

## Definition of a “Covenant”

*(Notes on the covenanting process by Marion Thompson)*

Defining anything is hard. In some ways almost any definition will be lacking in some ways. The more I got into looking at a series of definitions, the more prolix and elaborate I became. Finally I hit upon the idea of comparing a covenant to a living plant. So I would like you to try this idea with me. Please have a sheet of paper and a pencil ready. We will start from the bottom up. In the bottom 1/3 of your paper is where the roots will go.

Roots are the foundation of a plant and the source of nourishment. So we will want firm roots. What might they be called?

- History.
- Dependable relationships.
- Trust.
- What other ideas have you?

After we have a good foundation and nourishment the second part of our plant will be the stem. What kind of a plant will we have? A tree, or something more manageable. But to rise up from the roots we need a stem or stems that will be strong and share common values. What might some of them be?

- Courage.
- Autonomy.
- Strength.
- Mutual support.
- Other.

Then we get to the top part, the branches and even sometimes flowers. Branches are easy. They represent different kinds of a covenant:

- Legal.
- Political.
- Religious, e.g., UU.

Here we find the ideas that make our own church, or family, or other group covenants special. We will look at several of these.

- Speaking truthfully.
- Respecting confidences.
- Listening attentively.
- What might be some ideas of yours?

So finally I have a sort of definition of what covenant is for me now. I know it will change, and likely be different from yours:

**A covenant is a written agreement within a self-selected group of people regarding their shared values and behavior toward each other.**

Now that I have defined a covenant the next step will be to make one!