

Covenant of Presence

- 1. Be fully 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, to do what you do or to 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’s.
- 5. It is never “share or die.”** You will be invited to share stories in pairs and in a large group. The invitation is exactly that. You will determine the extent to which you want to participate.
- 6. No fixing.** We are not here to set someone else straight, right a wrong, or provide therapy. We are here to witness God’s presence and movement in the sacred stories we share.
- 7. Suspend judgment.** Set aside your judgments. By creating a space between judgments and reactions, we can listen to another person, and to ourselves, more fully.
- 8. 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?”

(This agreement can be found in the Fund for Theological Education’s Guide to Vocation Care, and is based on a set of touchstones first written by the Center for Courage and Renewal).