

# Circles of the Spirit Session Plans

## Theme: Covenant

### Opening Reading:

(You may light a chalice if you have one and wish to do so, but it's not mandatory)

*“a covenant might be implicit, expressed by silent consent as people walk together and show concern for one another. But an explicit covenant is far better ... for reminding the members of their mutual duty and stirring them up to it ... there is something to be said for the word covenant, ... It emphasizes that the church is a community of mutual obligation, which involves a sense of commitment. Even the freest of free churches needs that much discipline if it is to last long enough to accomplish anything of value in this world.”*

- Conrad Wright (Unitarian Universalist Historian and Scholar)

### Introductions and Check-In

If this is the first session of a new circle, or if someone new has joined your circle, do a round of brief introductions (just names is enough).

Today's Check-In Question: (limit responses to no more than 2 minutes each)

*What have you said Yes to recently? What commitments, affirmations, and promises have you made?*

### Group Covenant Review and Revision

Look to the Covenant for your Circle, and revise it as needed. Possible prompts for discussing the Covenant:

- *Are these the promises to one another that will make this small group ministry experience one of spiritual growth for us?*

- *Who do we feel called to be in this space together? Are these commitments calling us to be that person?*
- *Do these commitments challenge us to growth? Is it a Doable challenge or too much?*
- *Does anyone have needs (accessibility, safety, comfort, etc) that would not be met by these promises? What additional promise or commitment from the group could help meet that need?*

**Discussion Questions: (depending on how the discussion is going, you may choose which and how many of these questions to discuss)**

1. If someone secretly monitored your life for a month, what would they conclude is your most sacred vow?
2. What are your commitments? To Whom or What are you accountable?
3. It's been said that our very humanity lies in the way we carry out our promises. How have you made yourself more human through a promise? What promise is asking you to renew your humanity right now?
4. How might the world be different if each of us was convinced of our own worth and dignity and treated ourselves that way? What promises could you make to yourself?
5. What do you need to say "No" to in order to open up space to say "Yes" to yourself?
6. What mutual covenants do you have with other people? What unilateral promises have you made?
7. How do the promises and commitments you've made shape who you are?
8. What promise in your life needs to be broken? Are you keeping a commitment that is keeping you in a cage?
9. Do you still need to forgive yourself for breaking a promise?
10. When promises are broken, how good are you at "beginning again in love"? Has your ability to trust survived all those promises that went unfulfilled?
11. Has time and age changed how you think about making promises? Are you slower or quicker to make commitments? Have your commitments grown narrower or more broad?

**Closing Reading:**

*“You Reading This, Be Ready”*

*Starting here, what do you want to remember?*

*How sunlight creeps along a shining floor?*

*What scent of old wood hovers, what softened*

*Sound from outside fills the air?*

*Will you ever bring a better gift for the world*

*Than the breathing respect that you carry*

*Wherever you go right now? Are you waiting*

*For time to show you some better thoughts?*

*When you turn around, starting here, lift this*

*New glimpse that you found; carry into evening*

*All that you want from this day.*

*This interval you spent*

*Reading or hearing this, keep it for life –*

*What can anyone give you greater than now,*

*Starting here, right in this room, when*

*You turn around?*

--William Stafford

