

Adopted May 23, 2021, by Congregational Vote

First Unitarian Church of Chicago

Congregational Behavioral Covenant

Preamble

The Congregational Behavioral Covenant of First Unitarian Church is grounded in our Unitarian Universalist guiding principles that we affirm and promote, and informed by our covenant:

Love is the spirit of this church and service its law.

This is our great covenant:

To dwell together in peace

To seek the truth in love and

To help one another.

The behaviors that we commit to practicing as our spiritual discipline, and to adjusting as we find necessary, also affirm our mission "...to address personal and societal challenges with passionate action for the healing of the world."

Statement

We, the congregants of First Unitarian Church, strive to practice and embody the following principles, norms, and behaviors in the conduct of our board governance, committee work, relationship with our ministers and staff team, and in our small group and social activities.

1) The inherent worth and dignity of every person;

Values/Norms: To be welcoming, hospitable and respectful in our approach to communication and engagement with everyone who joins us.

Behaviors:

I will treat each person kindly and with respect. I will reach out to visitors and new members, and work to deepen my relationships with others. I will engage in civil conversation and actively listen to other people, assuming each person's good intentions.

2) Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;

Values/Norms: Address conflicts in a timely, direct, and open and compassionate manner, using the church's Conflict Resolution Policy, with an aim to achieve reconciliation and understanding whenever possible. Be aware and take responsibility for the ways that our words and actions affect others.

Behaviors:

I will be welcoming, respectful and responsive to members, friends and visitors of all gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, ages, and racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. I will speak out against injustices. I will be aware of, and take responsibility for, the ways that my words and actions affect others, and will acknowledge my own mistakes and shortcomings. I will address conflicts in a timely, direct, open and compassionate manner, using the church's Conflict Resolution Policy, with an aim to achieve reconciliation and understanding whenever possible.

3) Acceptance of one another and encouragement of spiritual growth in our congregations;

Values/Norms: Value differences in personal views and philosophies. Respectfully engage with others as we each find ways to develop our own spiritualities. Continuously seek new learning and understanding through our relationships with each other.

Behaviors:

I will use active listening and other communication skills to hear different views in all our interactions—one-on-one and in public activities. I will ask questions to seek better understanding when encountering different beliefs or experiences. I will use "I language" when sharing my ideas and beliefs.

4) A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;

Values/Norms: Seek the truth together by remaining engaged with each other and the world around us, as we explore meaning from diverse perspectives.

Behaviors:

I will consider new and different ideas responsibly, heeding the guidance of reason, science, wisdom from the world's religions, and the collective understandings and conscience of the congregation as a whole.

5) The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;

Values/Norms: Respect the authority of the congregation's elected leaders in matters of governance and commit to honoring the outcomes of the democratic process. Take mutual responsibility for information sharing through various modes and accessible formats.

Behaviors:

I will engage in the work of the church to the best of my ability—including volunteering to serve on committees, suggesting solutions to observed challenges, and participating in leadership training opportunities when available. I will commit to being informed of communications from the Board of Trustees and ministers. I will attend meetings for sharing and discussion before important decisions are voted on. I will become familiar with and uphold church bylaws, policies and decisions of our democratically elected Board. I will use our democratic process to propose changes.

6) **The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all;**

Values/Norms: Continuously educate ourselves on important social issues and engage in personal work to become aware of our own biases.

Behaviors:

I will regularly participate in church activities that allow me to learn about the pressing issues that affect all people—in our community, our country, and worldwide—and engaging, as I am able to, to help achieve just solutions.

7) **Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.**

Values/Norms: Work to foster a multigenerational, multiracial, multicultural community within a multi-species ecosystem embracing diversity and integrity in all its manifestations as signs of strength and health.

Behaviors:

I will help foster a diverse church community, contributing my time, talents, and treasure as I am able. I will support our multi-species ecosystem and environment through learning and action in our church, our community, and in the world to help to heal our planet.

Acknowledgements

The norms, values and behaviors formulated in the Covenant by the Good Relations Committee derive from a series of workshops that attracted over 50 registrants, and was consistently attended by some 40 congregants, who participated in focused small group discussions. They were further refined by the feedback received from the congregation to the draft covenant. It was voted on and approved by members at a special congregational meeting called for that purpose.

The Good Relations Committee (2019 – 2021)

Grace Latibeaudiere-Williams, Chair

Lisa Christensen Gee

Jean Hester

David Hodgson

Ellen LaRue

Jim Proctor

Joan Staples

Rev. Teri Schwartz, Ministerial Advisor

Monica Kling-Garcia, Ministerial Intern

See Summary Reference Guide to Behaviors below

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Summary Reference Guide to Behaviors

- 1) I will treat each person kindly and with respect. I will reach out to visitors and new members, and work to deepen my relationships with others. I will engage in civil conversation and actively listen to other people, assuming each person's good intentions.
- 2) I will be welcoming, respectful and responsive to members, friends and visitors of all gender identities, sexual orientations, abilities, ages, and racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds. I will speak out against injustices. I will be aware of, and take responsibility for, the ways that my words and actions affect others, and will acknowledge my own mistakes and shortcomings. I will address conflicts in a timely, direct, open and compassionate manner, using the church's Conflict Resolution Policy, with an aim to achieve reconciliation and understanding whenever possible.
- 3) I will use active listening and other communication skills to hear different views in all our interactions—one-on-one and in public activities. I will ask questions to seek better understanding when encountering different beliefs or experiences. I will use "I language" when sharing my ideas and beliefs.
- 4) I will consider new and different ideas responsibly, heeding the guidance of reason, science, wisdom from the world's religions, and the collective understandings and conscience of the congregation as a whole.
- 5) I will engage in the work of the church to the best of my ability—including volunteering to serve on committees, suggesting solutions to observed challenges, and participating in leadership training opportunities when available. I will commit to being informed of communications from the Board of Trustees and ministers. I will attend meetings for sharing and discussion before important decisions are voted on. I will become familiar with and uphold church bylaws, policies and decisions of our democratically elected Board. I will use our democratic process to propose changes.
- 6) I will regularly participate in church activities that allow me to learn about the pressing issues that affect all people—in our community, our country and worldwide—and engaging, as I am able to, to help achieve just solutions.
- 7) I will help foster a diverse church community, contributing my time, talents, and treasure as I am able. I will support our multi-species ecosystem and environment through learning and action in our church, our community, and in the world to help to heal our planet.

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