

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Delaware County

Covenant of Right Relations

A covenant is a mutual agreement regarding a course of action between parties. Our congregation developed its “Mission Covenant Statement” to guide our vision of who we are and where we want to go as a community. At our meetings we read a “Meeting Covenant Statement” that establishes the way we will act with one another in the meeting. To help create an environment that protects children and adults from physical, mental and emotional harm, we have created the church document “Toward a Safe Church and Safe Congregation.” Covenants make it clear to us and to others in concrete terms how we intend to live out our mission and vision.

A Covenant of Right Relations is a set of guidelines that describe how we will behave with one another to create a welcoming, respectful, safe and vibrant spiritual community. An atmosphere of trust, respect and cooperation is essential to our well-being. Each person in our community should be willing to actively participate in the democratic process, appreciate others' point of view and to respect the outcomes of the collective wisdom that results.

Right relations are the foundation on which a safe and thriving congregation is based. Although it is our similarities that bring us together, it is resolution of our differences and conflicts that often leads to progress and growth. Conflict is normal in healthy relationships. Disagreement, ideally, communicates caring and involvement. Differing views should be welcomed, respected and given due consideration in the decision making process. When practicing right relations, people may disagree vigorously but still treat each other with respect, staying together and learning from one another. As we work together to articulate our understanding of and commitment to the practice of right relations, we will enrich our ability to love, respect and nurture each other in our lifelong spiritual quests.

As members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Delaware County we build our church on a foundation of love and covenant to:

- Foster hospitality, extending a warm welcome to all our members, friends and visitors, encouraging them to engage in congregational activities, and to work intentionally to ensure that no one feels he or she is a stranger,
- Encourage our community to embrace diversity in all its manifestations, within a safe, positive and nurturing environment,
- Recognize that children and youth are an integral part of our community and welcome them in all appropriate facets of church life. To accept the responsibility of educating ourselves and our children in preventing sexual, physical and mental abuse and harassment,

- Serve with compassion and commitment in all our interactions supporting the life and activities of the church. To respect differing views of how to do things, and to accommodate them to the extent that they contribute to the overall achievement of objectives,
- Move beyond simple tolerance toward genuine understanding. To listen attentively in order to fully appreciate another's point of view, valuing the perspective of others and understanding that differing values do exist within our religious community. "We don't have to think alike to love alike,"
- Value and express our own emotions and opinions in a way that respects the worth and dignity of each person. To accept responsibility for our individual acts and deal with disagreements constructively, communicating with others in a direct, caring and responsible manner,
- Appropriately address behaviors which threaten the safety and well-being of individuals and our community.
- Ask for help, support and collaboration when needed and encourage others to do the same. To advocate for mediation and resolution processes agreeable to all parties when agreements cannot be reached otherwise,
- Value confidentiality, but strive for transparency in all aspects of church operations to the extent possible without violating individual rights, legal restrictions, or ethical constraints,
- Express gratitude and support to the minister and staff, and to church members and friends who volunteer their time, talents and treasures in support of the programs and governance activities of the church,
- Support and respect the contracts and/or agreements with the minister, staff and others who provide services to our congregation,
- Build courage and commitment to voice our values in the world, and work toward positive relationships with other faith communities,
- Acknowledge that everyone makes mistakes. To seek and offer forgiveness.

This covenant is a living document. It can be reviewed and adapted to fit changing needs and circumstances. It should be followed with a set of guidelines, and perhaps appropriate workshops or presentations on conflict resolution skills and practices. Although this document expresses our written promise, our true covenant exists in our behaviors. We are obliged and empowered as individuals to take positive action to uphold the provisions of this agreement. May it deepen our bonds with one another and, in times of conflict, may it guide us in working through our differences.