

Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene

Small Group Ministry Covenant of Right Relationship Group Agreements and Guidelines to Meet Our Needs and Support Our Values

Within the group

Respect, Consideration, and Support

- Begin and end on time.
- Have a strong commitment to attend every session.
- Let the facilitator know when you will not attend.
- Practice respectful listening and sharing of “air time” by listening to each person’s check in and sharing of the topic without interruption or cross talk.
- The facilitator and group members will call the group back to the covenant when needed.
- Respect the right to pass. A person may choose to talk later, or to sit/share in silence.

Empathy and Understanding

- Speak from personal experience and use “I statements.”
- Refrain from giving advice or trying to fix problems, either yours or someone else’s.

Trust and Safety

- Confidentiality: keep what is shared in the group within the group. The facilitator is considered to be a “mandatory reporter” to appropriate authorities for suspected abuse or neglect of vulnerable people, or other risks for people’s safety.
- Follow the meeting format. It provides a safe and predictable environment.

Learning and Contribution

- Remember we are all learners and teachers.

From the group to the church

Respect, Consideration, and Support

- Affirm and promote the principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the UUCE mission statement.
- Do a service project for the church or the larger community.

From the church to the group

Nurturance and Support

1. Provide the organizational and logistical support to maintain the Small Group Ministry program.

(Revised November 20, 2017. Small Group Ministry Steering Committee: Dick Loescher, Chair; Bonnie Koenig; Connie Newman.)

Why a covenant? This covenant is an essential part of the Small Group Ministry program. Groups can revisit the covenant if they flounder or need to refocus. This is how we hold each other to our religious principles, how we agree to act with one another.

UUCE Covenant of Right Relations

We covenant to build a religious community guided by respect and sustained by our principles. We will listen appreciatively, speak with care, express gratitude, honor our differences, and assume good intentions. We will communicate directly, honestly and compassionately – particularly when we are in conflict. When we hurt one another we will ask for forgiveness and make amends, and when we are hurt we will try to forgive and reconnect in a spirit of right relationship. In celebration of the common mission that unites us, we will abide by this covenant.

UUCE Mission Statement

Empowered by love, we transform ourselves and serve our world.

UUCE Aspirations

As a people of faith, grounded in our principles, we cultivate lives of meaning, reverence, and depth; we create sanctuary where all hands are held; together we work toward justice, healing, and sustainability.

Principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association

We, the member congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all
7. Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.
(The above 7 principles were revised in 1984.)
8. Journeying toward spiritual wholeness by working to build a diverse multicultural Beloved Community by our actions that accountably dismantle racism and other oppressions in ourselves and our institutions. (Proposed 8th principle adopted by the UUCE Board of Trustees on September 22, 2020, and by various other UU churches at various times.)

Optional Meeting Strategies for SGM Groups

- Use a talking stick or object to indicate who is talking and when the person is finished.
- Indicate when one is done talking with a gesture or a phrase, such as “I am finished.”
- For time management consider having a clock visible to the person speaking for self-monitoring of time, or have a timekeeper or use a timer to indicate when the allotted time for a person’s sharing is reached.
- Save time for response and dialog after all have shared.
- Consider having a time of silence, perhaps up to 30 seconds or so or three breaths, after each person has shared to allow for reflection, and to allow people to think about comments or questions they may want to bring up during the open discussion after all have shared.