

Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Midland

Covenant Group Information

Nine essential elements

1. A covenant of right relationship (covenanted ground rules)
 - Why are we here?
 - What is important to us about the way we behave with each other?
2. Format
 - Opening
 - Reading/chalice lighting
 - Review of covenants (right relationship, welcoming, service)
 - Check-in
 - “Weather report” (What is going on in your life right now?)
 - How is it with your spirit?
 - Content/focus
 - Activity and/or discussion
 - Check-out
 - How are you feeling now?
 - Appreciation and Aspiration (Likes/wishes)
 - Final thought
 - Closing
 - Reading/extinguishing chalice
3. Trained facilitator
4. “Small group” size (max 8-10 people)
5. Regular meetings (at least once a month)
6. Service to the church and/or larger community
7. Welcoming of new members
8. Support structure within a congregation
 - Ministerial involvement
 - Congregational support
9. Ongoing facilitators’ meetings with minister or designated leader

Goals of a Covenant Group program include

- Spiritual growth (individual/congregational)
- Community building
- Enhanced participation in Fellowship life
- Expanded congregational ministry
- Expanded opportunities for service to the Fellowship and larger community

Who is eligible to join a group?

- Members
- Friends
- Potential members

How is session content determined?

- By facilitator (based on group's stated interest, affinity, or activity)?
- By group members (based on group's stated interest, affinity, or activity)?

Where will groups meet?

- Fellowship?
- Members' homes?

Group member responsibilities include

- Support and maintain the covenants of the group
(with respect for other group members and the congregation)
- Welcome new members
- Participate in service to the church and/or larger community

Some best practices for covenant groups (suggested by Rev. Connie Grant 05-24-2018)

1. Consider "respect for each other's privacy" rather than "confidentiality" as a standard for your group's covenant. (And know that safety *always* takes precedence over privacy.)
2. Practice "Deep Listening" during check-in. Just listen; just hold each other's words. No comment; no advice. No Kleenex (but have a box handy for people to get their own). No hugs; no laughter.
3. Create space/silence/words after each person's check-in; pause, then the group speaks "We hold you in our hearts..."
4. Don't be afraid of silence; never rush to fill it. Allow/invite/encourage silence: Make room for people to collect their thoughts and to speak as the spirit moves
5. Remain open
 - To new ideas
 - To new members