

Small Talk

strengthening the small
Unitarian Universalist
congregation

May 2007

To worship is to stand in awe under a heaven of stars, before a flower, a leaf in sunlight, or a grain of sand. To worship is to be silent, receptive, before a tree astir with the wind, or a passing shadow of a cloud. . . . To worship is to sing with the singing beauty of the earth; it is to listen through a storm to the still small voice within.

—Jacob Trapp



Inside...

About Small Talk.....pg 2
Name the Book.....pg 3
Need a Consultant?...pg 4

Going to Two Worship Services

by **The Rev. Jane Dwinell, small congregation consultant**

Yes, small congregations may want to have more than one worship service —because of space constraints, to better serve your area, or to better serve the theological mix in your congregation. Crazy? Not really. Let's talk about these needs.

It's getting snug

If it's getting crowded in worship, your congregation may need to go to two services—or consider adding on to your building or finding a new space. If you're in a rental, it may be easy to move to someplace larger. If you own your building, it will be more complicated and will take time. Agreeing on a design, coming up with the money, getting permits, and doing construction will take anywhere from one to three years (or more). If things are getting crowded, you may need to go to two services in the meantime—or as a long-term solution.

A word about “crowded”—the standard rule of thumb is that if your sanctuary is more than 80 percent full, a visitor (and some members) will not feel comfortable. However, that 80 percent figure is only valid for people who live in cities and are more used to crowded conditions. For people in suburbs and small towns, a sanctuary 60 percent full feels crowded. If you're in a rural area, 40 percent feels like too much. Keep this in mind as you look at your worship space.

Once you determine that you need to go to two services and/or get a larger worship space, the leadership needs to put together a plan before presenting it to the congregation. This is nothing to be rushed—but don't linger either. You will need to move along if you are getting pressed for space. Have the governing board form a Two Services Task Force (with representation from the governing board, worship associates, religious education coordinator and committee,

Two Services
continued on page 2...

About Small Talk

Small Talk is published monthly by the Rev. Jane Dwinell, small church consultant. *Small Talk* is devoted to strengthening the small Unitarian Universalist congregation through informative articles, resources, and good ideas.

the Rev. Jane Dwinell

Editor

Dana Dwinell-Yardley

Graphic Design

If you have questions, comments, or ideas for future issues of *Small Talk*, please **contact** the Rev. Jane Dwinell at:

sky@vtlink.net,
802.229.4008
1 Bingham Street
Montpelier, VT 05602

Jane is also available to consult with your small congregation.

Sign up to receive *Small Talk* via email (as a PDF) at <http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/smalltalknewsletter>.

Back issues can be downloaded for free at www.nhvt.uua.org/publications.htm.

If technology isn't your thing, you can receive *Small Talk* as a **paper copy** by sending \$10 per year to the above address.

This is Volume Four, Issue Nine.
© the Rev. Jane Dwinell, 2007

minister, and anyone else who is interested) to look into the logistics of two services, the pros and cons of putting on an addition, or finding or building a new church. Once they have a plan to present, have one or two informal congregational meetings to discuss it, and refine it. Then move forward. (If you decide to build an addition or buy a new building, that decision will need its own task force and congregational vote.)

Other reasons to have two services

Some communities, especially strongly Catholic and evangelical areas, already have a culture of attending church more than once a week or at times other than Sunday morning. You may find that everyone you know goes to church on Wednesday evening. Your congregation might want to consider this as well — it may be a way to attract newcomers who would find an evening service easier to attend. Same goes for areas that tend to schedule youth sports and other activities on Sunday because they assume that all the churchgoers have already attended Saturday afternoon Mass. You too could have a Saturday afternoon service for families, freeing up time to do other things on Sunday morning.

It would be a wonderful thing to have two very different services, and it may not be that much work. A Wednesday evening or Sunday afternoon service could be shorter and more informal than the traditional Sunday morning sermon-centered worship service. It could be family-centered with music and readings, and periods of silence. It could run like a Small Group Ministry program, or use an adult religious education curriculum like Evensong or Building Your Own Theology as a central theme. With a worship associate or other member of the congregation willing to take the lead, it could be done with minimal preparation.

One service can be traditional (for your group) and the other could be more conservative or more liberal. One service could be more theist, the other more humanist. One service could be aimed at families and young people with a shorter sermon, more interaction, and more music. Another service could be Quaker or Buddhist in style with long periods of silence for prayer or meditation. Having a second service is an opportunity for your congregation to be creative, and more fully meet the needs of your members, friends, and visitors.

Won't this be too much work for us?

Two services are not necessarily double the work, though it depends on what format you use. If you're going to two services because of overcrowding issues as a temporary solution until you get a bigger

worship space, you'll probably want to have the two services the same. The extra work is mainly for the worship leader and the musician. The choir can sing at one or both services. If you rely on guest speakers for some or all of your services, you'll need to be clear with them that they are expected to speak twice. Don't forget to pay them appropriately for their time.

Most congregations that move to two services choose to have Religious Exploration for children at one service and child and infant care at the other service. You can also have the first service be a shorter, family-friendly, intergenerational service, and have the kids go to RE during the second service. If the parents want to attend the second service, they can—or they can help out in RE, pick up after social hour, or putter around the church gardens and grounds, knowing that they have had an opportunity to worship.

But we'll never see each other!

This is the perennial complaint when congregations consider moving to two services. There are several ways to handle this. One is by holding social hour between the services—the early service folks stay late, and the later service folks come early. This works well if parking is not a problem for your

congregation. Another way to handle this is to have a Small Group Ministry program, or frequent potlucks and social events where people can get together. If your push to two services comes because you are growing enough that you may eventually no longer be small, this is another sign that it's time to acknowledge that everyone in the congregation

may no longer be able to know everyone else. It's normal to feel stressed about this big change, but keep your greater mission in mind—you are part of a larger community who needs you and your faith.

You could have a Saturday afternoon service for families, freeing up time to do other things on Sunday morning.

As with any new congregational program, be sure to stick it out for six months or a year to give it a chance to work. Evaluate it after that time, see what needs to be tweaked or changed, and keep on moving ahead. You may find that you like the diversity of times and worship enough to keep going. If you go back to one service, you may decide to retain some sense of diversity. There are many ways to worship and be together in community. Being small makes it easier to try new things. Use your size as a strength and be creative! Who knows what wonderful things will happen as a result?

Good luck. Let me know how it goes.

NAME-THE-BOOK CONTEST!

Jane Dwinell and Ellen Germann-Melosh are writing a friendly, how-to handbook for leaders of small Unitarian Universalist congregations (in a style much like *Small Talk*) to be published later this summer. BUT... they don't know what to call it!



That's where you come in. Send us your idea for a small congregation book title by June 1. It can be serious, funny, clever, touching, or simple. Inventor of the best title will be credited in print and will receive a free copy of the book when it's published!

The Issue Index

Download these back issues of *Small Talk* for free at www.nhvt.uua.org/publications.htm!



What is a Small Congregation?	December 2003
Governance Structure	January 2004
Numbers (statistics to keep)	February 2004
Social Action	March 2004
Growth: Part One	April 2004
Growth: Part Two	May 2004
A Roadmap to Change	June 2004
Small is Beautiful Report	September 2004
The Small Church of the Future	October 2004
Publications: Part One (layout)	November 2004
Publications: Part Two (content)	December 2004
Conflict	January 2005
Creative Worship	February 2005
The Annual Canvass	March 2005
Small Group Ministry	April 2005

Knowing and Telling Our Stories	May 2005
Summer Worship—Yes or No?	June 2005
Small Congregations Speak Out	September 2005
Building a Music Program	October 2005
Technology: Help or Hindrance?	November 2005
Celebrating December Holidays	December 2005
Transformational Congregations	January 2006
Committee on Ministry	February 2006
Welcoming Congregation Work	March 2006
Greening the Small Congregation	April 2006
Religious Education for Children	May 2006
So You're Looking for a Minister	June 2006
Greatest Challenges #1: Growth	September 2006
Greatest Challenges #2: Burnout	October 2006
Greatest Challenges #3: Ministry	November 2006
Greatest Challenges #4: Money	December 2006
Greatest Challenges #5: Conflict	January 2007
The Small Cong. in Transylvania	February 2007
Buildings: Pros and Cons	March 2007
Capital Campaigns	April 2007
Two Worship Services	May 2007

Resources for Small Congregations

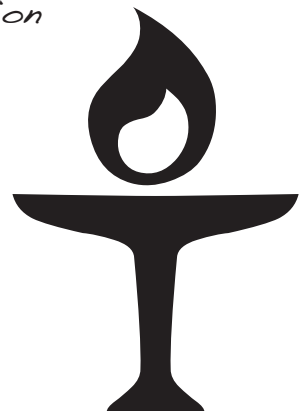
Email discussion list
for leaders (lay and paid)
of small congregation
lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/smalltalk

Email list for ministers of small congregations
lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/smallchurch-min

Handouts by the Rev. Jane Dwinell
1-2 page handouts on: change, finances, governance, leadership, publications, Small Group Ministry, welcoming, and worship
umetry.org/misc/materials

Need a Consultant?

Ellen Germann-Melosh, former District Executive of the Mountain Desert District, is now available as a small congregation consultant to serve congregations west of the Mississippi.



Contact her at:
ecgermann@earthlink.net
520.529.0990.