



## **GUUF Congregational Covenant 2023**

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

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**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 since we last met and how you are feeling now.

**Opening Words:** Covenant is the silk that joins Unitarian Universalist congregations, communities and individuals together in a web of inter connections. The practice of promising to walk together is the precious core of our creedless faith.

~UUA website Leader Lab "A comprehensive Guide to Congregational Covenants" April, 2019

### **Questions to prompt and guide discussion:**

1. Which of the Covenant statements are the easiest for you to live and demonstrate? Which are the most challenging for you?
2. How will you monitor your own behavior and communication to stay within our Covenant? What will you do if you see that you are behaving or responding "out" of our Covenant?
3. What will you do to make the Covenant a real part of our GUUF culture?
4. What are examples of potential breaches in our Covenant? How will you respond if you recognize a breach in someone else's behavior or communication?

**Sitting in Silence** (Reflect on questions just posed as you prepare to hear reading)

### **Readings-**

**Our Process to write a Congregational Covenant for GUUF:** In October of 2022, the Shared Ministry Committee (SMC) met to formulate a Covenant for GUUF. Reverend Chris Hockman felt that it was important to first discern what our common Values were. The SMC and Rev. Chris then, over the next several months, asked the congregation to write statements beginning with "We will", "We need" and "Our Vision Is" on index cards during interactive Sunday services. The SMC then spent 5-6 months digesting these index cards, numerous UUA sources and sample Covenants. From those months of intention, we were able to offer Covenant, Vision and Mission Statements to the congregation for a vote. At the May 2023 Congregational Meeting, they passed unanimously. ~Sabrina Walker, Shared Ministry Committee at GUUF

### **Congregational Covenant for Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship**

*A covenant is an agreement about how we will be together and behave toward one another.* Our faith requires us to be in covenant as a community of like-hearted people. We are called to make the following commitments to each other in faith:

- We will live our lives with kindness, understanding, respect, generosity, and patience for each other and the world around us.
- We will practice radical inclusion and celebrate the diverse identities in our community, recognizing that each of us brings unique gifts and perspectives that contribute to our collective growth and understanding.
- We will commit to using our voices and actions to promote justice and equity and to challenge oppression and systems of inequality wherever we find it.

- We will listen deeply and support each other through both joy and struggle, recognizing that we all have moments of celebration and hardship.
- We will act with integrity and honesty, holding ourselves accountable by calling one another back into covenant respectfully when it has been breached. We will then make amends, forgive ourselves and others, and reconnect in the spirit of love and the principles of our faith.

In all that we do, we covenant to embody the spirit of Unitarian Universalism; a spirit of love, justice, compassion and interconnectedness. We recognize that this covenant is an ongoing commitment, and we promise to continually renew and strengthen it through our words, actions and relationships.

**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 responses to one or more of the session questions.

**(This is usually a good time to take a brief break)**

**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.

#### **Closing reading:**

Living and working in a covenantal relationship is difficult. Keeping it foremost in mindfulness is key to making it work. Keep your covenant alive, read it together regularly, make it prominently visual, review it, and confirm it on an annual basis. Amen. May it be so.

~From "Unlocking the Power of Covenant Report of the UUA Commission on Appraisal, June 2021

#### **Announcements/Plans**

**Check out:** As we close today, how are you feeling now?

#### **Extinguish the Chalice**

*We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth, the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment. These we carry in our hearts until we are together again.*