



A People of Covenant, Our Journey Begins

Greenville UU Fellowship
Covenant Group Session Plan

Welcome, Chalice Lighting: Here we are, together in this space. By our love and by our covenant, we make this a holy place. We light the chalice of Unitarian Universalism in honor of the light that lives in each of us, the light that shines among us, and the light we bring into the world

Personal Check In: Briefly share something from your life recently, and how you are feeling now.

Opening Readings

We come together this day to remind one another
To rest for a moment on the forming edge of our lives,
To resist the headlong tumble into the next moment,
Until we claim for ourselves awareness and gratitude.
Taking the time to look into one another's faces
And see there communion: the reflection of our own eyes.
This house of laughter and silence, memory and hope,
is hallowed by our presence together.

~ Kathleen McTigue, *Singing the Living Tradition*, reading 435

Welcome to this special time and place where we seek:
to share openly and honestly;
to be heard and understood;
to listen with care, compassion, and understanding;
to explore, learn, and grow;
and to deepen our connections with ourselves and each other.
May our time together be mutually enriching.

~ Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website

Questions to prompt and guide discussion

1. Share a bit about your own spiritual journey. What do you believe? What brought you to this place of understanding the world as you do?*
2. How have you been changed by your journey of exploring your own spiritual life?*
3. What attracted you to Covenant Circles? What do you hope to take away from this experience?
4. What do you need in this Covenant Circle experience to feel safe and respected and to trust the other participants with your personal stories?
5. What do you want to be included in our circle's covenant?

Readings from the Common Bowl (See Quotes/Readings at end of Session)

Sharing - (This is a time to speak without interruption and for deep listening. Deep listening means no interrupting, no fixing, no saving, no advising, and no setting each other straight. Please share one or more responses to the session questions)

Sitting in Silence (This is a time to reflect on what each have shared)

Open Discussion -(This is a time to respond to something another person said about the topic or to relate additional thoughts that may have occurred as others shared their thoughts on this topic. Continue to practice deep listening.)

As people share responses to questions 3, 4 & 5 the facilitator will take notes on elements important to your group's covenant. These notes begin the Covenant process for the group.

Summary of Initial Covenant: The facilitator taking notes will read them back to everyone, reinforcing what the group members feel makes for a safe covenant group. The draft covenant based on the notes taken in this first session will be sent with the next session topic, Deep Listening.

Announcements/Plans

Personal Check Out:

As we close our meeting today, how are you feeling now?

Closing Reading:

May the light around us guide our footsteps, and hold us fast to the best and most righteous that we seek.

May the darkness around us nurture our dreams, and give us rest so that we may give ourselves to the work of our world. Let us seek to remember the wholeness of our lives, the weaving of light and shadow in this great and astonishing dance in which we move.

~Kathleen McTigue, UU Minister, Dir of the UU College of Social Justice, UU Service Committee

Extinguish the Chalice

Readings

Giving is a miracle that can transform the heaviest of hearts. Two people, who moments before lived in separate worlds of private concerns, suddenly meet each other over a simple act of sharing. The world expands, a moment of goodness is created, and something new comes into being where before there was nothing.

~ Kent Nerburn, *Simple Truths*

If you don't know the kind of person I am
and I don't know the kind of person you are
a pattern that others made may prevail in the world
and following the wrong god home we may miss our star.

~ William Stafford, excerpted from *A Ritual to Read to Each Other*

For none of us ever really walks in another's shoes or knows the innermost rooms of a person's heart. None of us truly knows the lonely places of another's journey or the causes of the lines around another's eyes. Therefore, let us be gentle with one another. Let us listen more than we speak and accept more than we judge.

~ Elizabeth Tarbox, *Life Tides*, UU Minister

When you speak to me about your deepest questions, you do not want to be fixed or saved: you want to be seen and heard, to have your truth acknowledged and honored. If your problem is soul-deep, your soul alone knows what you need to do about it, and my presumptuous advice will only drive your soul back into the woods. So the best service I can render when you speak to me about such a struggle is to hold you faithfully in a space where you can listen to your inner teacher.

~ Parker Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness*

A covenant is not a contract. It is not made and signed and sealed once and for all, sent to the attorneys for safekeeping or guarded under glass in a museum. A covenant is not a static artifact and it is not a sworn oath: Whereas, whereas, whereas. . . . Therefore, I will do this, or I'll die, so help me God. A covenant is a living, breathing aspiration, made new every day. It can't be enforced by consequences but it may be reinforced by forgiveness and by grace, when we stumble, when we forget, when we mess up.

~Rev. Victoria E Safford, UU Minister, <https://www.uuworld.org/articles/bound-in-covenant>

A contract is a matter of law. A covenant is a matter of love. A contract speaks this way: if you do this, and only if you do this, then I will do that. It is hedged, cautious, risk-averse. Its most basic principle is "no surprises." A covenant speaks this way: you and I will do whatever is needed to achieve our shared purpose. We will remember that our covenantal relationship is more important than any particular action we take or fail to take to serve its purpose. If either of us fails to honor this shared commitment, the other has permission to call the one who fell short back into covenant, to ask what is happening, to be demanding and supportive at the same time. In a covenantal relationship, there is an understanding that no one fulfills his promises each and every time. Sometimes you make a doubtful promise, and then put your heart into it, and then fail, and then you and your covenantal partners pick yourselves up and ask, "how shall we recover from this failure? How shall we keep going?" In a covenantal relationship, the message you get from your partners when you fail is as just as much an affirmation of self-worth as if the promise had been fulfilled.

~ Rev. Preston Moore, UU Minister, <https://www.uuberks.org/sermon/our-great-covenant>