

Covenanting in a New Reality: We Were, We Are, We Can Be

Unitarian Universalist Small Group Ministry Network, *Covenant Group News*, Sept.2021

Opening Words

“There Are No Good Opening Words”

Part of [Multi-Platform Resources: A Guidebook, UUA](#)

Rev. Kimberley Debus reflects:

There are no good opening words,
Written long ago
Or even recently
That capture this moment.
We are
In uncharted territory
Taking up a task
Our past selves and our ancestors
Can only imagine
But here we are –
We are the people this moment needs
And so let us take up our work
In covenant
In faith
In pursuit of healing and holding.
Let our work today
Be fruitful
And helpful
Despite our fears and uncertainties
Despite our anxieties and frustrations
And let us chart this new course
That says
We were, we are, and we can be again.

Check-in/Sharing: How is it with you today?

Topic: Moving from We Were to We Are to We Can Be Again



Covenantal Consent by the UUA Congregational Life Staff Group, adapted here

<https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/covenantal-consent>

“In covenantal communities, we are called to relationships of mutuality. Sometimes this requires taking time to listen deeply to one another’s concerns and fears before making any decisions that might marginalize some in the community, or even to put members of the community at risk, either physically or mentally, or cause people to leave the community.”

Inclusion May we ever be mindful of who is included and who may be excluded, aware of factors, obvious or subtle that interfere with inclusion.

Care May we allow time for each to express needs and feelings about plans and factors. We may know many things about participants in our groups, but we may not have discussed these concerns in a timely and caring way.

Consent May we adopt a practice of consent, asking one another what is comfortable and safe. May we respect what the others might need, even if you don't have the same needs.

Covenant May we respect the many ways people move toward well-being. Our covenants call us to work through differences. And in this manner, we make a difference.

Questions for Discussion

If your group was meeting before the change, reflect on:

How the group is different now from when the pandemic started and feelings about that.

How to plan to reconnect in person, or not.

What you might want to leave behind as you continue.

The grounding of your decisions related to COVID-19 considerations, how others define the grounding for their decisions, and how to work with the differences.

If your group is starting, what do you want to

Envision how the group can or will evolve: what needs to be in addressed for the participants to fully engage

Because this is written for a specific time, you may want to direct these questions in terms of specific topics, such as:

Safety measures related to COVID 19 (masks, distancing, quarantining, vaccines)

Setting for meetings (in person, zoom, or hybrid/multi platforms): benefits and concerns.

Closing Words

We Were

We stood at a point in time over a year ago.

We looked around and listened and named what was.

But now we look back and observe something different or something familiar in a different way.

We can indeed stand in one place and do nothing, but everything around, and even within, will continue to change – and leave us just standing or sitting where we used to be.

Where We Are.

We want to return *from* isolation *to* community.

We want to reopen doors, to go in and out unrestricted.

In returning, will it be the same as it was?

So how can we reopen?

We can be again--differently

We thought that this would be temporary, that we could return to our in-person meetings, return to normal, or rather a “new normal.”

But what is normal? Maybe “new reality” is a better term, a reality that is changing and evolving.

And moving forward now includes a new terms, such as “hybrid” and “Multi-platform”.

New ways to communicate, are calling us to be what we can be, albeit possibly differently.