

# Sample Covenants

## A Covenant from Furman University's Vista House Covenants of Presence

1. **Be 100 percent present, extending and presuming welcome.** Set aside the usual distractions of things undone from yesterday, things to do tomorrow. Welcome others into this story space and presume you are welcome as well.
2. **Listen Generously.** Listen intently to what is said, listen to the feelings beneath the words. As Quaker Douglas Steere writes “To listen another’s soul into life, into a condition of disclosure and discovery – may be almost the greatest gift we can offer to another.”
3. **Author Your Story.** We all have a story. Some might say, “I don’t have a story” or “a story worth telling,” but you do and the world is in need of hearing it. You must claim authorship of your own story and learn to tell it to others so they might understand you, be inspired by you and discover what calls you to be who you are, do what you do or love what you love.
4. **We come as equals.** We don’t have the same gifts, limits or experiences, but no person’s gifts, limits or experiences are more or less important than another.
5. **Turn to wonder.** If you find yourself becoming judgmental or cynical, try turning to wonder: “I wonder why she shared that story or made those choices?” “I wonder what my reaction teaches me?” “I wonder what he’s feeling right now?”
6. **Hold these stories with care.** There are many people who will benefit from the stories they hear during our time together. Imagine hearing another as you would listen to scripture—attentively, mindfully and open to the holy.
7. **Welcome discomfort and dislocation.** In the midst of new and uncomfortable places and the company of strangers, move against an instinct to construct a mental space of safety or to check out. See in what causes unease another world to be discovered. Perhaps it already lives secretly within you.
8. **Love the questions themselves.** Let your questions linger. Release the compulsion to answer them or to have them answered. Trust the questions to guide you toward loving first what you do not altogether understand. As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke says, “Have patience with all that remains unsolved within your heart.”
9. **Believe that it is possible for us to emerge from our time together refreshed, surprised and less burdened than when we came.** Expect that our work together can provide renewal, refreshment and possibilities for what we can do together to create the future that is waiting to be born, and that seeds planted here will keep growing and flourish in the days ahead in service to God’s church and renewing work in the world.
10. **Honor self-care.** Commit to take care of ourselves and our own needs so we can serve and love others to the best of our abilities. Without honoring our own needs and desires, we cannot be fully present and honest with others. By setting apart time for ourselves, we can be more connected with our own stories, and be able to focus on listening and loving others when we are in the presence of a community.
11. **Recognize that anyone in Christ is new creation.** Believe in the process of reconciliation and the healing power that it has to transform each and every one of us through God’s grace. Recognize our own need for healing and restoration. Strive for a better world where God’s redemptive work is able to shine in the midst of brokenness, and remember to be patient with ourselves and others because this process takes time. (2 Cor. 5:17-21)
12. **Be rooted and grounded in love.** Believe that we may be strengthened in our inner beings with the power of the Holy Spirit and that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. With God’s help, we may begin to comprehend the breadth, length, depth, and height of the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge. (Ephesians 3:16-19).

## Community Goals

1. **Giving priority to the community.** Living in an intentional community is life-giving and restorative, but to fully receive these gifts, we must put time and effort into building relationships with one another. Both time and sacrifice is

required when living together in this household, and we will always attempt to capitalize on all of the opportunities this place and organization provides for us.

2. **Making the Vista House a sacred space for ALL people.** This space was created as a hospitality house, a welcome space for students to study, faculty to gather, and all people searching for God to congregate. While we must always be welcoming to our guests, it is also our responsibility to reach out to others and invite them into our home.

3. **Creating opportunities for students to co-create via “the Arts.”** The Vista House is committed to praising God and God’s creation through all different mediums, from painting and cooking to writing and singing. We will plan events for people of many different talents to come and feel welcome to utilize these gifts to honor God and one another. Even those of us with poor singing voices or who lack artistic talent are always encouraged to join in!

4. **A gracious home to “Tom Foolery.”** We will always look for ways to invite Tom into our home, be it through group tennis tournaments or dancing to Beyonce while cleaning dishes. While looking for ways to have fun promotes general well-being, we will also use these times to remind us to always look for the positives in our life, especially when we feel weighed down by the anxieties of school, social pressure, or global tragedies.

### **Shared Values of the Community**

- Ministry of Presence: Qualitative and Quantitative time
- Safe and Courageous space for authenticity
- Community as family
- Genuine and Authentic Friendship
- Vulnerability- commitment to growth, intimacy and sharing with one another
- Discernment
- Listening
- Gracious Hospitality- inviting others and loving others
- Integrity
- Living by our values vs. social pressures to be productive, successful, etc.
- Romans 12- Living new life in Christ and openness to transformation

## **A Covenant from Missional Wisdom Foundation’s Epworth Project**

- Prayers
  - We will pray daily
  - We will use a variety of forms of prayer such as reflective reading of scripture and other spiritual texts, confession, the prayer of examen, intercession, journaling, and contemplation.
  - We will fast from food once a week
- Presence
  - We will practice a contemplative stance in order to be present to God, the world, and ourselves
  - We will be hospitable to our neighbors in our families, neighborhoods, and workplaces.
  - We will be hospitable to our faith community through participation in our worship, fellowship and mission.
- Gifts
  - We will honor and care for the gift of the earth and its resources, practicing ecologically responsible living, striving for simplicity rather than excessive consumption.
  - We will practice generosity in sharing our material resources, including money, within and beyond this community.

- We will use our spiritual gifts, talents, and abilities to serve God within and beyond this community.
- Service
  - We will serve God and neighbors out of gratitude for the love of God
  - We will practice mutual accountability with a covenant group within the community, for how we serve God and neighbor.
  - We will practice regular Sabbath as a means of renewal so that we can lovingly serve God and neighbor.
- Witness
  - We will practice racial and gender reconciliation.
  - We will resist evil and injustice.
  - We will pursue peace with justice.
  - We will share the redeeming, healing, creative love of God in word, deed, and presence as an invitation to others to experience the transforming love of God.

I commit to this rule of life and to the well-being of this community, out of gratitude to God who forgives, heals, and makes all things new. May my life be a blessing within and beyond God's church, for the transformation of the world.