

## Congregational Covenant

We, the members and friends of the Community Church of Chapel Hill Unitarian Universalist, affirm the following:

- **We will communicate with and about each other openly, kindly and respectfully.**

We intend to:

- Listen deeply to understand and appreciate the perspectives and opinions of others.
- Describe our own opinions and experiences using the word “I,” mindful that our views may not be shared by others.
- Be respectful and kind in our words and tone in person and in written and electronic communications, focusing on issues and behaviors, not on people.
- Avoid repeating rumors and hearsay about other individuals and groups.

- **We will seek peaceful and constructive resolutions when conflicts arise.**

We intend to:

- Assume that we and others in the congregation act with good intentions.
- Check the accuracy of our perceptions and assumptions with others.
- Communicate directly with individuals or groups with whom we have a conflict, rather than speaking negatively about others in the wider community.
- Be forgiving and loving when we or others make mistakes.
- Apologize, when warranted, and seek to make amends.
- Call on congregational resources when help is needed.

- **We will value diversity of thought, belief and culture within our community.**

We intend to:

- Reach out to others with warmth and kindness.
- Recognize and respect the diversity of beliefs and spiritual paths within our community, including the words and ways people choose to express their spirituality.
- Be curious, appreciative and informed about perspectives that differ from our own.
- Honor the contributions and needs of those who have been historically marginalized in the larger world, and strive to be welcoming.

- **We will work together to build the common good.**

We intend to:

- Nurture mutual trust by sharing information honestly and responsibly.
- Contribute our gifts of time, talents and financial resources.
- Encourage and support the participation of everyone in the life of our congregation.
- Express gratitude and appreciation for the contributions of others.
- Respect the roles and responsibilities of congregational leaders.
- Respect the congregation’s established policies and procedures.

*[Adapted, in part, from the Covenant of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Atlanta.]*

# Covenant FAQs

Below are some frequently asked questions (FAQs) about congregational covenants.

## **1. What is a covenant?**

In a religious context, a covenant often refers to a solemn promise between members of a congregation regarding how they will act toward each other. Synonyms for covenant include: pledge, promise, bond, and understanding.

## **2. What is the history of covenants in Unitarian Universalism?**

Covenants have been fundamental to our religious movement for more than 400 years. Our first congregations in New England rejected the idea of creed as a central doctrine for a religious community. Instead, they adopted covenants—written documents—describing how members of the community wanted to be with one another. Central to each covenant was the idea of the spirit of love working in the hearts and minds of each member of the community. Essentially, UUs have always been people of a covenant instead of a creed. Covenant is fundamental to our UU identity.

## **3. What is the value in having a Congregational Covenant?**

- To specify ways we can act to be our most positive, supportive and caring selves in our relationships with others—to create “beloved community.”
- To specify actions and behaviors each of us can expect of ourselves and others within our church community.
- To remind and guide us toward constructive contributions when tensions or conflicts arise within our community.

## **4. How will we encourage congregants to embrace the Covenant?**

- Each of us—in our choice to participate in the church—agrees to take responsibility for our actions and to abide by the Covenant.
- All will be invited and encouraged to affirm the Covenant.
- Education will be offered in sessions for church groups and individuals and through the program for new members.
- The Committee on Ministry will use the Covenant as a baseline for their work in mediation and facilitation.