

The Practice of Invitation: Creating Covenant

Theme Angle
To get to know one another and create our covenant as we begin our new year.

Materials Needed:
Name tag inserts and holders
Markers/crayons/pens/pencils
Chalice/candle
Chimes
Joys and Sorrows bowl
For Activities: Newsprint or other large paper

Set-up:
Have some chairs around the table for making name tags. Have the chalice, chimes, and joys & concerns bowl on the table in the center.

Arrival Time
The Leader sits by the door to greet the youth (and possibly parents) as they arrive. Ask each person how they are feeling today and acknowledge this with a fist bump, elbow bump, high five, or a nod of your head - whatever they are comfortable doing.
The Assistant greets the youth and invites them to make a name tag if they aren't wearing one. Invite the group to sit around the chalice table.

Welcome!

Welcome everyone to the middle school group and introduce yourselves. Let the group know we'll have some fun and get to know each other a little bit by playing some games and creating our own covenant.

Activity

Game: Silent Interviews

1. Divide the group into pairs - try to mix the group into pairs of folks who don't know each other well.
2. Ask the participants to introduce themselves to their partner.
3. Instruct the group that from this point forward, speaking is not allowed. This includes whispering, mouthing words, and making sounds, too!
4. Inform the group that they must tell their partner 3 things about themselves without speaking, similar to a charades game. These things cannot be physical characteristics.
5. Once all of the partners have finished miming to each other, call everyone back into a circle.
6. Ask for each pair to verbally introduce their partner to the group, as well as the three things that they learned (or think they learned).

Light It!

When everyone is seated, ring the singing bowl. Ask them to stay quiet until they can't hear the sound. As Unitarian Universalists, we light a flaming chalice as a way to center ourselves when we gather. Our chalice lighting words today are:

Invitation by Shel Silverstein
If you are a dreamer, come in
If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar,
A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer...
If you're a pretender, come sit by the fire
For we have some flax-golden tales to spin.
Come in!
Come in!

Joys and Sorrows

Explain to the youth that we take time to share our joys and sorrows when we are together. We want to know all the good and bad things that are happening to them.

Pass the bowl around the circle and invite each person to take a stone. Explain that we'll take turns and go around the circle. When it's your turn, say your name, and one thing you are sad or happy about today. Then put your stone into the bowl. If you don't want to share, just say "pass" and put your stone in the bowl. When everyone has gone, put in a stone and say, "This is for the joys and sorrows that were not spoken, but are in our hearts."

Explore It!

Planning the Year Ahead

Tell the youth that you're glad they are here to start the new year at UCE. Invite them to share their thoughts on the following, and have someone write the ideas on the post-it pad or other paper:

- What are you most looking forward to in this group this year?
- Should we consider naming our group?
- Should we do social things outside of Sunday mornings? If yes, what?

Let the youth know that we will be planning a worship service for Youth Sunday on April 13, and exploring our values and UU identity as the seniors prepare for bridging in May.

For this month, Rev. Susan has asked if we would participate in the Climate Change Revival service next Sunday. Some roles youth can take:

- Light & Extinguish the chalice
- Read part of the Prayers of the People and Planet by the UU Climate Justice Revival Worship Team
- Be part of the Ritual for Action
- Read part of the Benediction

Let the youth know that she needs to know who can participate by 10 am on Tuesday, September 24th. She will send you the worship script then.

Also, Rev. Eileen and Kathy Underwood are offering a program for youth and adults: Meeting Our Interfaith Neighbors. We will be exploring one faith tradition in our area each month. They can participate as much as they can. The first 3 sessions starting on October 1, will be on Zoom only as an introduction to the program and how it connects to our UU values. The rest of the program will be in person with visits to each place of worship. Let Kathy know if you're interested.

Invite from Rev. Allison and Countryside UU youth:

Introduction to the Prison Industrial Complex
...and how to change it.

Saturday October 19, 2024
10 am - 2 pm
Countryside UU Church, Atherton Hall
& on zoom

Creating Covenant (if time allows)
Ask the youth what their understanding is of the word "covenant". Invite responses. If they need clarification, they can think of it as a type of promise - more formal and sacred than a typical promise though.

On a piece of newsprint or paper, invite someone to be the scribe to write down all ideas presented. Ask the youth, "What would make this time and space sacred to you as far as how we should behave and act?"

To help get the process going, some usual things are:
- One voice at a time (take turns speaking)
- Ways to express discomfort with something that is said or done, such as "ouch!"

- Keep confidentiality except in cases of self-harm or harm to others

Then ask the group, “What should happen if someone doesn’t follow our covenant?” Write down responses. Some possibilities are:

- Say “ouch” (or other word) and explain why it hurt. Ask for an apology.
- Ask the person to sit aside or leave the room for a certain period of time.

Once there is a list, on a fresh piece of newsprint, combine similar ideas into one short phrase or a couple of words. Then ask if everyone is in agreement. If yes, invite them to sign it and decorate it if they wish.

Evacuation Drill

Around 11:45, we will have our drill. Let the youth know that they are to line up quietly at the door when given the alarm. From there, they will quickly stop at room 9 to see if any assistance is needed with the pre/k/1 group. If yes, then help them escort children down the hall towards room 7 and the outside door. If not, then leave the building via the door by room 7.

The following instructions are also located in the room binder as well as on a clipboard that has a sign-out sheet for parents to pick up their child(ren) after the drill.

Please read through the entire procedure:

Evacuation Procedure For Faith Formation Leaders

Nursery: in room 11
Pre/K/1 –in room 9
2nd - 5th – in room 8
6th-8th - in room 10
9th-12th – in room

1. Someone will sound the “alarm” by announcing on the walkie talkie that there is a fire in the building.

2. Leaders from each of the rooms will escort kids as follows:

   a. High School 9th-12th youth: Leaders take the attendance sheet and a pen, and then go with youth to the nursery in room 11 to help carry any little ones who need help. If no help is needed, they will walk back towards room 5 to the door at the end of the hallway. They will stop at room 9 (pre/k/1) to help any youngsters if needed on the way.

   b. Nursery: Caregivers will instruct youth and/or leaders to help take babies/toddlers if needed. One caregiver will lead the youngsters/helpers, and the other caregiver will take the attendance/sign-in sheet with a pen and follow the group down the hallway past rooms 13 and 5, then out the door at the end of the hallway.

   c. Pre/K/1: One leader leads the group, and the other leader will take the attendance/sign-in sheet with a pen and follow the group down the hallway past room 7 and out the door at the end of the hallway.

d. 2nd - 5th youngsters: One leader leads the group, and the other leader will take the attendance/sign-in sheet with a pen and follow the group down the hallway past room 7 and out the door at the end of the hallway.

e. 6th-8th: One leader leads the group, and the other leader will take the attendance/sign-in sheet with a pen, and stop by room 9 to see if assistance is needed there. If yes, then help them escort children down the hall towards room 7 and to the outside door. If not, then leave the building via the door by room 7.

f. ALL: Upon exiting the building, groups should stay together and walk calmly across the South Lawn towards Ridge Avenue and the *Black Lives Matter* sign. Nursery and pre/k/1 groups should stand together on the grass closest to the sign. Older groups should stand on the grass further from the sign on the other side of the youngest groups.

g. Leaders will take attendance once outside to ensure that everyone is out safely. If someone is missing, notify DLFF or Senior Minister immediately.

h. Parents can meet their child(ren) as long as they stay with them in their group until the Leader has checked the attendance sheet. Parents will sign out children on the sheet provided by their leader.

Once everyone is accounted for and youth are signed out by a parent, you can return the clipboard to Kathy or to the room and then leave.

Please let Kathy know if there are any challenges with the evacuation drill, or write them below.

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