

CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT OF GOOD RELATIONS

“Let us deal gently with each other and let us make room in our fellowship for each other.
For the span of life passes and the time of our years is all too brief.”

Rev. Fred Cappuccino

THE COVENANT

We the members of the First Unitarian Church of Victoria agree to treat ourselves and each other fairly and respectfully. We extend the same respect to children and youth, as well as Friends of the Church.

We are committed to improving the quality of our lives by supporting one another's self development and spiritual growth. This Covenant promotes a culture in which vibrant discussion and participatory decision-making guide our relations with each other. Differences of opinion need not be stifled by the Covenant. Instead, we will use the Covenant as a guide for how to voice such differences with respect, compassion, and a consideration for the good of the whole.

GUIDELINES

My Relationship with Myself

We start by looking within ourselves.

I am an individual aspiring to live as a person of integrity and compassion within my family, at work and within my community.

I believe that I must take responsibility for my personal well-being and that I must value myself. By doing so, I will be better able to contribute to others, to the church, and to the larger community.

In cases of conflict, I commit to reviewing my choices and to learning the appropriate skills to communicate in clear, sensitive and compassionate ways.

My relationship with Others

My Relationship with Other Members

I believe that each person is free to make choices regarding their personal journey. I will respect these choices and will support the spiritual growth of others in an inclusive, loyal and generous manner.

I aim to listen with the intention of understanding what others have to say. I will make every effort to settle issues between myself and another member on a one-to-one basis. If this is unsuccessful or unsatisfactory, I may consult a minister or the Dispute Management Group.

I will be responsible for getting the facts for myself. While respectfully truth speaking, I will be aware of how others may respond. I will not engage in harmful gossip. In clearly communicating my needs, sometimes I will have to decline or say "no". I will also honour the rights of others to do the same.

I will respect absolutely the confidentiality and private disclosures of others.

I will not claim sole ownership of any role or task while still recognizing the need for accountability. I will encourage and appreciate the contributions of others.

I will make every effort to be aware of my emotions and to be sensitive to the emotions of others, recognizing that these signal meaningful issues requiring empathy and guidance. In this regard, I will learn the necessary skills, if needed, to express my emotions and beliefs in a constructive way.

I will respect the private and intimate bonds of other members, and will not exploit another person for my own needs.

I will respect the personal physical boundaries of all members by being mindful of individual comfort zones, on or off the Church property, no matter the age or gender.

I will be respectful and welcoming to all, regardless of gender identity, race, faith, sexual orientation or age.

I will welcome new members, friends and guests and commit to getting to know people in this religious community.

I appreciate that I am a member of a religious community that makes decisions through a democratic process. As a responsible citizen in this community, I will actively participate in the process and will respect the outcomes of the collective wisdom.

My Relationship with the Board

My responsibilities do not stop when the Board is elected. I will participate in the life of the Church by sharing my skills, talents and money, and taking part in committee and volunteer work where, and when, it is possible to do so. I will seek out areas of our "shared ministry"* that match my passions, nourish my spiritual or personal growth, and deepen my relationships with this community.

*This is the work that clergy and lay people do together to care for the congregation and larger community.

I will actively support, encourage and show my appreciation to the Board by being responsible for providing feedback when it is sought and making my expectations clear to the people I have chosen to represent me.

I accept responsibility to become informed about how the Church operates and will seek information through the various communication channels such as Neighbourhood Groups, Committee Chairs, Board Members, Newsletters, E-weeklies and Orders of Service.

In return for the above good relations that I agree to exercise, I expect others will, in return, express appropriate appreciation of efforts made, listen to concerns or complaints that I may have; and show willingness to help problem-solve in a timely and amicable manner. I trust that I will be consulted before decisions are made that affect my area of contribution.

My Relationship with the Wider Community

I will act responsibly in local and global issues in order to promote a world community with peace, compassion, equality, freedom, and justice for all.

I will respect the interdependent web of all existence. I respect and uphold life, and will live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

My Relationship with the Minister(s) and Staff

I will treat the Minister(s) and staff and their families with dignity, respect, courtesy and consideration.

I will respect their work hours and personal time, and I will show appreciation for their contribution to the life of the church.

I will support and encourage the Minister(s) to exercise a responsible freedom of the pulpit. If I have differences of opinion, I will first deal with them by self-reflection, before taking them directly to the Minister or the Committee on Ministry.

I take responsibility to address unresolved issues between myself and the Minister by seeking advice from the Committee on Ministry or by requesting the assistance of the Human Resources Committee or Dispute Management Group. In situations where I have an unresolved difference of opinion with a staff member, I will seek resolution first with the relevant supervisor (see Personnel Handbook).

And as a Minister or Staff member:

I will be courteous and respectful in my interactions with the other staff, members and the community-at-large, and will encourage compassion in human relations. I will be mindful that in my work role, I am representing the church and will be positive in my interactions

with members of the public.

I will respect the confidentiality and privacy of others.

I will actively listen to others and be clear and respectful in communicating my needs. I may say “no” to requests made of me if they are not part of my job description or if I believe the requests may be deleterious to the functioning of my job. In the latter case I may consult as appropriate.

In situations where I still may have an unresolved difference of opinion with a member or another staff person, I will seek mediation: (a) initially with my supervisor; (b) the other staff member's supervisor if they are staff; (c) another appropriate party such as the President or Committee on Ministry; (d) and finally, if so advised, with the assistance of the Dispute Management Group.

I will actively support the Board and provide feedback as needed.

Summarizing the Spirit of this Document

This Covenant proposes a guide for respectful communication and ethical behavior in our congregational activities. It provides a framework for putting our seven Unitarian Universalist Principles into practice.

Each of us will take responsibility for our personal well-being and show generosity of spirit to others' needs and contributions.

Together we will strive to create a healthy spiritual community in which the contribution of each person is valued.

We will be welcoming to all members, Friends of the Church, children and youth regardless of gender identity, race, sexual orientation or age, and participate in church life with enthusiasm and joy.

We believe in participatory decision-making and respect the outcome of this democratic process.

This Covenant of Good Relations aims to complement the following documents of the First Unitarian Church of Victoria:

- The Unitarian Universalist Statement of Principles
- The Mission Statement
- The Constitution and Bylaws
- The Sexual Misconduct Policy
- The Dispute Management Policy

- Human Resources Committee Guidelines and the Personnel Handbook
- E-mail Guidelines

A Covenant is an agreement to abide by a set of enduring and deeply held promises made between us. And while we take these seriously, the promises we make are so ideal that it may be impossible to always live up to them. We will admit to falling short, and will respond by re-committing, trying to make amends, and by showing understanding and compassion. By accepting and practising the following attitudes and actions we will fulfill our Covenant of Good Relations.