

FAQ for Covenant Groups at South Church

Questions and Answers Developed by the Covenant Groups Steering Committee with Feedback from Past Participants

Q. Why do we call ourselves Covenant Groups? What IS a covenant?

Quite simply, a covenant is a promise, an agreement. In the law, it is a written and binding agreement that parties will do or not do something. In this ministry, it is a written commitment by the members of each group as to how they wish to behave with each other and how their meetings will be run for the program year.

Q. Do other UU churches have Covenant Groups?

Yes, this is part of a worldwide program in UU churches. Small covenant groups were started about 15 years ago, and there is a website that supports our sessions, plus networks and conferences.

Q. How are groups in the Covenant Groups program different from other groups at South Church?

It is an opportunity to develop relationships and conversations that go way beyond those at coffee hour!

Covenant groups are intentional lay-led small groups that deepen and expand the ministry of a congregation (within the group.) Covenant Groups help build community and provide opportunities for deeper relationships-*intimacy*- and opportunity for deeper spiritual exploration and search for meaning.

Q. What should I expect as a result of participation?

To listen, to be heard, to consider questions you may have not considered before, to hear a variety of answers.

To form bonds with people you might not otherwise meet.

Q. What makes the small group a safe place?

The group's covenant serves that function. The covenant is the committed agreement as to how members of the group will be together and treat each other.

Q. You use the words "deep listening" to describe the group? What is that, and what supports that? (What if I can't do it?)

Deep listening is the art and skill of paying attention to what another person is sharing without inserting yourself into the conversation. During deep listening and sharing time, we do not interrupt, talk to those around us, or react with our body language, gestures, expressions. We just provide a supportive, safe space to hear another human's heart and mind. And you can do it! It can take practice though, and your group leaders and more experienced members can gently remind the group of how we have agreed to be together at this time

Q. What is the purpose of small groups?

To build relationships and community within the church and also promote personal and spiritual exploration.

Q. What is my commitment when I join? Tell me the details. [Do I have to go to all the group meetings?]

Darn tootin'!

Attending all of the meetings is how we build community and closeness with each other. This is not a drop-in group. However, there is an opportunity in January to revisit your commitment. During this time, group members can easily withdraw and new members can be added if there are spaces available in a group.