

Covenants for the Writers' Circle

September 2014

The Writers' Circle creates a safe and welcoming forum for writers to share works in progress with their peers and receive support and constructive feedback. We aspire to respect the inherent worth and dignity of each participant in our interactions.

We function best as a peer support and critique forum, and we do not claim to be professional editors or experts. Our feedback, as fellow writers, is the most helpful if a work has not yet been edited professionally. Therefore, we share only works in process that are new and/or previously unpublished.

Our covenants reflect our commitments and give shape to our values.

Value: We respect each others' time.

Agreements:

- Each meeting begins at 12:30. If we will be more than 10 minutes late we will plan to read last, and we will enter quietly and listen before joining the process. To avoid disrupting the group process, if we will be very late (more than 20 minutes), we will consider not attending that session.
- If we know we will have to miss a meeting, we notify the Facilitator beforehand.
- Members may go on leave by notifying the Facilitator beforehand. If they plan to be away for more than one month their seat will become temporarily available to another writer and they will be taken off the rotating Facilitator list. They will be kept on the email list even while they are on leave unless they request to be removed.

Value: We value the equitable division of time to ensure that each piece of writing receives adequate time for thoughtful feedback.

Agreements:

- We rotate reading alphabetically. Each session the next person in the alphabetical list starts first, assuming they arrive on time. Depending on the size of the group, we may have to limit the time for reading and receiving feedback.
- We divide the available time for reading and feedback so that each person receives an equal amount of time. Writers read for roughly ½ of their time. The rest of their allotted time is for feedback.
- We keep our feedback concise so that all members are able to share their thoughts. Usually initial feedback is about 1 to 2 minutes. If time remains we may go around the circle again. Adequate time for sharing is one reason we keep the group small in size.

Value: We respect one another by being courteous to one another.

Agreements:

- We don't interrupt the writer or someone else giving feedback. We wait our turn respectfully.

- We choose to be consciously kind in our comments to support the atmosphere of trust that is important to the group.

Value: We respect one another's' written and oral contributions.

Agreements:

- Writers decide what kind of feedback will be useful to them (whether that is grammatical or substantive) and ask for what helps them move their writing forward.
- We limit comments to constructive writing critique, not personal preferences or opinions on the content.
- The writer has the final say about what works for them and what doesn't.
- We are free to offer diverse thoughts and don't argue about them.