



Join a Growth Group!

Growth Groups are starting during the week of February 5-11. Please read this information and go to the Channing Information Table to sign up. You can also contact me as Director of Lifespan Faith Development at Natalie@firstuu.org for more information.

Growth Groups are small groups designed to provide members and friends with a setting in which to get to know each other while discussing the week's sermon and how the subject matter affects our daily lives and spiritual growth. The groups will meet weekly for ten weeks. After the first three weeks, a commitment for the remaining seven is expected of group members.

In his book, *The Sticky Church*, Larry Osborne outlines a variety of reasons why it is important to join a small group. Here are the three that I find particularly significant:

1. The possibility of depth in relationships – On Sunday mornings frequently what we say in answer to “How are you?” is “Fine.” -- even though we are carrying a heavy burden or really wish there were someone with whom we could talk about what just happened at work. In Growth groups, with just a few people, where we get to know them and trust them, honesty and transparency is both encouraged and supported.
2. Spiritual Discipline – How many of us just renewed our desire to achieve greater spiritual depth by making a resolution to go for more walks, be more regular in our church attendance, meditate regularly, etc.? Attending a Growth Group is a discipline in itself. It's on the calendar and we are taking time weekly to focus on meaningful material on our own and with others. It also gives us friends who can hold us accountable for those walks and meditations practices. And it gives us increased interest in attending the services and paying close attention since we know that a spirited discussion of the sermon will take place during the week.
3. Becoming more knowledgeable about Unitarian Universalism – Growth groups are what the name implies: places we can move through four stages of knowledge.
 - a. *Inspiration* – that's where we are exposed to a UU principle or idea and it rings true. So, we go home from church, for instance, thinking “Wow, I learned something today.”
 - b. *Familiarity* – This is the stage where I respond to the same thing with “Oh, yeah, I know that. It's what I was thinking about last week and it still fits.”
 - c. *Boredom* – “Do we really need to hear this again? I already got it.” This is often the reaction we have at this stage. Although ministers and other communicators

try their best to avoid it, we need to be aware that we are actually moving into *deep familiarity*.

- d. *Knowledge* – now we know what we think about that particular principle or idea that we once experienced as new and exciting. We own it, express it and use it without being prompted.

The danger comes with the third stage: boredom. This is when many of us bail out or start criticizing the minister/teacher. Growth groups give us a place to discuss, to criticize productively, to hear others, and finally, to integrate our knowledge within our Unitarian Universalist framework.

So, I encourage you to sign up now. We will do our best to provide child care for parents who are interested (please indicate it on sign-up sheet). And for those of you who are intrigued but whose schedules are already full, make a plan now to start in September!

Peace, Natalie