

SAMPLE COVENANT FOR THE USG SMALL GROUP MINISTRY PROGRAM

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We gather to grow in our spiritual and relational lives, and to offer our gifts to one another, to USG, and to our wider community.

PARTICIPATION

Participation in the USG Small Group Ministry program is equally open to members, contributing friends, and newcomers. Groups will have approximately 12 participants, as determined by the facilitator(s). Each group decides if/when it will accept new members.

DATE, TIME, AND DURATION

Groups meet once per month. Members commit to actively participate for the whole church year (September to August), after which the group may continue or disband as determined by the facilitator(s) and members.

RESPECTING TIME

We commit to starting and ending our meetings on time. Hosts should expect that members will arrive slightly before the starting time in order to insure a timely start to our meetings. Planned absences should be communicated in advance to the facilitators, and members are encouraged to explain unplanned absences to the group. If you need to quit the group, you are encouraged to let us know why.

MEETING NORMS

1. Speak from your own experience. Our meetings are not a place to debate facts and theories; they are a time for reflecting upon ideas as they relate to our own experience and lives.
2. Be honest. Respectfully say what you feel and think without excuses.
3. Practice “deep listening.” Do not interrupt other speakers. Silence is OK and sharing is optional.
4. If you have complaints about the group, bring problems with the group to the group.
5. Meetings are not for providing advice.
6. Share only as much as you are comfortable with. Intimate revelation is not required to be a valued member of our group.

RESPECTING PRIVACY

Maintaining a safe space where members can share openly and honestly is critical to the success of a small group. Therefore, in general, sensitive information about personal struggles should be kept confidential. At the same time, part of the purpose is to increase each member’s support network, which will occasionally require follow-up on information disclosed during meetings. Therefore, members are encouraged to declare their desired standard of privacy, especially for significant pieces of information (such as major illness, job or marital struggles, etc) prior-to or after they have shared (e.g. “Please keep this information within this group”). Small Groups often bring interesting perspectives and insight to the table, so Members should not fear sharing what they’ve learned during group outside of meetings so long as the privacy of the speaker(s) are protected.

SERVICE

We commit to engaging, as a group, in two acts of service during our time together: one to USG—such as serving as a host for coffee hour—and one to the larger community. Our facilitator will make time during our gatherings to discuss and plan these activities.