

## **The Covenant of Right Relations**

[Adopted by Action of the Congregation, June 2013]

### **I. Purpose**

The goal of this Covenant (and the accompanying guidelines) is to provide a clear statement about how our values and principles can best be demonstrated through our actions. “Covenant” is Latin for “come together” and means a “solemn agreement” or “promise from the heart” regarding a course of action between parties. The well-being of our congregation depends on a sense of fellowship among all within our community -- members, friends, children and youth, minister, and staff -- whenever and wherever we worship, interact or work together.

### **II. Our Covenant of Right Relations**

In practicing our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes and with Love as our guide, we covenant to:

- ◆ Welcome the newcomer.
- ◆ Encourage and support one another.
- ◆ Honor our diversity.
- ◆ Ask questions with an open mind and heart.
- ◆ Listen deeply and seek understanding.
- ◆ Speak and act compassionately.
- ◆ Trust one another to remain in community while differences are resolved.

### **III. How We Will Live in Covenant**

In the interest of building beloved community:

- In written and spoken communication, we will strive to create a sanctuary, a place of refuge where people can experience a space for reflection, safety in relationship, reverence, and the growth that comes with faith-in-action.
- We will ground our thoughts and actions in a spirit of compassion and peace, in our personal lives and relationships, in our fellowship, in our public witness, and in our advocacy for human rights.
- We will refrain from negative gossip and the spreading of rumors.

- We will each do our part to minimize destructive competition, manage conflict, and maximize cooperation.
- When conflict arises, we will name it and work through it together.
- I will strive to seek and speak what is true, treating all with worth and dignity, and mindful of our covenant to act with care toward ourselves and others.
- If I am uncertain about how to address a conflict or problem with another, I understand that the minister and Committee On Ministry are available to provide emotional support and confidential counsel.
- If I am aware that I am in conflict with someone, or that someone has hard feelings toward me, I understand that I am encouraged go to them to do what I can to be reconciled.
- When someone approaches me with a criticism or complaint about another person, I will gently suggest that they go speak to the person with whom they are unhappy.
- When someone approaches me with a criticism or complaint, I will listen carefully and work for resolution of the problems that gave rise to their unhappiness.
- If I have attempted to resolve a conflict with another and failed, I will ask a neutral party to help me resolve the conflict through voluntary mediation (assisted negotiation). (The Committee On Ministry is available to provide this service).

#### **IV. Problem/Conflict Resolution Guidelines**

In Summit Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, we recognize that conflicts may arise from time to time and that, when they do, their management and resolution are paramount. Differences or misunderstandings that go unresolved and descend into prolonged conflict can threaten the social fabric of our Fellowship. Should unresolved conflicts arise, we covenant to follow the established Problem Resolution Guidelines:

1. How a conflict or problem is handled is the responsibility of all the parties involved.

2. If someone is aware of a problem or a conflict between them and another person or group in our fellowship, they are encouraged to go directly to them to resolve the issue and be reconciled.

3. If, for whatever reason, a member or friend of the fellowship chooses not to address a conflict or problem that arises, he or she is asked not to speak ill of anyone who may be involved.

4. Anyone who has, in good faith, attempted reconciliation with a member or friend of the fellowship and failed, OR who is reluctant to meet alone with a member or friend, is encouraged to speak with our minister and/or seek support from the Committee on Ministry for assistance.

5. After attempting to resolve a problem or achieve reconciliation through direct or mediated negotiations, if the conflict persists, then grievances may be communicated as follows:

- 1) In cases of staff-related problems, the people involved may go to Minister, who is the supervisor of staff. If the grievance is not addressed satisfactorily by the Minister, it may be communicated to the Personnel Committee.
- 2) In cases where there is conflict with a contracted musician, the people involved may go to the Sunday Services Committee.
- 3) In all other cases, people are encouraged to go to the Committee On Ministry or Board President for review and investigation of the problem, and a mediated or arbitrated decision.
- 4) In any case, should a conflict or grievance persist despite the fellowship's best efforts to resolve it, the Board of Directors may refer a grievance to the congregation-as-a-whole where it will hear and render a judgment by vote for how a conflict will be resolved OR the Board may call upon the services of the Unitarian Universalist Association for consultation and help in resolving the problem.