

FALL  
2020

# Families

WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

## A Tale of Three Villages

By Renée Ruchotzke

**There once were three travelers whose village was flooded. Together they set out for higher ground to find a new home. As they journeyed, they reminisced in stories of their former home and their loved ones lost to the flood.**

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Keeping  
the Covenant  
of Democracy

VISIT

[www.uua.org/parenting-pandemic](http://www.uua.org/parenting-pandemic) and find faithful support for raising kids amid the covid pandemic and white supremacy.

As they crossed over mountains they saw a sheltered, fertile valley beyond, with a cluster of three small villages. One said, "This land looks a lot like home, but I'm a little bit nervous about meeting new people." The second said, "We have become good friends. We know and trust each other, and we share tasks fairly." The third said, "Let's ask good questions at each village to help us find a new home." Over their fire that night they came up with two questions: "How does the village make decisions" and "What happens when you don't agree?"

When they entered the first village, the villagers told them, "We have a powerful ruler who decides what is best for our village. The ruler's family have been in charge for many generations. If we have a disagreement, the ruler

decides for us."

The travelers looked at each other with tight lips, then thanked the villagers and continued their journey.

When they entered the second village, they asked, "How does your village make decisions?" The villagers responded, "We vote for a few people to represent all of us on a council. We vote for people who promise to make decisions that are the best for us."

Then the travelers asked, "What happens when you don't agree with what the council decides?"

"Sometimes we don't all like what they decide. But we have to do it."

The travelers looked at each other with disappointed eyes, then said "thank you" and "good-bye" to those villagers, as well.

As they trudged to the third village, they talked amongst themselves. One

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The Families pages are adapted from Tapestry of Faith lifespan faith development programs. [uua.org/tapestry](http://uua.org/tapestry)

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said, "That sounded good at first, but was it better than the village with a ruler?" Another said, "Not really. Some people have a bigger say." The third said, "After the others vote for them, the people on the council can do whatever they want."

In the third village, they soon found some villagers to ask about decision-making there. One villager smiled and said, "Come. We will show you."

The villagers formed a large circle and invited the travelers to join them. A villager wearing a special necklace said, "We welcome you into our circle. If you would like to stay, you must accept our agreements: Speak the Truth. Keep Your Promises. Honor and Care for this Circle as Part of Earth and Sky." The travelers looked at each other with shiny eyes, then agreed in unison.

Another villager explained, "This is how we make important decisions: by listening to each in their turn, under these agreements, until the decision is made. This is also how we disagree, by listening to each in their turn. Sometimes, we agree to disagree, but we disagree in respect and peace." The travelers smiled widely. They had found their new home.

- **Why do you think the travelers decided to stay in the third village?**
- **What is important to the people in the third village? What values can you notice in their Agreements?**
- **What are the values that people share where you live? What rules do you go by that help you live by those values?**

## EXPLORING TOGETHER

**"Everyone has a say" is one of our Unitarian Universalist Principles. And it's one of the principles of democracy. Just like the UU Principles are a covenant UUs agree on to keep us connected, democracy is a covenant that keeps the people in a nation connected.**

**What are some covenants that YOU are part of?**

**What promises do you keep so the covenant stays strong?**



### When Voting's Not Fair

A vote is a way to have a say. And still, when it's election time, not everyone has a say! Many who want to vote face obstacles that are not fair. People in charge of the voting sometimes use their power to make voting easy or hard.

When leaders make it hard for others to vote or they ignore the vote and do what they want, they are breaking the covenant. As UUs, we believe a broken covenant can and must be repaired. The people who break it are accountable. When voting's not fair, what can the people do who have been hurt? What should the people who broke the covenant of democracy do?

### But Kids Don't Vote

Kids don't vote in political elections, but your right to speak out is part of democracy's covenant.

Some adults think all ages should have a say in matters that concern them in their town and in our nation.

Do you think kids should be able to vote? Why? Why not?

#### You can...

- **make signs and bring them to a rally for a cause or a candidate you believe in**
- **help get people registered who are old enough to vote**
- **start a petition for a new rule that voters can decide on later**





## Make a Paper Circle

Discover the covenant that connects your family.

### You will need:

- Sheets of colored paper, cut into strips
- Scissors
- Markers
- Tape



1.

Get together and name the values your family cares about. Values are ideas like kindness, anti-racism, or taking care of the earth.

2.

Write each value on a strip of paper. Tape both ends of one strip together to make a circle. Link a second value to the first. Link all the values together so you have a circle of circles.

3.

What behaviors show your family's values? Write or draw good behaviors on paper strips. Link them to the values they show. *Example:* Washing your hands (behavior) shows you value keeping each other healthy.

Some behaviors go with more than one value. There is no ONE way to do kindness! Some behaviors might support one value and challenge another. What if you wash your hands well, but take a long time in the bathroom everyone shares?

Your paper circle may get big enough to hold your family like a covenant. At least, it is a good symbol for one. A paper link can be torn, but it can also be repaired.

## Covenants, in Action!

A covenant says what is important to the people who make it. It reminds them of the values they share, but does not give them rules to follow.

■ Which is easier to follow, a value or a rule? Why?

■ What rules do you need for when somebody breaks the covenant?

Here are some covenant words written before we all were born, by James Vila Blake:

**This is our great covenant:  
To dwell together in peace,  
To seek the truth in love,  
And to help one another.**

If you agreed to be in this covenant, how would you try to behave? How would you expect others to act?

**DRAW IT!**

## Troll Feet for Dinner

Everyone's getting hungry. The family will all have a say in what to eat for dinner...like their UU Principles say.

You are the youngest. You say, "As long as we don't have to eat troll feet..."

The oldest says, "Oooh! We didn't think of that, it's been ages! That's my favorite."

The second oldest says, "Hooray! Leftovers tomorrow!" You are in despair.

Your sibling says, "But last time we had troll feet, I almost lost my lunch!"

The oldest says, "But you know how much we love it! You shouldn't have mentioned it!"

Someone says "Let's vote!" But it's a tie: two and two. "I'm sorry, kids," the oldest says. "Troll feet tonight!"

## THINK ABOUT IT

- Does everyone really have an equal say about what's for dinner?
- Is it fair for the elders to take over when the votes are tied?
- Did the elders break the covenant of everyone having an equal say? How can they try to repair the covenant?



# Raising Covenant-Keepers in a Broken Democracy

By Alex Sherwood

The fifth Principle is one of the more complicated pieces of Unitarian Universalist writings: “The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large.” What does it mean that we, UUs, affirm and promote this principle?

As a young adult in the United States, a country that routinely uses its purported support of democracy around the world as an excuse for military invasion and occupancy, I wonder if the democracy we have agreed to affirm is just an expression of the same white supremacy we want to fight. Even in our own country, the democratic process has corruption.

This kind of unsettling feeling makes it hard to talk to our children about covenant.

While the democratic process does not technically begin or end in the voting booth, engaging in the political process is fraught with roadblocks and challenges. Our system is built on assumptions of trust and common interest, however when trust is broken, we do not have an accountability structure that is direct. We can say we will vote out the harmful politician, but the realities of campaign financing and other systemic corruptions have already limited our choices. Do we really have an equal say?

If we want to raise covenant-keepers, it's not enough to simply tell them “every voice matters.” How do we prepare children to keep themselves and others accountable?

**...democracy only works when we think not just about ourselves, but about each other. ... If the world's going to get better, it's going to be up to you.**

— Former President Barack Obama, to HBCU graduates May 16, 2020



How do we reconcile the way democracy plays out in our country with ideals that we hold as UUs?



How can we build structures of accountability inside the political process?



How can parents and caregivers seed accountability at home?

## FAMILIES: WEAVE A TAPESTRY OF FAITH

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## FIND OUT MORE

■ Kimberly Jones, a black author and lecturer based in Atlanta, gave a powerful statement in the wake of protests for black lives in June, 2020. She unpacks how police brutality toward African Americans represents a centuries-old breach of democracy's social contract. Watch the video on YouTube. Consider how democracy's covenant is more aspiration than reality. For racial justice to come, must democracy be scrapped and re-made? Can it be repaired? How will you and your family be part of this work?

■ Democracy's covenant is the subject of many picture books. *What's the Big Deal About Elections?* tells how voters choose leaders and what happens after the voting. *Lillian's Right to Vote: A Celebration of the Voting Rights Act of 1965* follows an elder African American voter's musings on her way to cast her vote. On YouTube, watch a promo for *What Can a Citizen Do?* by Dave Eggars, illustrated by Shawn Harris.

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