



Reflecting on Covenant

Covenant Group Session Plan

Greenville Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, Greenville, South Carolina

Revised from *The Importance of Covenants* by Main Line Unitarian Church, Devon, PA, Rev. Dr. Stephan Papa,

September, 2005. This session written by: Denise and David Frick

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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:

Love is the spirit of this church, and service its law.

This is our great covenant: to dwell together in peace,

To seek the truth in love, and to help one another

~James Vila Blake, Reading #473, *Singing the Living Tradition*

Questions to prompt and guide discussion:

1. What covenants have you created with your own efforts? What are some of the explicit covenants you have made?
2. What's the connection between your spirituality and covenant-making?
3. What do you bring (personal qualities, attributes) to your covenantal relationships?
4. Reflecting on our circle's covenant: What resonates most with you? What might you add?

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

Readings- Words from the Common Bowl: Quotes/Readings – see below

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.

(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:

As we part now one from another, let these be our thoughts:

If that which is most holy lies within the human person, and if the greatest power in the world shines flickering and uncertain from each individual heart, then it is easy to see the value of human associations dedicated to nurturing that light: the couple, the family, the religious community. For the power of good in any one of us must at times waver. But when a group together is dedicated to nurturing the power of good, it is rare for the light to grow dim in all individuals at the same moment. So we borrow courage and wisdom from one another, to warm us and keep us until we're together again.

~ Eileen B. Karpeles, UU minister, 1925-2018

Announcements/Plans

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

Extinguish the Chalice

Readings

In our culture of rugged individualism—in which we generally feel that we dare not be honest about ourselves, even with the person in the pew next to us—we bandy around the word ‘community.’ We apply it to almost any collection of individuals—a town, a church, a synagogue, a fraternal organization, an apartment complex, a professional association—regardless of how poorly those individuals communicate with each other. It is a false use of the word.

If we are going to use the word meaningfully we must restrict it to a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some serious commitment.

~M. Scott Peck, *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*

One of the deepest convictions that unites us as Unitarian Universalists is a belief in the possibility of a beloved community among people, whether members of a family or the most diverse representatives of humanity. We affirm that such communities are in part a natural outgrowth of human life, but that they must also be deliberately formed and reformed, nurtured and renewed.

~From *Interdependence* by the Commission on Appraisal of the UUA

Covenant is a way of working and being together in the context of human interaction including the natural energy of conflict. A covenant is an open and unequivocal statement about how we intend to live and a claim of the importance of that choice. When we make a promise we stretch out to say, ‘I will be there no matter what turns up.’ As free selves we know we become genuine selves by making commitments to others. This is holy and sacred lifelong work.

~Karen Lindley of the Wilmington, Delaware Unitarian Church

Each of us brings a separate truth here,

We bring the truth of our own life, our own story.

We don't come as empty vessels...

But rather we come as full people -- people who have our own story and our own truth.

We seek to add to our truths and add to our stories.

This room is rich with truth, rich with experience.

All manner of people are here: needy...joyful...frightened...anxious...bored...

We all bring our truth with us.

May we all recognize the truth and the story in everyone's life.

And may we hear and honor the truths that we all bring as we gather together..

Together we have truths.

Together we have a story.

Together we are a community.

~Penny Hackett-Evans, UU Minister

Let us covenant with one another to keep faith with the source of life knowing that we are not our own, earth made us. Let us covenant with one another to keep faith with the community of resistance never to forget that life can be saved from that which threatens it by even small bands of people choosing to put into practice an alternative way of life. And, let us covenant with one another to seek for an ever deeper awareness of that which springs up inwardly in us. Even when our hearts are broken by our own failure or the failure of others cutting into our lives, even when we have done all we can and life is still broken, there is a Universal Love that has never broken faith with us and never will. This is the ground of our hope, and the reason we can be bold in seeking to fulfill the promise.

~ Rebecca Parker, *What They Dreamed Be Ours to Do*