

Covenant of the Unitarian Universalists of Benton County

We, the members of Unitarian Universalists of Benton County covenant to affirm right relations¹ and promote our "Principles and Practices" and to promise "one another our mutual trust and support."

A covenant of right relations is a set of guidelines to create a welcoming, respectful, safe and vibrant spiritual community. This purpose is served through respectful communication amongst individuals when engaging in congregational activities. Such guidelines are meant to reduce the amount of conflict, misunderstandings and hurt feelings that can occur when people speak passionately about subjects important to them. Right relations are the foundation on which a safe congregation is based. As we work together to articulate our understanding of and affirm our commitment to the practice of right relations, we will enrich our ability to love, respect, and nurture each other in our lifelong spiritual quests.

Conflict is normal in healthy relationships. Disagreement, ideally, communicates caring and involvement. When practicing right relations, people may disagree vigorously but still treat each other respectfully, stay connected, and learn together. Power is shared. A sense of well being pervades the congregation as people minister to one another. This allows each of us to choose with intention and act with integrity on what we believe and value, in a framework of respectful relationship with members of the Congregation, community and wider world.

As members of the UUBC Congregation, the following guidelines are in place in order to create our own welcoming, respectful, safe and vibrant spiritual community where each person can search for truth and meaning in an environment that builds connections, renews spirit, and inspires action. While realizing that we do not

¹ This right relations covenant has extracted major portions of the Westside Unitarian Universalist Congregation Covenant of Right Relations.

always live up to our ideals, we know we can choose to grow in a manner that promotes a religious community grounded in love and justice. In pledging to follow these guidelines, we will serve our own spiritual development, one another, our religious home, our local community, our larger faith, and our world.

Principles and Practices

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

The living tradition which we share draws from many sources:

- Direct experience of that transcending mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces which create and uphold life;
- Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion and the transforming power of love;
- Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life;

- Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbors as ourselves;
- Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;
- Spiritual teachings of Earth-centered traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for the religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

Members will strive to do the following as they participate in the life of the Congregation:

- Welcome and engage members and visitors alike, encouraging them to join in Congregation activities
- Value and express our own emotions and differences in a way that respects the worth and dignity of each person.
- Express gratitude for the efforts of others
- Listen attentively to appreciate fully another's point of view, valuing the perspective of others
- Support and encourage the personal and spiritual growth of others, acknowledging that each person has a unique path and truth
- Support and respect the contracts and/or agreements with the minister, staff, board and congregational committees
- Value confidentiality
- Ask for help, support and collaboration when needed and encourage others to do the same
- Build courage and commitment to voice our values in the world, and work toward positive relationships with other faith communities

- Provide opportunities to share diverse ideas in a safe place
- Approach disagreements and conflicts constructively, communicating with others in a direct, caring and responsible manner
- Advocate for mediation and resolution processes agreeable to all parties, when conflicts and misunderstandings arise within the Congregation
- Acknowledge that everyone makes mistakes. Seek and offer forgiveness.

This covenant is a living document. It can be reviewed by the congregation at any time in the future and adapted to fit changing needs and circumstances. It represents a commitment to thoughtful, active participation in the life of this religious community; caring and respectful relationships with one another and with visitors; cooperative support for the minister, staff and volunteers; and individual and collective contributions to the wider community.

We also commit to

- learn and worship alongside other congregations by participating in **district or regional** programs
- provide direct services to other congregations by paying Fair Share dues to our **Association** and to districts/regions