

April 23, 2008

Dear RE Teachers and Assistants,

Every year the RE program sends out a survey to the volunteers in order to get feedback about their experiences working within the program. This survey is an enormously valuable tool in evaluating our progress and in promoting the growth of our program. Below you will find this year's survey. I am asking that you fill it out and **return it to me, by mail, in person, or via email, by June 1, 2008**. I want you to feel free to be completely honest and constructive in your feedback and to call me or see me in person if you have something you would like to discuss in depth. Our volunteers are the backbone of the RE program and their input is necessary for our continued success with our young UUs! Thank you so very much for all you have given. My first year as the DRE has been a true joy and much of that goes to our amazing volunteers.

Take care,

April L. Fritts
Director of Religious Education

RE Volunteer Questionnaire 2007 - 2008

Name _____
Class _____
Curriculum _____

This year's curricula were: *Celebrating Me and My World, Treasure Hunting Take 2, Spirit of Adventure, Holidays and Holy Days, The New You the Creator, YRUU*

Please feel free to elaborate on answers.

☺ We have continued to use the Teacher Logbooks. They include attendance sheets, schedules, and a place to record classroom notes from week to week. What did you think of this idea? Did you find this system helpful? Would you like us to continue the Teacher Logbooks?

☺ As we continue to evaluate curricula, your feedback is the most valuable of all. How did you like your curriculum this year? Did it work for you and/or for the kids? Why or why not?

☺ Were your supplies and resources adequate? Is there anything we should get to improve the supply/resource situation?

☺ How well did you team work out scheduling? Would you rather schedule it all at the beginning of the year or in half-year intervals? Do you like working as a 3 teacher/3 assistant team?

☺ Did you feel supported by the DRE and/or the RE Committee? Is there anything more that you could be given to feel supported?

☺ If you used the Montessori building for class, how did that work out? Taking the kids over there? Finding what you needed? Classroom space and logistics? For your age group?

☺ As UUFHC works towards a small group ministry model, I am interested in developing small groups for the teachers that would work in place of the usual August Teachers' Forum. This would mean meeting occasionally to be fed spiritually, interact with your team and cover logistical needs. I have included an attachment at the end of the survey that explains this model in more detail. What are your thoughts on this format?

☺ Is there a topic that you would like to see featured at the next Teacher Gatherings – regardless of the format?

🌀 What did you like best about teaching this year?

🌀 What would you want to be different about your experience if you were to teach again?

🌀 We have been using an RE Liaison System to assist with teacher needs before class to allow the DRE to greet families. How did this work for you?

🌀 We also asked teachers and assistants to show up by 9:45 am and to sign in. How did this work for you?

🌀 We continued with efforts to improve the classroom experience, for example removing the supplies every week to minimize usage and adding clean-up supplies and wipes for the kids. Did these get used? What other ways could the classroom be more effectively set-up?

🌀 Did you have any concerns with children being picked up on time from RE?

🌀 Is there anything else you would like to add?

☺ We truly appreciate the teaching you did this year and we hope you would like to teach or assist again. Would you?

☺ Would you like to teach the same age group?

☺ Or a particular curriculum:

Pre-K: *We Are Many, We Are One* – UU Identity

Grades K – 1: *Creating Home* – New online curriculum on UU Identity (can be viewed at <http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/index.shtml>)

Grades 2 – 3: *Moral Tales* - New online curriculum on UU Identity (can be viewed at <http://www.uua.org/religiouseducation/curricula/tapestryfaith/index.shtml>)

Grades 4 – 5: *Toolbox of Faith* – New online curriculum on UU Identity

Grades 6 – 8: *Neighboring Faiths*- World Religions

Grades 9 – 12: *Coming of Age, YRUU, The Gospel According to the Simpsons*

Pre-K thru Grade 5: Once a month Children’s Worship (second Sunday of the month)

Once more, thank you for all you have given of your time and your resources. I truly appreciate your passion for our youth!



© The article below can be read, along with its links, at <http://www.smallgroupministry.net/start/index.html>

Getting Started with Small Group Ministry

By [Peter Bowden](#) (c) 2007
[UU PLANET Ministry & Media](#)
Co-Founder UU SGM Network

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What is Small Group Ministry?

When the terms "Small Group Ministry" and "Covenant Groups" were introduced to the Unitarian Universalist Association in the late 1990's many people said, "Hey, we have some small groups meeting in our congregation. Guess we've got small group ministry!" Time and time again I meet leaders in congregations who are working with small groups and think they are doing what I mean by small group ministry. Below is my definition and resources I personally recommend you start with. Note that there are many wonderful kinds of groups meeting and ministering in our congregations. I value the majority of them. However many are not what I am talking about when I say Small Group Ministry. This leads to a lot of confusion so let me clearly state my definition.

Peter Bowden's Definition of Small Group Ministry

Small Group Ministry a way of "doing church" which strives to deepen and expand the ministry of a congregation using an intentional system of lay led small groups. Imagine all that your congregation is trying to accomplish, everything your minister, staff, leaders and members are called to do as a community. We have learned that we can design lay led and clergy supported small groups to accomplish this work and ministry. At the heart of healthy congregations and life/world changing ministries we find 1) strong relationships, 2) engagement with meaningful issues, 3) leadership/leadership development, and 4) inspired action. You might think of Small Group Ministry not as a new program, but an alternative model for doing what Unitarian Universalist congregations have been doing for years.

How do you start a small group ministry?

Step one is to do your homework. Congregations who start too fast end up regretting it. You have my personal guarantee on that point. There are many ways congregations implement small group ministries. How you build your culture of small group ministry, the purpose for groups, and how you train and support group leaders will determine whether your group ministry thrives.

As you work on developing your ministry, remember not to work in a vacuum. Talk to the person on your district's staff who has small group ministry in their portfolio. Talk colleagues with small group ministries. Look to congregations you respect and interview their leadership. Take the time to bring in an outside consultant to work with your team. Working with someone who knows this ministry inside and out can save you massive amounts of time. If you can't find a consultant or trainer in your area contact someone (like myself) who offers independent consulting/training.

Check with your district office for the best person to support you. [More on consulting/training.](#)

Resource suggestions to start with

My #1 recommended resource for those wanting to start a congregation wide small

group ministry -- a group program that is generally focused on expanding and deepening the work and ministry of the church -- is Glenn Turner's paper *Designing and Implementing a "Small Group Ministry" Focus for Your Congregation* by the Rev. Glenn H. Turner. In this paper Rev. Turner gives a general overview of small group ministry, a specific plan for studying the topic, and suggestions on designing and launching your own program.

- [#1 Designing and Implementing a "Small Group Ministry" Focus for Your Congregation](#) by the Rev. Glenn H. Turner.

Again, heed the words of the Rev. Bob Hill. **Speed kills.** If you try to launch or grow a program too quickly you will run into problems. Take the time to study, contact other congregations. Don't make decisions until you have learned what the terrain is like, including the common pitfalls. We now know what makes a small group ministry thrive, bumble along or flop.

After you have a basic handle on what Small Group Ministry is (from Glenn Turner's paper) I'd work with an "exploratory group" or as Glenn calls it, an "implementation team", and study the following material. At a minimum make sure you have read Glenn's paper, Bob Hill's book, and the resources by Calvin Dame.

- [#2 Calvin Dame's Small Group Ministry resources](#)
- [#3 Bob Hill's book, "the Complete Guide to Small Group Ministry," and other resources from Bob Hill.](#)

I would also recommend reading at LEAST the following three non-UU resources. Our UU literature is not complete. It is essential - I think - that you hear Andy Stanley's argument for being a RELATIONAL CHURCH, that you learn how to DESIGN COACHING STRUCTURES necessary for growing healthy groups, and that you are exposed to Carl George's vision and passion. Carl George's work inspired our UU small group movement.

- #1 [Creating Community: Five Keys to Building a Small Group Culture](#) by Andy Stanley
- #2 [Coaching Life-Changing Small Group Leaders: A Practical Guide for Those Who Lead and Shepherd Small Group Leaders](#) by Bill Donahue
- #3 [The Coming Church Revolution: Empowering Leaders for the Future](#) by Carl F. George

Don't stop there. Keep reading...

In addition to these UU resources, make sure you take the time to read the resources by denominations that have been working for years to master "doing church" via small groups. Below are my recommendations.

- [Recommended Small Group Ministry reading list](#)
Here is my list of books I think you should read. Should you read all of them? Depends on how well you do with reading Christian resources. There is great wisdom in these books.
- There are many other great resources on our site.
[Explore our resource page.](#)

- The UUA has a growing collection of Small Group Ministry resources on its website.
Visit the [UUA's Small Group Ministry Page](#).

It isn't rocket science, but it is harder than it looks

Small group ministry is not rocket science, but it is a lot more complex than one would think. I often talk about it in terms of being like an iceberg, what you see above the surface is held up by what you don't see. If you don't take the time to learn what is under the surface, all those things that need to happen to support this ministry, it is more likely than not that your small group ministry will sink instead of grow.

In faith,
Peter

Peter Freedman Bowden

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