

## THE CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT PROCESS AT FIRST UNIVERSALIST



be a spiritual seeker

Each of us is warmly invited - even beseeched! - to join with other First Uers as we explore our way into Covenant. Between mid-Feb and mid-March, we're having a few gatherings at church and a few gatherings at member homes. We will do the same thing at each: discuss what covenant IS and is NOT, and then make a list of ways we will engage with each other in church life. Those lists will be the source for the wordsmithing team who will share a preliminary draft a bit later, and on which we will vote at our Annual Meeting in May.

After worship on Feb 19th is the first of these gatherings! Please see sign-ups at church (in the Gathering Room).

For more information, check-in with members of the Healthy Congregation Team (Sarah Witte, Steve Thomas, Sue Ellen Bordwell, Jane Cleaves, Tom Carlisle).

Or call/email Sarah Witte: 207-415-2973 or [sarahcoffinwitte@gmail.com](mailto:sarahcoffinwitte@gmail.com)

## AN EXPLANATION OF COVENANT – REV. THOM BELOTE



"I once attended a public rally organized by Planned Parenthood. There, at that rally ... there were a couple of college students who were also conservative Christians who were also there to spy on what was going on. Word got around that a minister who supported sex education was in the crowd and the two students made a bee-line to find out the story of the minister who would stand up for medically-accurate human sexuality education.

They barraged me with questions, questions that clearly established that a pattern that others had made was prevailing in [their] world. They had never heard of Unitarian Universalism, so they began to try to ascertain whether I ascribed to the same creeds and doctrines to which they assented. "Do Unitarian Universalists believe in the Bible?"

But, you can't know us by defining our doctrines, can you? You can't know us by pinning us down on a statement of belief. We're covenantal, not creedal. You know us by knowing how we promise to try to be together. [...]

In the assumptions that these ladies brought into the conversation, a pattern that others had made prevailed in the world. That pattern said that religion is about correct doctrine, established forms, orthopraxy. [...] It was agonizing to try to explain to them that we do not see religion as a matter of doctrines but a matter of

relationships, not a matter of creeds but a matter of how we promise to be together.

The Jewish theologian Martin Buber famously said that our humanity is inextricably bound to our promises. He called us the “promise-making, promise-breaking, promise-renewing animal.” Riffing on Buber, UU minister John Buehrens said, “I believe that we humans are not so much homo sapiens (we are neither that wise nor that self-aware), but rather we are [the animal that makes promises]. We ourselves are created in the context of relationships, promises, commitments. We then either break them, make new ones, modify them, or renew them. To use a word deeply rooted in our culture, we are ‘covenantal’ by nature.”

- Excerpted from Rev. Thom Belete