

## WHEN MAY I JOIN?

Enrollment is open throughout the year. If space is available, you may join an existing group at any time. If no openings exist, you may place your name on a waiting list and you will be contacted as soon as there is space available. We welcome you to join us!

## HOW MAY I JOIN?

Our Renewal Committee is responsible for placing those interested in one of the fifteen existing groups, or helping to start new groups. If you would like to join a group or if you would like to have more information, please contact a member of the Small Group Ministry committee.

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## OUR COVENANT

- I will make a sincere effort to attend all sessions through the end of the church year
- I will notify the group as well as the facilitator in advance if I have to be absent
- I will be considerate of my fellow members by arriving on time
- I will respect the confidentiality of what is said during the group session
  - I will speak from personal experience and listen to others fully and deeply
  - I will refrain from giving personal advice
  - I will not engage in crosstalk during check-in
  - I will have the option to speak or refrain from speaking during check-in
  - I will participate but also self moderate so that others may speak
  - I will share responsibility for maintaining a focused and purposeful session
  - I will not leave the group without communicating my reasons to the group in person
  - I will warmly welcome and receive new members into our group
- I will do my best, with the help of everyone in the group, to uphold this covenant in order to maintain a safe and respectful environment for the important work we do together

## Small Groups



*Facilitating spiritual growth through  
personal connections*



**The Unitarian Church in Westport**  
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## WHAT IS SMALL GROUP MINISTRY?

In 2002, the Small Group Ministry program began at the Unitarian Church in Westport as a way to help build and nurture personal connections and foster shared spiritual exploration. Our working truth is that all theology is grounded in personal experience. Our vision is to deepen and enlarge our shared ministry – to ourselves, to each other and to our community. Small Groups (also known as covenant groups) are transforming many UU churches across the country.

### PROGRAM PURPOSES

- to connect deeply to new friends
- to listen attentively and share deeply
- to develop and clarify personal values, beliefs and theology
- to have a safe place in which to explore difficult feelings, needs and life events
- to practice covenantal relationship
- to care for one another during times of trouble and celebration

### HOW IT WORKS

Groups of 8-10 people meet monthly for two hours at a member's home or at church to explore spiritual topics together. Each group is guided by a member facilitator. The members agree to follow a covenant (see back panel), which acts as a common sense set of guidelines for respectful group interaction. Membership requires a commitment to regular attendance to the end of the church year in which you join.

## OUR FORMAT

Each time a small group meets, we follow a format developed to create a spiritual setting and the structure needed to share our journeys, listen deeply and learn from the experience of others.

- Opening Words -
- Chalice Lighting -
  - Silence -
  - Check-in -
- Topic Introduction -
- Group Discussion -
- Brief Check-out and Feedback -
  - Closing Words -
  - Extinguish Chalice -

### **Intro to Past Topics**

*Friendship*  
*Personal Rebellion*  
*Promises*  
*My Stuff*  
*The Life List*  
*Technology*  
*Grace*  
*Legacies*  
*Apologies*  
*Fun & Play*

## WHO TYPICALLY JOINS A SMALL GROUP?

Men and women of all ages, marital and working statuses, and backgrounds are members of small groups. There are long term church members and those new to the church. A diverse group of people have already joined small groups, allowing for an interesting cross-section of ideas, opinions and personal experiences. So, come, come whoever you are!

### WHAT MEMBERS HAVE TO SAY

*"Spiritual exploration had been a lonely journey until my participation in a small group. Now it's a joyful process filled with love and companionship." ~ Carla Conw*

*"It's been a wonderful combination of self time....and an opportunity to connect with some quality and caring individuals whom I would not have gotten to know otherwise." ~ Wendy Brandt Martinenas*

*An important Small Group experience: "Being listened to and heard. Honoring other members' experiences. Just listening is sacred! And not being judged for thinking differently."  
~ Adair Heitmann*

*"As a group member and facilitator, I have truly found community, a deeper sense of my own theology and a meaningful way to serve others."  
~ Sara Leydon*

*"I always feel more connected, not only with my co-members, but oddly, even with myself." ~ Jim Cooper*