Covenant groups after 9/11 which is when ours started. I recently talked with people from a 600 member church in VT and a 400 member church in NY. Both began when we did. Both had between 10-12 groups. We initially had 7 groups. These other two churches now have 3 groups each. We have 13---one of those being the family covenant group that really counts as two or three groups. We are doing something right!

People get different things from their covenant groups. You will hear from a few of them. I'm sure others of you could tell other stories. For myself, I'd have to say that without my initial covenant group, I don't think I would be an active part of this church today. It gave me a way to connect with others and to reconnect to the church.

If you think you'd like to join a group or have questions, stop by the Covenant Group table in the Parlor after the service and get a registration form and one of our brochures . Or join us on March 12 for a potluck followed by a covenant group session. This evening is open to current covenant group members who want a chance to connect with people in other groups as well as those of you who are just curious what a group is like. There is a sign-up sheet at the table.