

## Rules—UUFVB Covenant Groups—May 2020

### Chalice Lighting

May we know once again that we are not isolated beings,  
but connected, in mystery and miracle,  
to the universe, to this community and to each other.

**Check-in:** What is most on your mind today?

### Opening Readings

“Know the rules well, so you can break them effectively.” (*The Dalai Lama, spiritual leader of the Tibetan people*)

“It is the beginning of wisdom when you recognize that the best you can do is choose *which* rules you want to live by, and it's persistent and aggravated imbecility to pretend you can live without any.” (*Wallace Stegner, American novelist, All the Little Live Things*)

"You are remembered for the rules you break." (*U. S. Army General Douglas MacArthur*)

### Topic Exploration

Individuals, groups and governments create rules and consequences to promote harmonious personal relationships, maintain order, resolve disputes, and protect liberties and rights. Rules govern a wide range of human activity--there are rules of games, of language, of etiquette, of clubs or associations, and so forth. Sometimes rules are unwritten, informal, and are so ingrained that our compliance becomes habitual. Sometimes important rules are codified and applied to everyone—these rules are then called laws which, if broken, have more serious consequences than those for breaking rules.

The extent to which persons may follow a rule partly depends on what they think others are doing. Even if we believe that a rule is necessary, we may break it if we think that many others are also breaking it. For example, we may decry stealing, but take home a few file folders or ballpoint pens from an employer because everyone seems to be doing it.

Family rules spring from the priorities, values, and needs of the adults. Family rules can range from being overly rigid to undisciplined and inconsistent. Likewise, consequences of either complying with or violating family rules can vary greatly. In general, rules set in place in childhood are preparation for living with laws in adulthood.

### Questions / Sharing

1. Who was the dominate rule-maker in your family of origin? What were some of the rules that governed your family's interactions and traditions? Give examples of how violations of those rules were enforced-- strictly or haphazardly? Did you conform to family rules or did you tend to be a rebel, and in what way?
2. What are some of the rules that currently govern your relationship with your spouse or significant other? Are most unspoken, or are expectations clearly articulated? How sure are you that both of you have the same understanding of the relationship rules, and what happens when differing interpretations surface?

3. Some suggest that the rules that a society develops reflect its basic morality, for morality governs how we live with other people. What do you think of that idea?
4. When is it justified to break a rule? What kinds of rules do you generally disregard? What is your reaction if others break the rules that you abide by?
5. The Indian jurist B. R. Ambedkar said, ""Religion must mainly be a matter of principles only. It cannot be a matter of rules. The moment it degenerates into rules, it ceases to be a religion, as it kills responsibility, which is an essence of the true religious act." Do you agree, and why or why not?
6. Rules for membership and pledging are written and explicit at the UU Fellowship. What are the important unwritten rules that you believe apply to members of the congregation? Who or what enforces those unwritten rules? Is there a penalty, or consequence, of noncompliance?

### **Closing Reading**

"It's all very well to run around saying regulation is bad, get the government off our backs, etc. Of course our lives are regulated. When you come to a stop sign, you stop; if you want to go fishing, you get a license; if you want to shoot ducks, you can shoot only three ducks. The alternative is dead bodies at the intersection, no fish, and no ducks. OK?" (*Molly Ivins, American newspaper columnist, author, "Getting Control of the Frontier," Gainesville Sun, March 22, 1995*)

**Check-out and reflections on today's session:** Please express your closing thoughts on the content or process of today's session.

### **Extinguish the Chalice**

We extinguish this flame but not the light of truth,  
the warmth of community, or the fire of commitment.  
these we carry in our hearts until we are together again.

### **Housekeeping**