

# Building the Beloved Community

## Lesson 1: Creating a Covenant

1.21.2024

---

**Objectives:** Introduction to community, culture, and creating learning covenant.

**Materials:** Flipchart, human bingo cards, lesson attachments.

**Time allotments** suggested for 50 minute class, followed by 25 minute closing service.

---

### 1. Nametags and Graffiti Wall (5 minutes before class begins)

- Make nametags using blank paper, markers, and holders. Youth can create their own unique but LEGIBLE nametag. Make it a regular practice to wear nametags.
- “Graffiti Wall” questions: Write the following on whiteboard. Invite youth as they arrive to grab a marker and weigh in with their responses:
  - ▶ What does “diversity” mean to you?
  - ▶ What do you hope to learn from this course?
- Teachers complete attendance sheets.

### 2. Silly Fun: Human Bingo (10 minutes)

Each person gets a human bingo card listing various descriptions/facts (e.g. “someone who has visited a foreign country,” or “someone who hates getting their feet wet”). Youth move around the room trying to match persons to facts, trying to be the first to complete the card and declare “Bingo!”

### 3. Chalice Lighting: Light the chalice, saying these words together: “We light this chalice as a symbol of our faith; the light of truth and the warmth of love.”

**Teacher reads:** (from poet and civil rights activist, Audre Lorde)

*“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our **inability** to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences [that divide us].”*

### 4. Community Time Activities (25 minutes)

**Where Do I Stand?:** Designate 3 imagined spots on the floor as Very, Somewhat, and Not At All representing a continuum of opinion. Youth will be invited to stand at differing points along the continuum in response to series of questions. Give each participant a

numbered question to read aloud (attached), with everyone then moving to their chosen spot on the continuum. After all 11 questions have been asked, invite brief comments about how people chose their spots.

**Venn Diagram/ Similarities & Differences:** Teachers help youth get into groups of 3 with others less familiar. Teacher draws a Venn Diagram with 3 intersecting circles to create a visual expression of this activity. Each group identifies:

- 10 things they have in common (e.g. lived in same neighborhood for 7+ years)
- 10 things unique to each youth (e.g. I was adopted, home-schooled)

#### **Questions for Discussion:**

- Having identified things in common and things unique to each, how can this information help to make everyone feel included in group discussions?  
**For example:** If someone brings up a Harry Potter reference at an important moment in class discussion, but not everyone has read the books or seen the movie, is that okay?
  - What might we need to do to include everyone?
  - Do we have to set aside everything not shared by everyone in the class?
- What is the balance between sharing what is important to us, and understanding that it may not be important to everyone else?

### **5. Important Agreements (14 minutes)**

Extend community sharing to discuss what community practices/agreements will help “learning together.” Because this class is not just about learning new information but learning about ourselves, how do we create a community where our best selves can emerge? Write these agreements on the flipchart and tape up on the wall to refer back as needed in future classes.

**\*Question to consider for this course:** The agreement to “assume positive intentions” and goodwill is vital for the work of racial justice and multiculturalism. But does that mean what others say/do out of good intentions will never hurt us?

- Are positive intentions (“I didn’t mean to...” ) protection from all harm?
- Can we apply the same principle of “assuming positive intentions” when honest, critical feedback is given? (I.e. assuming critical feedback is offered not to shame us but to request change in behavior or language.)
- What do you think about Unity Church shifting from using the language of “safe space” to “brave space”? Does one help achieve the other? Which one?

**One important agreement for Junior High youth:** Weekly classes will conclude with worship in Ames Chapel, so that youth can experience regular worship that's at the heart of every faith community. Additionally, youth will attend worship in the main Sanctuary *at least once a month* with their families/friends (at either a *Story Sunday* or *Family Sunday* that occurs once each month). Unlike their younger siblings who may exit after the children's story moment in worship, Junior High youth will stay for the full service.

**6. Home Assignment** (1 minute)

For next class, please ask youth to bring (1) a picture or object that describes or connects to an important family tradition and (2) a story of a family member that has stuck with them over the years.

**7. Extinguish the chalice**, saying together:

*"May the light of truth and the warmth of love go with us in our hearts."*

**8. Help clean up classroom** before leaving: Please keep regular practice of readying classroom for the next class.

- leave lesson plan and all materials organized
- wipe the whiteboard clean
- tables and chairs neatly returned
- nametags collected in Ziploc bag
- leave any comments for RE staff on attendance sheets