



# Promises for a New Unitarian Universalism



A workshop on covenant  
for youth & young adults

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## Program overview

This program was designed as a way for youth and/or young adults to explore covenant. Though it was designed for use online, it is easily adaptable for in-person use. You should feel free to adapt it as needed for your own group.

Though it may be possible to fit this workshop into a one-hour window if needed, it may be preferable to allow 90 minutes if possible—especially if you'd like to include a check-in.

## Resources

### Jamboard

To use a jamboard in your workshop, make a copy of our [Youth on Covenant jamboard](#) and use it for your group. Once your workshop concludes, we'd love to see a copy of what your group came up with. Email your link to [article2studycommission@uua.org](mailto:article2studycommission@uua.org)

### Google Form

The activities in this workshop ask some questions of participants. If meeting online, please share this google form link with the group so they can answer these questions for themselves: <https://forms.gle/iWwHkBwhV6bcERbJ7> . If meeting in person, you can collect answers and fill out one copy of the form for your whole group or pass the link on to the group afterward. Please note that the google form will collect email addresses. If youth would like to avoid sharing their own email address, please ask them to use an email address for the religious educator or the congregation.



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## Program

### Splash Activity for Arriving

[Program leaders: If you have any arriving rituals you typically do with youth, begin with these (name tags? conversation? check-in?)]

Online—[As participants arrive, share the link to the Jamboard (make a copy of the one [here](#) and use for your group) and ask folks to share their favorite gif, emoji, or meme to use online or while texting to show they agree with something.]

On-site—[As participants arrive, ask them to write or draw on post-it notes all the words, phrases, or images they can think of that indicate agreement. Post on an easel page or wall.]

### Chalice Lighting

[If you have a regular chalice lighting, use your regular one, but if not, light a chalice using these words:]

*As we light this chalice, may we remember all the wonders of the universe that must come together in order to make this flame possible, contained in this space, in this tumultuous time. Each one of us—in all of our variety—is no less a miracle. It is good to be together.*

### Introduction to the work of the Article 2 Study Commission

Though most of us have seen the UU Principles and Sources we're all familiar with on posters and in our hymnals, their actual, original home is in Article 2 of the UUA Bylaws. Because we understand Unitarian Universalism to be a living tradition, it's important to revisit even our most treasured ideals—maybe *especially* our most treasured ideals—to be sure they are still as meaningful as they were to begin with.

So every 15 years, we examine Article 2 to see if anything about it needs to change to better reflect the UUs we are today and who we want to be. This is what we're doing now, and we are hoping to have thousands of UUs participate in conversations



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about what—if any—changes might be appropriate. We are beginning by taking on four big topics:

1. What is most important to us, our shared UU values?
2. What inspires us; where do our values come from?
3. What is our work in the world, our mission or purpose?
4. What promises must we make to each other; what is our covenant?

This workshop will explore this all-important fourth topic: Covenant.

## Our Beloved Community

Imagine a Unitarian Universalist community that is just the way you think it should be. Take 5 minutes to write or draw how such a community would feel. [Leaders may want to play soft instrumental music during this time]. Who would be there? What kinds of things would you do together? What would it sound like? What would it feel like? What hopes would you bring to it? How would you feel as you said goodbye after a gathering? [Leaders may want to prepare these questions on a slide or paste in the chat, or write on an easel pad so youth can see the questions as they work.]

Share verbally and/or, if online, add your thoughts to the jamboard (visible to all participants) or to the [google questionnaire](#) (visible only to the commission after the workshop)

[Allow conversation to go for up to 10 minutes; draw attention to items on the jamboard too; affirm ideas; transition to next agenda item if conversation quiets early.]

## Covenanting for Beloved Community

When we say “covenant,” we basically mean the promises we make to each other in community. [Leaders may want to write these lists out on slides or newsprint, or just go over them verbally.] A covenant does many things, such as:

- help us know how to stay in right relationship
- give us a sense of belonging, knowing we're in the right place
- hold aspirations and help us know what's most important
- bind us together in solidarity and help us reach our goals
- (other?) [ask if the group has any other suggestions of things to add]



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There are also several *types* of covenant, such as:

- person to person (like wedding vows)
- person to community (such as joining a congregation)
- community to person (as in a child dedication)
- community to community (our uu principles)
- multiple individual to group (like a youth group covenant)

So, now that we have in mind what a covenant can do, and we have some ideas about what an ideal Unitarian Universalist community might be like, let's put the two together. What are the promises we would have to make to each other if we wanted to live in the Beloved UU Community of our dreams? [Take 15-20 minutes to discuss. If online and you haven't already, share the link to the [google questionnaire](#) to allow participants to also contribute without speaking. If conversation lags or if participants need more prompting, use any of the following questions to spark additional discussion:]

*Optional conversation sparks:*

- *What are some of the unspoken agreements you have with close friends that help you trust and care for each other (maybe "be honest with each other"; or "call them out when they say mean things about themselves"; other examples?)*
- *Think of a fictional friendship or community you admire. What makes it work? What promises could you imagine the people in that relationship making to each other?*
- *Is there a group agreement you've had in a previous group's covenant that you thought was useful?*
- *What is special about the UU community you imagined? What could \*you\* personally do to help create that type of community?*
- *Is there a group agreement you wish had been in place (and followed) in a previous experience that might have solved a problem that came up?*

## Wrap Up/Announcements

Your Article 2 Study Commission thanks you for sharing your experience and your wisdom! You can keep up with our work at [uuu.org/a2sc](http://uuu.org/a2sc) and through YUUP. If you want to get in touch with the commission, you can send us an email at [article2studycommission@uua.org](mailto:article2studycommission@uua.org).

## Check-out

Before we leave this place, share one or two words about your hopes for what the future of Unitarian Universalism might be like.



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## Closing

*Everything we love about this community was created by people.*

*There was a time before any of it existed, and then a moment—or many, many moments—when people came together and made the somethings we treasure most.*

*Someday a community will light a chalice and think back to these days and the things they love about what we created together. May it be so.*