

"What my Covenant Group Means to Me" **by Heather Chenette**

My name is Heather Chenette, and I am somewhat of a new member to UUFC. I joined about one year ago, and so my reflection on covenant groups is my experience after being involved in one this past year.

If you asked me what was the most meaningful part of my religious upbringing as a child and youth, I would answer: community. I experienced community by sharing Sunday school class with the same group of kids year after year, by attending youth retreats, camping trips, and weekly bible study. Those friendships were rooted in trust, support, and acceptance.

As an adult I value Sunday services and sermons very much and find them engaging (although that might have something to do with the fact that I now attend a Unitarian Universalist church, and I was brought up on Lutheran sermons), but I still need something deeper and more personal. In fact, after my first few Sundays visiting this fellowship, feeling drawn in and intrigued by the stimulating topics raised by Rev. Alex, I wanted to engage in those discussions in a small group setting to nurture and explore my spirituality, in a meaningful way, with topics relevant to my life now. I wanted to find that atmosphere, that community I had in my youth, to establish more secure relationships. This desire for personal community was not just for a spiritual community, but I was seeking community in general, having moved to Clemson and being just a few years into the Ph.D. program.

My needs were soon satisfied. Several weeks after my first visit last fall, I heard this term 'Covenant Group,' and that there was to be a Sunday Service (just like this one!) soon, where it would all be explained to me, and I could sign up for one. By the end of October I was involved with the "Young Adult" covenant group, which over the last year went through each of the seven principles, one each month, plus a few other topics.

And so, "What does my covenant group mean to me?" To me it means the UU version of "bible study," which, means a committed, lose-knit community of people digging deeper into religious study, in finding new ways to view the universe, raising issues and making a change in our own community, who provide support in times of frustration and who celebrate personal achievements along this journey we call life.