

Small Group Ministries Annual Report 2017-2018

Coordinators: Essjay Foulkrod, Sally Barney, under the guidance of Rev. Helfer

Affinity Groups:

- Women's Spirituality and Creativity Circle - disbanded autumn 2017
- interest has been expressed in beginning a group on death and dying questions to explore

Short term Spiritual Reflection groups:

- Anatomy of Peace, led by Barbara Holtzman, Summer 2017

Covenant Groups:

- Two active groups, 8-10 members each
- ongoing outreach to offer new groups included "Sample Covenant group Experience" offered April '18, led by Sally Barney
- some new interested parties, but difficult to organize due to variety of schedules

The following is general and specific info on the SGM program.

Respectfully submitted by Sally Barney

- Covenant Groups - - - Affinity Groups - - - Short Term Reflection Groups -

Small Group Ministries (SGM) are small gatherings with the intent of deepening connections with one another through spiritual exploration. The format includes a theme or topic, and mindful practices of deep listening, supported by co-facilitation. They can be drop-in groups, or include a commitment for regular attendance, depending on the intention of the gathering.

Since Rev. David Helfer came to UUCSC, he's been working with SGM coordinators Sally Barney and Essjay Foulkrod to develop a new framework for offering a variety of opportunities for Small Group Ministries, including supporting our established "Small Group Ministry Groups" (now known as "***Covenant Groups***").

Beneath this SGM umbrella are two other kinds of groups: ***Affinity Groups*** and, periodically, ***Short Term Spiritual Reflections Groups***. All serve to enrich our experience in the UUCSC community.

* Rev. Helfer has pointed out that committees, book study groups and social gatherings do not fit into the SGM category, as they are not marked by the format characteristics above.

Affinity Groups

Affinity Groups are characterized by the intent of deepening connections with one another through spiritual exploration in the context of a common spiritual path interest, life experience, or life theme. The format includes a theme and mindful practices of deep listening, supported by co-facilitation.

They can have a more flexible approach than Covenant Groups, in terms of number or frequency of meetings, whether an attendance commitment is built in, or whether "drop-ins" would work, depending on the focus of the group.

Examples of Affinity Groups would be Women's Spirituality Circle, Men's Group, Healthy Aging, LGBTQ, Parents of Young Children, Parents of Teens, UU Buddhists, Earth Centered Spirituality Group.

(Men's Breakfast and Women's WOW Lunch are considered social gatherings)

Short Term Spiritual Reflections Groups

These are similar to Covenant Groups (*see other side*), offering the opportunity to experience the connections generated by sharing spiritual exploration in a small group, but in this case participants only commit to meeting for 6-8 consecutive weeks (or 6-8 meetings). They could be based on a particular topic, or a different topic could be explored at each meeting.

~ *see other side for info about Covenant groups* ~

Covenant Groups

(formerly known as Small Group Ministry Groups)

.... are characterized by a commitment to continuity of attendance two times per month for at least 6 months

.... have a common meeting format including readings, chalice lighting, check-in, topic sharing and discussion, closing words

.... include group covenant building, shared facilitation, and collaborative topic choosing

.... membership is limited to 10 people, with a minimum of 6 to begin a group.

.... require a three-month commitment at minimum.

.... open to all when establishing a new group, and then enrollment is limited to allow for group bonding and continuity.

.... can be set up for the shorter term (1 church year) or can be ongoing for years, as we have experienced here at UUCSC.

.... representatives of each group meet regularly with the minister and SGM coordinators

.... are not drop-in groups.

.... are a place for sharing spiritual exploration of topics and themes, NOT group therapy.

We've had many groups over the 17 some years since the program was initiated at UUCSC. Some have stayed together since the beginning, some for as long as 7 years, others for shorter term periods. All have been invaluable to the participants, in terms of forming deeper connections with one another.

We currently have two long term Covenant Groups, and each have had some changes in members over the years. When a space opens up in a group, the SGM coordinators and the Minister offer that space to a congregant who has indicated interest by filling out the "Covenant Group Interest Form," and whose schedule matches the established group.

When a group is full, and more people are needed to begin a new group, one member may choose to leave the group to help start the new group.

**** If you're interested in the Covenant Group experience, please fill out a "Covenant group Interest Form" and we will contact you as soon as we have enough people to form new group, or an opening in an existing group.**