Woven
FAITH

NOVEMBER 2026 Theme:

Covenant

Adults in the U.S. - Small Group Ministry on Covenant

by Marisol Caballero

Introduction

Watch the video introduction of this month's theme.

Materials and Preparation

- ▢ Chalice and candle
- ▢ (For Option II or III) Whiteboard or newsprint and markers, or screen-shared document (online or in the room)
- ▢ Take time before the session to consider which of three presented options works best for your group.

Table of Activities

Element	Description	Time
Opening Words and Chalice-Lighting	Love is the spirit of this church	1 minute
Community Agreements	How we're together + values covenant	3 - 5 minutes
Check-In	Setting aside to be present	3 - 15 minutes
Focus Reading	On Covenant	2 minutes
Centering	Moment of silence	1 minute
Focus Questions	Reflecting on Covenant, Options for building a group covenant	15 – 60 minutes
Closing Words	To make peace in the world	1 minute
	Total Time	**30 - 90 minutes**

Opening Words and Chalice-Lighting (1 Minute)

> Love is the spirit of this church, and service is 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, American Unitarian Minister (1842–1925)

Community Agreements (3-5 Minutes)

We agree together on how we'll be in this space:

- We listen without interrupting, with one person speaking at a time
- We keep what is shared here confidential and private
- Share our own experiences, be willing to be vulnerable
- We don't give advice unless it is asked for
- You can always pass or only speak briefly
- Share the space: speaking only once until all have had the opportunity to speak
- Phones are put away or on silent
- Additional language to add if meeting online: We keep focused on the group, without additional tabs or digital distractions.

Our Covenant

Our covenant is in our shared UU values.

- In community, Love centers and connects us all
- Interdependence: *We need each other to survive and thrive*
- Pluralism: *We embrace and celebrate diversity*
- Equity: *We commit to help everyone*
- Transformation: *We change and grow together*
- Generosity: *We share generously and joyfully*
- Justice: *We work to build the beloved community*

Check-In (5-15 Minutes)

What is one thing weighing on your mind that you are setting aside to be present with this gathering today?

Focus Readings (2 Minutes)

> We are the promises we make and the vows we break. In this faith, Unitarian Universalism, covenants bind us together and strengthen our relationships. They create a pathway toward inclusiveness and, in times of both joy and sorrow, remind us that we are tough, resilient, and thoughtful. We become better people and often much more intelligent when we make the intentional choice to create connections and stand in a collaborative community with another.
>
> - Rev. Carol Thomas Cissel, American UU Minister, from Commission on Appraisal

> 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… I remember: a covenant is an aspiration to go deeper in relation to ourselves, to our best intention, to our God, and to each other.
>
> - Victoria Safford, American UU Minister

Centering (1 Minute)

One minute of silence for participants to center themselves for listening and sharing.

Focus Questions with Covenant-Making (15 - 60 minutes)

In this session, in line with this month's theme of Covenant, we will go deeper into the Community Agreements and Our Covenant, to reflect as a group on the ways we hope to engage together. Because each Small Group Ministry is unique, there are 3 options below for your group's discussion.

Please discuss as a group which option feels most right at this time. You might consider the types of commitments participants have to the group - for example:

- Do you drop-in when available or do you commit to all sessions?
- Are you only meeting for the first time or do you know each other well?
- How long is your group meeting time?

Option I - Follow the Regular Session Plan to Explore Community Agreements & Our Covenant

> If your group feels the Community Agreements & Our Covenant statements above provide enough foundation for the group's ways of being and relationship, continue to Focus Questions to reflect on being in a covenanted community.

Option II - A Personalized, Quick Covenant

> If your group would like to add some more personalized aspects of covenant without focusing on the wording too much, continue to a fun, fast-paced group activity.

Option III - Take Time for Sacred Promises

> If your group would like to engage in deeper reflection about your personal values, promises, and purpose of community, this option leads to creating your own covenant.

Option I - Follow the Regular Session Plan to Explore Community Agreements & Our Covenant

Focus Questions

1. Please re-read the Community Agreements and Our Covenant above. What is one word or phrase that especially resonates with you?
2. What is one aspect of the Community Agreements or Our Covenant that you know is a strength of yours? What's one aspect you know is a growing edge for you?
3. What are situations when you feel like you've practiced covenant or witnessed covenant in action in your congregation?
4. After this discussion, are there any other Community Agreements the group would like to add for your future sessions?

Option II - A Personalized, Quick Covenant

This activity is inspired by the Deeper Joy activity "The Quickest Covenant in the World." You will have some fun reflecting on ultimacy, intimacy, and legacy. In the end, your covenant will not be poetic sentences, but words and short phrases that reflect what's most important to your group.

Your group will need a scribe or note-taker who will take notes and commit to typing the notes after the session to be shared with the group. It works best if notes are taken on a whiteboard, newsprint, or screen-shared document.

You will reflect on 3 statements. Please give a minute of personal reflection then have popcorn style sharing (no order, speak when you're ready) which the scribe will capture.

1. Ultimacy is how we make meaning of our life. Ultimate can mean the most basic, the most extreme, or the final. What words come to mind when naming what is greater than this group in which our values are rooted? (i.e. transcendent, purpose, source)
2. Intimacy is how we belong and how we are known. What words come to mind when naming how participants will care for themselves and one another? (i.e. care, consent, pacing, listening)
3. Legacy is something we receive, and something we leave for others. What words come to mind when naming a shared obligation to learn from our ancestors and people who've come before us? What gifts do we want to leave descendants and those who come after us, in our covenanted community? (i.e. wisdom, repair, stewardship)
4. As you look at your new group covenant, are there any must-adds or clarifications?

Note: The Scribe will now type the group's new covenant. Please share this electronically with the group for final edits and agreements. You can include a copy of your group's covenant in future gatherings.

Option III - Take Time for Sacred Promises

For a group that would like to engage in deeper reflection about their personal values, promises, purpose of community. This activity is inspired by the Deeper Joy activity "Sacred Promises Framework." You will use the Community Agreements and Our Covenant as your starting point, and take time together to reflect and create your own covenant.

Each participant is given around 2 minutes to respond to a question, and all participants share before moving to a group reflection on the question. During the group reflection, you will take what has been shared to create your covenant.

You will need a scribe during these times to capture what is shared in the room, who also agrees to type and share the covenant after the session. It works best if notes are taken on a whiteboard, newsprint, or screen-shared document.

Please decide on time as a group, based on the number of people present, and find a timekeeper.

1. **Individual sharing:** What values do you hold dear?

   Group Reflection: What shared values do we want to affirm in our covenant?

   Group Noting: How can we note these reflections in a few phrases for our covenant?

2. **Individual sharing:** What promises do you make about how to be together in this group?

   Group Reflection: How can we, as a group, be about the journey and not just the destination? Sometimes, the destination is important, but it matters how we get there.

Can we be flexible? Can we embrace a spirit of adventure and experimentation? Can we be gentle with each other?

Group Noting: How can we note these reflections in a few phrases for our covenant?

3. **Individual sharing:** Why have you committed to this Small Group Ministry at this time?

   Group Reflection: We know what we believe, and how we want to be with each other. But to what ends? Why are we here in this community together? What commitments, grounded in our values, do we make to each other and to the world?

   Group Noting: How can we note these reflections in a few phrases for our covenant?

4. **Group Reflection:** Look at the words and phrases noted by the scribe. Is there anything missing that feels important to include? Any suggestions for phrasing? Other ideas?

Note: The Scribe will take the notes and type up the group's new covenant. Please share this electronically with the group for final edits and agreements. You can include a copy of your group's covenant in future gatherings.

Closing Words (1 Minute)

We are extinguishing this light.

We want to take it as a part of ourselves

because the light symbolizes the truth,

which we want to take with us

to spread and make peace in this world.

- Darek Dukielski, lay leader Polish Brethren Unitarian Church in Warsaw, Poland

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