

Unitarian Universalist
Fellowship
of
Clemson



Nurturing Souls,

Challenging Minds,

Touching Hearts,

and Strengthening

Relationships

What is a covenant group?

Covenant Groups or Small Group Ministry programs exist in many Unitarian Universalist congregations as a way for people to explore their deepest understanding of life in the midst of a community of faith.

Here at the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Clemson, they are groups of 8-12 people, UUFC members and friends, who gather monthly to connect with each other and discuss a predetermined topic. The sharing and deep listening that take place foster intimate connections and a sense of shared community that are often difficult to achieve in a large congregation such as ours. While they are not support groups, members do support each other by listening with empathy and caring for and helping each other when the need arises.

Why are they called covenant groups?

Because each group creates its own covenant or agreement which outlines the guidelines they choose to abide by in their meetings. Covenants usually specify when and list communal expectations such as listening respectfully, speaking one at a time, practicing

kindness, and maintaining confidentiality.

When do they meet?

Most groups meet once a month on a regular day, such as the first Tuesday or third Thursday of each month. Some meet in the evening, while others meet in the morning or afternoon.

Where do they meet?

Many groups meet at UUFC, either at Founders' House or in the Library in the main building. Others meet at members' homes.

What happens at the meetings?

The way meetings go varies from one group to another, but they follow the same general pattern. First, opening words are read and a chalice is lit. Then members check-in with a brief update on how they are doing. The majority of the time is spent on reflection and discussion of the predetermined topic. In some groups, members check-out with their final thoughts on the topic. To conclude, closing words are read and the chalice is extinguished. Some groups take

turns providing refreshments; others do not.

Who leads the meetings?

Each group has a trained facilitator, and most have a co-facilitator as well.

Tell me more about the topics.

Each group chooses its own topics. Sometimes the facilitator comes up with the topic and sometimes members of the group suggest topics they'd like to discuss. Up to a week before each meeting, the facilitator sends out via email the topic, any related readings and/or pertinent questions for discussion. A sampling of topics includes:

Prayer Sacred Places
Balance Follow Your Bliss
Forgiveness Approval
Ethical Reasoning Gratitude
Intergenerational Understanding
Father/Daughter Relationships
I Am Home Peacemaking

OK, I'm sold and I want to be a member of a covenant group. How do I join one?

Open sign-up for covenant groups is held every October. As October approaches, look for information about sign-ups on the UUFC website www.uufc.org and in the newsletter *UUFC World*, the Sunday bulletin and the emailed Midweek News.

If you can't wait for October, contact

Karel Keel at (864) 868-7626, or karel@bellsouth.net

and she will do her best to place you in a group.