

**Essay Title:** The Value of Covenant Groups

**Audio Essay Series:** Disc 1, Track 14

**Author:** The Reverend Bob Hill

**Date of Release:** June 23, 2005

---

I HAD OCCASION TO WRITE A SERMON RECENTLY for the installation of a part time minister at one of our small congregations. Writing the sermon gave me a chance to look back and appreciate how much our faith has influenced my life, how much has changed, and how important our task as UU leaders remains.

Our faith has grown since I discovered it in the 1960s. We are more genuinely open to our spiritual differences now and we've learned some better ways of making a strength of our diverse understandings of reality. I see us continuing to extend welcome to the curious, the lonely, and the confused. When we are at our best we do that. We provide a nest for people learning to fly.

There are, all around us in every city and town, lots of people like I was then, men and women, young and old, who are religiously liberal and going through life without the support of a community willing to encourage their flights of imagination about how life might be richer, fuller, more authentic. We need to let them know we exist. We need to personally invite them to visit.

When they visit, we need to notice them. We need to have Covenant Groups for them so they can build personal connections in an atmosphere of mutual trust. Covenant groups, also known as Small Group Ministry, are groups of 7 to 10 people who meet regularly to get to know each other and to explore significant questions involving spirituality and the business of living. More and more of our congregations have started such groups. If your congregation does not yet have such groups I encourage you to explore them as a way to create community and to provide a place of instant welcome for newcomers."

When new people come to our doors we have to say to them in various ways, "We anticipated your coming and we are glad to see you. Rest here. Try your wings here. Tell us a bit about your story and we'll tell you a bit about ours. Together we may find ways to serve. Together we may make this a better world."

Nothing more is required. Nothing less will do.

Thank you, all of you who have given your time, energy, money, and attention to the creation of and the continuance of our congregations, our nests of sustaining community. Ten at a time, in our small groups, we can become enough of a multitude to tip the world toward justice and spiritual depth.

---

*This Audio Essay series was created by the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, for the purpose of supporting its valued lay leaders. Copying and sharing these essay texts, downloadable audio files, and the companion LayLeader Drive Time Essays compact disc is welcomed and encouraged. • Comments or suggestions? We welcome your ideas about this Audio Essay series and your lay leader questions. Please send them to Don Skinner, the editor of InterConnections, a resource for lay leaders. Email: [dskinner@uua.org](mailto:dskinner@uua.org)*

**Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations**, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108 617.742.2100 [uua.org](http://uua.org)