

Small Talk

strengthening the small
Unitarian Universalist
congregation

October 2010

Let me not pray to be

sheltered from dangers, but
to be fearless in facing them.
Let me not beg for the stilling
of my pain, but for the heart
to conquer it.

—Rabindranath Tagore

Who You Gonna Call?

Some Basics About the Unitarian Universalist Trauma Response Ministry

Editor's note: It seems that traumatic events are on the rise. We hear about people opening fire in churches, universities, elementary and high schools, places of employment, and military bases. Their reasons are varied, but what is the same is that this could happen anywhere. It also seems that weather-related traumatic events such as flooding, wildfires, hurricanes, and tornadoes are also on the rise. Congregations of any size should have a plan in place in case you are faced with a traumatic event — it will help things go smoother as you put the pieces back together. But the first thing you should do is to contact the UU Trauma Response Ministry. I asked the Rev. Gowdy to write this article to let you know who they are, how they can help, and how to reach them. Let us hope that your congregation does not have to face a traumatic event, but if you do, you can be assured that you will not be alone.

**by Rev. Nannene Gowdy, director of the
Unitarian Universalist Trauma Response Ministry**

I imagine that a man with a gun walks into your sanctuary on Sunday morning as the children are presenting a play and opens fire, killing a man who was trying to protect the children.

Imagine that wildfires force half of your congregation — including the minister — to flee their homes for days at a time. Add to the problem the fact that phone lines have been burned through, making it impossible to call and make sure people are all right.

Imagine that your congregation was in the path of Katrina, your church building is completely flooded with hymnals floating in the sanctuary, and you don't know where all of your members are.

Imagine your church is near a college campus and there is a mass killing. Students running from the shooting run into the closest shelter — your building.

Inside...

About Small Talk....pg 2

Trauma Response...pg 3

Issue Index.....pg 4

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 Designer

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

jane@spiritoflifepublishing.com
PO Box 243
Montpelier, VT 05601

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.spiritoflifepublishing.com/newsletters.

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 Eight, Issue Two.
© the Rev. Jane Dwinell, 2010.

continued from page 1

Imagine your church is in Manhattan, you've lost members at the World Trade Center, and everyone else is traumatized.

These are just five of the disasters to which the Unitarian Universalist Trauma Response Ministry has responded, and are part of the reason the ministry received the 2007 President's Award for Volunteer Service to the UUA.

What is the UU Trauma Response Ministry?

The UU Trauma Response Ministry is an organization of Unitarian Universalist ministers and lay people who have been trained in trauma response. This includes models of crisis counseling, UU theological understandings of hope, companioning, and suffering, as well as critical incident reporting. Most of us have responded several times. New members join an experienced team until they have achieved the necessary skill levels. All responders come from outside the disaster area. Since trauma tends to make people act irrationally, having help from outside is important.

The congregations the UU Trauma Response Ministry has served are small, medium, and large. Responses have ranged from several teams deployed to a site over months to a one-day event. What these congregations have had in common is that they have suffered a traumatic experience and need help getting back on their feet.

Responding to trauma

Trauma is an event outside of the usual realm of human experience that makes a group of people feel isolated and fearful. People are often in such a state of shock that they are unable to make even the simplest decision, which would enable them to move forward. They are stuck. This is when the UU Trauma Response Ministry needs to be called, usually by the minister or the district executive.

We send trained responders who offer direct, on-site ministry, crisis counseling, and stress management skills so that the people in the congregation can begin to recover. Some times it is as simple as making a to-do list. In a traumatic situation, people feel overwhelmed and don't know where to start. We help organize recovery. Once people have something to do — a manageable task — they begin to be able to function in a normal range. If needed, we have a follow-up team who will make sure the recovery is progressing.

While many people feel they just "need to get over it", studies have found that as many as 35 percent of people who suffer a mass disaster may develop post-traumatic stress disorder. Getting help immediately following a disaster helps to significantly reduce that statistic.

Be prepared

So imagine the unimaginable. Imagine your church caught on fire during Sunday services. Have you practiced a fire drill so that everyone knows how to get out of the building safely? Do you have a designated person each Sunday whose responsibility it is to call 911 if there is an emergency?

Now imagine that even if you've done these things, a disaster happens. Who is responsible for calling your district executive so the UU Trauma Response Ministry can respond? Don't assume the

In a traumatic situation, people feel overwhelmed and don't know where to start. We help organize recovery.

minister will do it. He or she is often overwhelmed taking care of parishioners. Time is important. The quicker the response, the more likely it is that recovery will happen. UU Trauma Response Ministry was called quickly in the above disasters and we were able to be there before the fires were out, before the funerals happened, before the water subsided, and before the building dust had completely settled. Our ability to respond quickly has significantly helped these congregations on the road to recovery.

Who You Gonna Call?

UU Trauma Response Ministry: 888-760-3332

Make sure your district executive and your minister know how to contact the UU Trauma Response Ministry. They should know who to call when disaster strikes so that you and your congregation have the best chance of recovery.

Check out www.traumaministry.org for more information.

A Few Useful Resources for Small Congregations

Big Ideas for Small Congregations

The hands-on book by Jane Dwinell and Ellen Germann-Melosh!

Order now at www.spiritoflifepublishing.com

Email discussion list

for leaders (lay and paid) of small congregations

<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/smalltalk>

Email list for ministers of small congregations

<http://lists.uua.org/mailman/listinfo/smallchurch-min>

The Issue Index



Download back issues for free at
www.spiritoflifepublishing.com/newsletters.

GENERAL ADVICE

What is a Small Congregation?	December 2003
The Small Church of the Future	October 2004
Knowing and Telling Our Stories	May 2005
Transformational Congregations	January 2006
Wrapping Up the Church Year	June 2007
Centering, Connecting, and Creating Change	October 2007
The Seven Habits of Highly Ineffective Churches	March 2008
Peter Morales for UUA President	March 2009
Who You Gonna Call? (trauma response)	October 2010

LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE

Governance Structure	January 2004
Greatest Challenges #2: Burnout	October 2006
How to Get the Work Done	December 2007
How to Run a Meeting	February 2009
Advice for Leaders	March 2010
Advice for Followers	April 2010
Supporting Youth Leadership	September 2010

MONEY

The Annual Canvass	March 2005
Greatest Challenges #4: Money	December 2006
Capital Campaigns	April 2007
The Financial Crisis and Your Congregation	January 2010

BUILDINGS

Buildings: Pros and Cons	March 2007
How to Help Your Building Pay for Itself	April 2008

STAFF

Committee on Ministry	February 2006
So You're Looking for a Minister	June 2006
Greatest Challenges #3: Ministry	November 2006
Sharing Staff in the Small Congregation	January 2009
The Care and Feeding of Your Part-Time Minister	April 2009

COMMUNICATION

Publications: Part One (layout)	November 2004
Publications: Part Two (content)	December 2004
Technology: Help or Hindrance?	November 2005

CONFLICT AND CHANGE

Conflict	January 2005
Greatest Challenges #5: Conflict	January 2007

NITTY-GRITTY

Numbers (statistics to keep)	February 2004
-------------------------------------	---------------

WORSHIP

Creative Worship	February 2005
Summer Worship—Yes or No?	June 2005
Building a Music Program	October 2005
Celebrating December Holidays	December 2005
Going to Two Worship Services	May 2007
Multicultural Worship in the Small Congregation	June 2010

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION FOR CHILDREN

Religious Education for Children	May 2006
Integrating Children	September 2007

RELIGIOUS EXPLORATION FOR ADULTS

Small Group Ministry	April 2005
-----------------------------	------------

HOSPITALITY

What Should We Do With Our Visitors?	January 2008
---	--------------

BEYOND OUR WALLS (wisdom from other congregations)

Small is Beautiful Report	September 2004
Small Congregations Speak Out	September 2005
The Small Congregation in Transylvania	February 2007
New Orleans: New Life for Small Congregations	May 2008
Small Congregations at General Assembly	June 2008
The Living Room Church, Part One	September 2008
The Living Room Church, Part Two	October 2008
The Living Room Church, Part Three	November 2008
The World of the British Unitarians	May 2009
Some Good Ideas from the British Unitarians	June 2009
A Little Goes a Long Way (social justice)	May 2010

MISSION

Social Action	March 2004
Welcoming Congregation Work	March 2006
Greening the Small Congregation	April 2006
Another Look at Social Action	November 2007
Anti-Racism Work in the Small Congregation	December 2008
Climate Change and the Small Congregation	February 2010

GROWTH

Growth: Part One	April 2004
Growth: Part Two	May 2004
A Roadmap to Change	June 2004
Greatest Challenges #1: Growth	September 2006
The Meaning of Membership	February 2008