

Session 12: Covenanting with Equity and Transformation: Rooting in Love

We covenant to use our time, wisdom, attention, and money to build and sustain fully accessible and inclusive communities. Equity calls us to listen, understand, respect, and respond to one another.

We covenant to collectively transform and grow spiritually and ethically. Openness to change is fundamental to our Unitarian and Universalist heritages, never complete and never perfect.

Dear UU Wellspring Participant,

Thank you for an engaging last session. During session 12, [insert date, time and location here] we will focus on covenanting with Equity and Transformation. We will explore how equity is necessary to truly transform our systems, societies, and selves.

Covenanting around equity and transformation is making a commitment to recognize how our smallest actions of equity can reverberate, as the butterfly effect explains how one small change can make a significant difference elsewhere. Canadian Indigenous Chief, Bob Joseph (Chief name *K'axwsumala'galis*) also explains how the [Seventh Generation Principle](#) begins with equity and leads to transformation and sustainability.

We will also explore community care in this session, which can amount to something as simple as holding a door open, offering to watch someone's kids, helping with translation of bureaucratic forms, or doing the grocery shopping for an elderly neighbor. Each one of these approaches hold immense value as a way to live into a just and equitable future. Each one can be transformative for all involved. Also, we will use our exploration of self-care in previous sessions to explore the relationship between ourselves and our communities.

We will consider what our communities need for there to be greater equity. What resources? What access? How might this equity transform our community? Our world? Since it is best to ask anyone in need to answer that question rather than doing so for them, we primarily explore how to identify areas of equity and inequity with the goal of transformation.

Resources

- Song "[Mitakayu Oyasin](#)" by Nahku and Medicine for the People. Note that there is a 1-minute introduction before the music begins.
- Video "[Mitakayu Oyasin \(We Are All Related\)](#)" by members of the Oglala Sioux Tribe on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. 2014. (6 min 45 sec)
- *Sacred Nature: Restoring Our Ancient Bond with the Natural World* by Karen Armstrong. Chapter 8. "The Golden Rule"
- *Beyond Welcoming: Building Communities of Love*, ed. by Linnea Nelson. Choose at three (or more) essays to read:

- "A Welcoming Congregation Must be Accessible" by Julie Romero p. 17/
- "A Conscious Act to Stay Engaged" by Dr. Jenice L. View p. 75.
- "Sparking the White Supremacy Teach-In" by Aisha Hauser p. 83.
- "Leading Equitable Multicultural Communities" by Dr. Janice Marie Johnson p. 91.
- "Social Class and Beloved Community" by Denise Moorehead p. 99.
- "Worshiping in Fullness and Truth as Black UUs" by Rev. Mykal O'Neal Slack p. 61.
- "Nurturing Mission-Based Arts Programs" by Laura Weiss p. 99.
- "Embracing Family Ministry" by Laura Beth Brown p. 113.

Reflection Questions:

- How have you experienced the Butterfly Effect, where one small change has had a significant impact?
- In your Unitarian Universalist community, what do you see as a barrier to equity that needs to be addressed? What is one barrier that has been addressed and there is progress being made?
- What needs to transform in yourself to better engage and sustain the feedback loop between self-care and community-care?

Experiences:

Storytelling:

Take a moment to think of what you wish you could say to your ancestors on the topic of equity and transformation. Also, consider what messages you would leave for your descendants. You might [choose a few questions](#) that you will focus on during our next session, when we will do some writing to these prompts.

“Around the world—even in some of the countries most troubled by poverty or civil war or pollution—many thoughtful people are making a deep, concerted search for a way to live in harmony with each other and the earth. Their efforts, which rarely reach the headlines, are among the most important events occurring today. Sometimes these people call themselves peace workers, at other times environmentalists, but most of the time they work in humble anonymity. They are simply quiet people changing the world by changing themselves.”

— Eknath Easwaran

Please arrive a few minutes in advance so that you can settle in before we begin together as a group.

With Love in the Center,

[Facilitator Name]

Note: We offer optional resources in the Covenanting Sessions for ongoing exploration. For this session:

- **Optional Books and Resources**
 - “Chapter 1: Obstacles to Cultural Competence Understanding Resistance to Multicultural Training.” [Counseling the Culturally Diverse 7th edition](#), by Derald Wing Sue and David Sue
 - [Emergent Strategies](#) by adrienne maree brown. AK Press, 2017.
 - [Excerpt from the Introduction](#) of *the New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Color Blindness* by Michelle Alexander.
 - “[Psychiatric diagnoses & bioessentialism will not liberate us](#)” by [Ayesha Kahn, PdD](#) in Woke Scientist.
 - [My Grandmother’s Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies](#) by Resmaa Menakem. Penguin, 2021.
 - “Love and Power at the Center, by Rev. Mary Katherine Morn, Chapter 19 and “Love, A Work in Process” by Rev. Bill Sinkford, Chapter 20 in *Love at the Center: Unitarian Universalist Theologies* ed. By Rev. Dr. Sophia Betancourt.

Session Plan

COMMUNITY: CHECK IN

Reading

Before we check in, I have a reading from Nayyirah Waheed, who is a poet focused on racism, feminism, and self-love in books of poetry and on Instagram, but has not revealed their identity.

“We have all hurt someone tremendously, whether by intent or accident. We have all loved someone tremendously, whether by intent or accident. It is an intrinsic human trait, and a deep responsibility, I think, to be an organ and a blade. But, learning to forgive ourselves and others because we have not chosen wisely is what makes us most human. We make horrible mistakes. It’s how we learn. We breathe love. It’s how we learn. And it is inevitable.” Nayyirah Waheed

Our music for today is “[Just as Long as I Have Breath](#)” by The Unwieldies. Lyrics are found in [Singing the Living Faith hymnal 3 6.](#) It is about 3 minutes long and we will have 6 minutes of silence after that.

Facilitator Tips

- If you are playing the music in person, use a good quality speaker to avoid the music becoming distracting.
- Set up the music in advance to check for any advertisements that you can skip before playing for the group.
- When playing on zoom, use the share button and choose Advanced, Computer Music and Share.
- Remember to allow silence after the music.

Check in:

As we engage in our session on Covenanting with Equity and Transformation, I invite you to check in by sharing one thing that has transformed in your congregation for the sake of greater equity. It is fine to repeat or amplify what someone else has shared and we won't share the transformation the change may have instigated at this time.

You may find you are also carrying something in your heart that you want to share with this group as well.

Facilitator Tips

- Model the check-in for your group to encourage brevity. You might model by saying, "In my congregation, I have experienced more diverse authors in our readings from the pulpit over the past few years." Remind the group that check-in is about 2 minutes per person.
- Remind participants that this is the time for deep listening, no fixing, no saving, no advising. Our highest offering is to be a witness to one another with love and kindness.

AGREEMENTS: COVENANT

Review the covenant as needed for your group.

Facilitator Tips

- You have choices in reviewing the covenant based on your groups' needs. However, you usually won't be able to anticipate the future needs, so find different ways to review the covenant.
- Vary the approach but touch on the covenant every time so that if something needs to be brought up, there is already space for it.
- Some ways include:
 - Reading the full covenant silently or aloud and asking if we are living into this covenant faithfully.
 - Asking a participant to read the line of the covenant that is important to them

- Asking everyone to read through it silently and asking if there is anything we should discuss.

REFLECTIONS: QUESTIONING

We will begin our reflections today with (choose a question to begin):

- How have you experienced the Butterfly Effect, where one small change has had a significant impact?
- In your Unitarian Universalist community, what do you see as a barrier to equity that needs to be addressed? What is one barrier that has been addressed and there is progress being made?
- What needs to transform in yourself to better engage and sustain the feedback loop between self-care and community-care?

Facilitator Tips

- Focus on one question so that you have time for the experience and/or storytelling.
- At times, you may be directed to go directly to the experiences or storytelling.

EXPERIENCES

We will work as a group to name an oppressive situation, and together we will identify the three parts of this oppression by naming the institutional, interpersonal and internalized parts as identified in your email. For example, we might name profiling black drivers. The institutional part would be that it is illegal to stop cars just because the driver is black. However, the interpersonal part of this oppression is that at times, police officers more often choose to stop people of color than white people for minor traffic violations. The internalized feeling is one of fear and apprehension whenever driving.

What is another oppression we can discuss as a group?

STORYTELLING

We will take ten minutes to write a letter to either one of your ancestors, children alive today, or children seven generations into the future. Pick one or more questions listed, journal or draw in response to them if necessary. We will share how the process made you feel and share letters, journal entries or drawings you are ready to reveal.

Facilitator Tips

- Print out [this handout](#) prior to the session to share with your group, or share your screen if you are online. Either way, read them aloud before you begin and ask for questions or clarification needed.

To Ancestors

- What is one thing that your ancestors did to prepare you for this time?
- What is one thing your ancestors could have done differently that you may resent or regret?
- As part of healing generational wounds, what is a trauma that your ancestors experienced, which you want to honor and start to repair?
- As part of healing generational wounds, what is a trauma that they committed that caused trauma you want to forgive?
- What is something your ancestors did to increase your chance of that you want to appreciate and/or give gratitude towards?

To the Children Alive today

- What is one thing you've learned that you want to pass on to children alive today?
- Name one thing you would recommend children of today practice or do to increase their chances of sustaining and evolving life?
- Name one thing you would encourage them not to do as it would decrease their chances to sustain and evolve life?
- What is one thing that you personally regret doing that has impacted their life experience? How do you want to apologize?
- What is one appreciation you want to offer to children today?

Now imagine that you are a child, seven generations from now writing a letter to this generation

- What is one thing your ancestors did to prepare you for this time?
- What is one thing your ancestors could have done differently that you resent or regret?
- As part of healing generational wounds, what is a trauma that they experienced, which you want to honor and start to repair?
- As part of healing generational wounds, what is a trauma your ancestors committed to cause trauma that you want to forgive?
- What is something your ancestors did so that you could survive and be alive now? How might you show your appreciation or gratitude?

Affirmations

To begin our closing, please share a word or phrase of gratitude or affirmation for this shared experience.

Facilitator Tips

- Encourage everyone to unmute if you are online, or come into a closer circle, elbow to elbow if you are in person and everyone is comfortable being this close together. Ask for consent before moving closer. If any one person is uncomfortable, remain in your seats.
- Model sharing a word and then another later to show that they can add more than one word if the spirit moves them.

Closing Words

Share with participants:

“May we live into our faith with love, equity, and transformation. May it be so.”

Facilitator Tips

- You could also choose to create a special blessing at the end of each session by beginning with “May we...”
- You may always choose your own words for the closing.
- Participants may want to create/write a closing of their choosing.