

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network Website
“Covenant”
Covenant Group Curriculum, River of Grass Unitarian Universalist
Congregation, Davie, FL

Opening Meditation/Music/Silence/Chalice Lighting (whichever one(s) you choose to do)

Opening Words:

Traditionally our churches have been grounded in a covenant binding us together... but this enterprise of maintaining the network is itself not to be understood as simply a human enterprise. It is {our} response to a divinely creative power, a sustaining power, a community-transforming power. The power is ultimately not of our own making...

- *James Luther Adams*

Check-in/Sharing

Topic/Reading:

Eight years ago I moved to California to become President of Starr King School for the Ministry. Truth be told, I was feeling proud of myself. Captain of my ship and master of my soul I had charted valiantly my course to become first, a cellist, then a minister, and now an educator.

When I got to California, I discovered I had a passel of distant cousins I had never met.

One of them, my cousin Eldon Ernst was Dean of the American Baptist seminary at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley. He proposed an Ernst family reunion, and so we got together. When we arrived in the driveway of my cousin Sally Ernst’s home, I got my first introduction to my distant cousins by reading the bumper stickers on their cars.

One said, “If you want peace, work for justice.”

Another, “Teachers do it with class.”

Another, “Live music is best.”

And then there was one that said, “If you love Jesus, tithes.”

Inside, over Jell-O salad, homemade rolls, and tuna casserole reminiscent of every other church potluck I had ever attended, we said hello to one another.

Here was Sally—a minister of religious education and a graduate of Pacific School of Religion. And here was Mike, a professional French horn player and high school music teacher. And

Eldon, a seminary Dean. And, David, a United Methodist parish minister. Every single one of my distant cousins was a musician, or a minister, or a teacher—and several were all three! Not only that, the ministers were all liberal, social-activist types with an intellectual bent. And all the musicians were classical.

Apparently, I had never made any choices at all!

We receive who we are before we choose who we become.

And that is how it is with covenant, as well.

We are born into relationship before we shape relationships by our conscious intention.

We inherit covenant before we create covenant.

- Rebecca Parker

Questions for consideration:

In an age of free agency in so many aspects of life, covenant and promise-making is perhaps even more important. Think on these things: What makes a covenant different from a contract? Name some of the historical religious and secular covenants. What are the covenants you were born in to? What covenants have you created with your own efforts? What's the connection between your spirituality and covenant-making? What are some of the explicit covenants you have made?

Likes and Wishes/Feedback

Closing 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

Amen. May you go in peace. May you live in blessing.