

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF GREELEY COVENANT OF RIGHT RELATIONS

We the members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Greeley, adopt this mutually binding covenant of right relations to strengthen the bonds of trust and loyalty in our beloved community and to diminish the chances of hurt and disillusion in times of disagreement. In adopting this covenant we seek to create an atmosphere of honesty, respect, trust, gratitude, forgiveness, acceptance and loyalty within our congregation. The goal of the covenant is to provide a clear statement as well as guidelines about how our Unitarian Universalist values and principles can best be demonstrated through our actions. We aspire to strengthen our relationships and enlarge our sense of community. The well-being of our congregation depends upon a sense of fellowship among and between all within our beloved community whenever and wherever we are together.

In adopting this covenant, we realize that differences, strong feelings and disagreements will arise. These can and should be the well-springs of change, creativity, and growth. When we practice right relations, we reduce the level of conflict, misunderstanding and hurt feelings that can occur when people speak passionately about subjects of importance to them. Right relations are the foundation upon which a safe congregation is based. To this end, we pledge to govern our actions and our speech by the spirit and letter of this covenant.

Member to Self

- I promise to take responsibility for my personal well-being and spiritual needs. I will strive to act with integrity, to speak honestly and to honor the commitments I make to the Church.

Member to Staff

- We promise to show our respect by making clear requests in a timely manner, being civil in our interactions, honoring work hours, being open and direct in our communications, and showing sincere appreciation for work done.
- We promise to honor the staff's authority over their spheres of responsibility.
- We promise to provide staff with adequate resources, a healthy work environment, and opportunities for professional development.
- We promise to support fair compensation and benefits for staff.

Member to Member

- We promise to be welcoming, respectful, and supportive of church community members.
- We promise to speak openly, compassionately and truthfully and to listen deeply with an open mind and loving heart.
- We promise to speak directly and privately with individuals with whom there is a misunderstanding, concern, or disagreement in an effort to resolve interpersonal disputes.
- We promise to allow sufficient time to identify and explore disagreements and conflicts, focus on the message not the messenger and critique ideas not people.
- We promise to give our time, talent and money and maintain the commitments we make.
- We promise to keep informed and inform others of happenings within the church community.
- We promise to support each other in our search for meaning, recognizing each of us as a teacher as well as a student in the learning process.
- We promise to care for each other in our joys and sorrows.
- We promise to maintain appropriate boundaries with our children and youth.
- We promise to include our youth and children as full participants in church life appropriate to their age and experience.
- We promise to hold one another accountable to the covenant we have made to each other.

Member to Board Members

- We promise to communicate openly, directly and honestly with the Board.
- We promise to honor and respect the work of the Board.
- We promise to educate ourselves on the Board's decision-making process, to raise issues directly consistent with that process, and to trust and accept the results.
- We promise to empower the Board as our representatives with the authority to operate the church as outlined in the By Laws.

Member to Clergy

- We promise to recognize and value the unique role of the clergy in providing leadership for our church while at the same time acknowledging our own responsibility for carrying out the church's shared ministry.
- We promise to have a respectful relationship with the professional clergy, a relationship that models justice, truth, equity, and compassion in all encounters.
- We promise to communicate directly and honestly and to provide feedback in a spirit of loving kindness.
- We promise to support the professional growth of clergy.
- We promise to honor those needs and concerns of the clergy that are outside of their roles as leaders of the congregation, including acknowledging that time away from the church is protected personal time.
- We promise to provide clear guidelines of expectations to any new clergy asked to join our church community. These guidelines will provide a starting point in an evolving relationship between the membership and its chosen spiritual leader.
- We promise to support fair compensation and benefits for clergy.

Right Relations

Our true covenant exists in our day to day interactions with one another. Our goal is to address concerns through compassionate solutions which serve both the common good and the individual, allowing us to remain in a loving and caring fellowship.

Conflict Resolution Process

When conflicts arise that are not easily resolved, we agree to follow the eight step process for conflict resolution as presented by Dudley Weeks and included as an addendum to this covenant.

This is a living document intended to reflect the current needs of our congregation as it changes and grows. Accordingly the Committee on Right Relations and the Board, in concert with the Congregation, will review it at least every three years. Additionally, it will be included in our new member orientation process, made available for all to see, and incorporated into our congregational lives. Concerns about right relations should be directed to the Board and consequently to the Right Relations Committee.

*Adopted: 2010
Reviewed: 2014*

ADDENDUM to the Covenant of Right Relations

The Conflict Resolution Process As Presented by Dudley Weeks

The Eight Essential Steps to Conflict Resolution by Dudley Weeks, Ph.D., Los Angeles: Jeremy P. Tarcher, Inc. 1992, as summarized by the Conflict Resolution class at Quinebaug Valley Community-Technical college, Danielson, CT.

Overview of the “Conflict Partnership Process”

Summarized by Tyla Baff:

Conflict Partnership is a process that empowers people to build mutually beneficial relationships and to resolve conflict effectively, try following its **eight steps**:

1. Create and Effective Atmosphere
2. Clarify Perceptions
3. Focus on Individual and Shared Needs
4. Build Shared Positive Power
5. Look to the Future, then Learn from the Past
6. Generate Options
7. Develop “doables”
8. Make Mutual Benefit Agreements

The “partnership process” is based upon the following **five principles**. Keep them in mind whenever you are involved in a conflict:

1. Think “we”, rather than “I versus you” – working together helps solve conflicts.
2. Try to keep in mind the long term relationship.
3. Good conflict resolution will improve the relationship.
4. Good conflict resolution benefits both parties.
5. Conflict resolution and relationship building go hand in hand.

The Eight Steps

Step 1 – Create an Effective Atmosphere

Summarized by Lisa Courtemanche

Creating an effective atmosphere is a very important step in the conflict resolution process. It is more likely for mutual agreements to be reached when atmosphere is given careful consideration. When thinking about atmosphere, remember these ideas:

1. Personal preparation—doing all you can to ready yourself in positive ways to approach issues honestly and openly.
2. Timing—choosing a time that is best for all parties involved. This is a time in which no one is feeling pressed to move on or pressured in other ways.
3. Location—where you meet is as important as when you meet. It is best to pick a place where all parties can feel comfortable and at ease.
4. Opening statements—try to start out on a good note. Good openings are ones that let others know you are ready and willing to approach conflict with a team-like attitude that focuses on positive ends. They should also ensure the trust and confidentiality of the parties involved.

Step 2 – Clarify Perceptions

Summarized by Michele Schlehofer

Clarify individual perceptions involved in the conflict. You can't solve a problem if you don't know what it is about.

1. Sort the parts of the conflict – ask what it is about.
2. Avoid ghost conflicts – get to the heart of the matter and avoid side issues.
3. Clarify what, if any values are involved.
4. Recognize that the parties involved need each other to be most effective.

Additionally, clarify your perceptions of the other party.

1. Avoid stereotyping.
2. Listen carefully.
3. Recognize the other's needs and values.
4. Empathize – ask why they feel the way they do.
5. Clear up misconceptions you may have of them.

Step 3 – Focus on Individual and Shared Needs

Summarized by Tara Auger

Expand on shared needs. Realize that you need one another in order to successfully resolve conflicts. Be concerned about meeting others needs as well as your own. When you take the time to look, you will recognize that individuals often share needs in common.

Step 4 – Build Shared Positive Power

Summarized by Ted Rugar

Power is made up of people's outlooks, ideas, convictions, and actions. A positive view of power enables people to be most effective. A negative outlook on power proves disempowering. Instead of "power with", it encourages "power over". Positive power promotes building together and strengthening partnerships. When parties in conflict have this outlook, they can encourage each other to use shared positive power. This gives an ultimate advantage to all involved because each person's positive energy in being drawn upon for a worthwhile solution.

Step 5 – Look to the Future, then Learn from the Past

Summarized by Denise Dagle

Don't dwell on negative past conflicts, or you won't be able to deal positively in the present or the future. Try to understand what happened in the past, and avoid repeating the same mistakes. Don't get stuck in a rut; learn from past conflicts and be forgiving. Let others know "I'm not mad at you, I'm mad at what you did."

Step 6 – Generate Options

Summarized by class

1. Beware of preconceived answers.
2. Look for common threads.
3. Make sure options are workable for all parties involved.
4. Set aside disagreements and focus on options that seem most workable.
5. Avoid spin-off conflicts by bypassing options that won't work for all involved.

In Generating Options:

1. Ask first for the conflict partner's options – listen and learn.

2. Try free flowing options:
 - a. Make new suggestions
 - b. Write them down
 - c. Wait to discuss them till they're all out on the table
 - d. Group similar options together
 - e. Narrow down the list
 - f. Predict possible outcomes
 - g. Look at all ideas, no matter how silly they may seem
 - h. Imagine
3. Identify Key Options; these are ones that will:
 - a. Meet one or more of the shared needs
 - b. Meet individual needs that are compatible with others' needs
 - c. Use mutual positive power
 - d. Improve the relationship
 - e. Be at least acceptable but preferably satisfying to all involved
4. When looking at options, don't let past experiences cloud present perceptions and decisions.

Step 7 – Develop “Doables” – Stepping-Stones to Action

Summarized by Rosita Gluck

Doables are specific actions that have a good chance at being successful. Doables are:

1. the ideas that have the best chance at success
2. steps that never promote unfair advantages on any side
3. founded on shared input and information from all parties
4. trust builders – they add confidence in working together
5. actions that meet shared needs

Step 8 – Make Mutual Benefit Agreements

Summarized by Deb Shuron

Mutual-Benefit Agreements should give you lasting solutions to specific conflicts.

1. Instead of demands, focus on developing agreements and find shared goals and needs.
2. Build on “doable things by working on the smaller stepping-stone solutions.
3. Pay attention to the needs of the other person in addition to your own interests.
4. Recognize the “givens” – basic things that cannot be altered or compromised.
5. Clarify exactly what is expected of you in the agreement – your individual responsibilities.
6. Keep the conflict partnership processes going by using and sharing these skills with others.