

# Introduction

Dear A2U2,

Thank you so much for engaging with the covenant workshop earlier this month! While the post-its were only a glimpse into your conversations, they are a rich starting place for further conversation. Below you will find the RE Covenant, which the kids and adults created together that morning, then the notes from the gathering of parents. Following that are all the items on post-its for each question we asked. I've put them into categories. Some of my connections are certainly open to different interpretations, and this is not meant to be pointing in any particular direction at this stage. It's just a way to see them and look for patterns. I hope you find them as interesting and inspiring as I did! We will be in touch soon about how we are going to dig in deeper.

Erica

## RE Covenant

All people are important

Be kind

Take into consideration what people say

Only talk when no one else is talking

Create a safe space

Be respectful of others' passions

Assume everyone is cool!

Assume everyone is fashionable

Be gentle with our bodies

Ask permission to have physical contact

Pay attention to body language

If someone tells you to stop - stop the first time

Be inclusive

Commentary:

Look to your surroundings to know how to act

Most adults are oblivious to the world around them

No, they just forgot to have coffee

Breakfast is important

## Parent Reflections on Covenant

The parent group had a slightly different format. Here are their items.

Speak up for yourself
Actively welcome families
Connect with members
Promote cohesion among the congregation

Don't put onus on families to drive connections
Share gifts with the RE program
View RE program as the investment it is - in the future of A2U2 and the faith
Be aware of unintended consequences under your awareness and accept your personal responsibility

## Question: What does/did let you know that you belong/ed?

### Invitation

Welcoming to newcomers
Being invited to join
Introducing people to others and introducing themselves
Inclusion in text chain
Invited

### Personal Connection

This is a bit hard to pin down, but basically a personal, human connection of genuine caring

Contact and engagement
Remembered and followed up on things I said
Deep connection
Connections
Compassion for each other
Welcome - missed when away
Companionship
People who are interested in each other - engaged
Caring
Excited to see each other
Friendly greeting
Supportive
Forming a connection with another person
Concern for my well being and the well being of all members of the group

## Common Purpose

We have something important in common. I've included common or shared purpose, goals, interests, experiences, values, and a sense of belonging to something bigger in this category

### *Purpose*

Engaged in worthwhile cause
People there for the right reason
Each member had a calling to be there
Sense of shared purpose
Similar goals
Common purpose - justice seeking people

### *Common Interest*

Shared interest and value
Shared interest
Common goals/interests/needs
Common interests and/or needs
Common interest discovered
Affinity group

### *Common Values*

Shared values
Enough shared values to make the group cohesive

### *Something Bigger*

Bigger than a whole - eg. music group
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### *Common Experience*

Group was sympathetic to my issues
Affinity group
Shared story of your life
Shared experience
Shared stories

## Social Activities and Fun

In addition to common purpose, another key theme in why groups form is... fun!

Social times - meals, etc.
Socializing
Reunions with friends
Had fun together
Doing things that bond the group
Joviality
Friendliness
Fun

## Vulnerability/Authenticity

This is a big category that includes different ways of expressing a sense that vulnerability is possible and shared, you can be your whole self, and you can trust others in the group. In order for this to be true, differences have to be accepted (or not present), so I've included the items about differences here.

Can be vulnerable - safe space
Willing to show vulnerability
People listen without judgment
A lot of sharing
Exchange of vulnerabilities
Non-judgmental
Confidentiality
Judgment free zone
Authenticity
Openness
Open

### *Trust*

Trust
Trust
Trust
Trusted
Level of trust (acceptance)
Trusting

## Differences

Tolerates differences
Exchange of ideas
Allowed to be authentic self
Bring whole self
Acceptance
Being able to be who we are
Valued each other's thoughts and questions
Complimented each other's varied diversity
Valuing varied skills and gifts
Acceptance of differences
Respect boundaries - such as no hugging
Respect each others' needs
Acceptance of differences of opinion

## Teamwork

*We are doing something important together - closely related to common purpose, but a different nuance*

Reliance on others and teamwork
Community working together (eg. doing dishes)
Skilled - all carry weight
Shared responsibility
Preparation
Committing to do your prep work to help group work on goals
Collaborating
Sharing ideas
Common actions together

## Bringing and Appreciating Diverse Gifts

This is where vulnerability and teamwork intersect - the appreciation of differences that allows for more meaningful teamwork. I suspect that the experience of feeling valued and/or respected is also related to this, so I'm putting those here too.

Relied on each other's talents
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Complementary skills and interests
Confident of ability - respected
Validation
Appreciation
Open to my ideas
Colleagues were forthcoming

*Valued*

Listened to
Listened to my ideas
Valued
Taken seriously

*Respect*

Mutual Respect
Mutual Respect
Mutual respect
Respect
Respect
Respect

## Commitment

This includes items that indicate a particular level of commitment to a group, including: regularity of engagement, long-term groups, and groups that provide practical support

*Engagement over time*

Enjoying annual reunions
Kept in contact
You can count on the group to be an ongoing experience
Joining each other at weekends away
Going through life experiences together - losses, joys, etc.
Longevity - 30 years deep knowing

*Regular Interaction*

Consistency of meeting regularly
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Investing time in the group
Frequent communication
Communicating frequently
Frequent meetings

*Practical Support*

Mutual help
All chip in to support each other
Helped each other outside meetings
Help each other outside group
Caring for each other

## Safety/Comfort/Loyalty

Everything in this category could have multiple interpretations, but these seem like related items so I'm putting them together.

*Safety*

Security
Sense of security - safety first
Safety/trust

*Comfort*

Feeling comfortable
Easy to get along with
Comfort

*Loyalty*

Have each others' backs
Look out for each other/sticking up for each other
Loyalty

## Humor

Lot of joking and laughing at my jokes
Laughter together

Laughter
Affirming humor
Comfortable teasing
Nicknames / terms of endearment that you like
Can joke without worrying about offending someone
Humor and laughter

## Process

The most directly opposed experiences of belonging are related to particular pieces of process. Plus there are process items that are not at odds.

Feedback
Problem solving
Listening
Small groups
Active listening
Problem solving together
Accepting constructive criticism
Compromising
Working together to get past roadblocks
Respect group process
Giving and getting suggestions/advice
Decisions are not made until everyone has had a chance to give their opinion
Inclusive language and values
Being listened to
Being heard
Some ground rules
Can express myself without worrying about censoring myself
Being allowed to get clarity by asking a question
Opposite of "no cross-talk"
Speak one at a time
Everybody has a chance to express
No interruption
Took turns leading



Everybody had a turn
Shared leadership
No hierarchy
No permanent role
Empowered and encouraged new roles
Start with covenant
Working out when you feel sensitive to others' remarks
Everyone listens without interruption respectfully, though sometimes with time limits for all speakers

## Miscellaneous

All the stuff I didn't know how to categorize!

Uniform
Supported
Desirous of success
Recognized
Familiar rituals

## Question: What made a group a good experience even in conflict or doing something difficult?

There was quite a bit of overlap between the yellow items and the pink items. The biggest difference was the importance of commitment/persistence/perseverance in this category, which was present but not as big a theme in the yellow items.

## Common Purpose

Shared vision for end goals
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## Vulnerability/Authenticity

### *Vulnerability and Trust*

Trust in one another
Being willing to be vulnerable
Priority was feelings of the group before the agenda

Caring
Openness
Honesty
Bring feelings into the open
Allowing people to be their authentic self, even if it is difficult for this group to accept
especially in a personal setting, very personal and sensitive topics are not discussed if not germane to the group or objective

*Differences and Acceptance*

Listening to voices of others
Wlaking other's shoes
Belief that everyone does the best they can with what they know
Acceptance
Accept different opinions
Acceptance
Understood another's perspective
Coming to an understanding of another's motivations, point of view, expectations
Neither leadership nor members of the group dismisses the ideas or opinions of other members

## Bringing and Appreciating Differences

Meaning leaning into people's gifts to get through something difficult

Play to people's strengths
Understanding people's strengths so they can work with joy
Respectful

## Commitment

This was a big theme in the pink items - staying in it

Commitment
Committed to group being together
Determined to stay together
Commitment to a common goal encompassing both sides
Close team can work together through adversity
Persistence
One shovel at a time
Persistence
Groups working hard to get to the other side

Perseverance
Commitment to the group
Flexibility and willing to learn new skills

## Humor

Humor
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## Process

As in the yellow items, lots of specific process items were listed. Interestingly, the process items in groups in conflict or working with something hard were less directly opposed than in the first set.

Common language
Discrimination is determined by the offended
Reframing
Revising Covenant
Shared information
Move venue to each others' homes
Putting Buddhist Principles into action - "practice in action"
Returning to basics
Asking questions - no assumptions, get the info
Keep breathing
Taking unique roles
Lots of conversation
Give and take
Recapping, sharing what you learned
Talking and listening
Listening without interruption and with time limits and with respect
Good leadership makes a point of asking each person for their ideas/opinions systematically
Voting
Consensus
Compromise
Working to find agreement or consensus which can mean everyone must give up a little OR Accepting that neither agreement or consensus are possible at that time and the the topic/plan/task should be revisited
Retreating enough to heal then coming back to work on it
Self care makes it more possible to have a generous spirit
Time to settle down

Take a break
Have fun - reminder that we chose to be here
Working with interim minister