

**Covenant
of
Right Relations**

Working draft

Westwood Unitarian Congregation
Received May 6, 2010

Who We Are

Mission, Principles & Goals

How We Are

Interpersonal Communication

Congregational Communication ...

Personal Responsibility

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Diversity

Have You Tried

Help

We recognize that healthy, respectful interpersonal relationships are essential for the well-being of the congregation.

As well, we remember that we are all human, likely to make mistakes, even while striving to be respectful.

The following are guidelines rather than rules, meant to inspire us toward peace, at the same time protecting space for free speech and constructive critical thought.

***Visitor, Friend or Member, Volunteer or Staff,
you are encouraged to join and participate within this Covenant of Right Relations.***

We begin from an assumption of goodwill.

Westwood's Mission

Westwood lives and shares Unitarian Universalist principles through spiritual growth, learning, social justice, care and compassion.

Westwood is a welcoming, nurturing and inclusive community where people may experience freedom of religious thought, spiritual development, hope and inspiration.

Principles (adapted from the UU Principles)

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to grow spiritually
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
- The right of conscience and the use of democratic processes
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence

Westwood's Goals

Nourish all ages, abilities and identities through worship, music, programming and celebration.

Become known in the larger community as a voice for freedom of religious thought, social justice and stewardship of the earth.

Encourage, develop and support our members, friends, leaders and staff.

Provide development opportunities and appropriate compensation for professional ministry.

Provide facilities that accommodate growth in membership, participation and programming.

Interpersonal Communication

In our actions, we will

- Be gentle with one another
- Speak with both honesty and compassion
- Listen actively and with respect to the words, ideas and positions of others
- Acknowledge our own feelings, and the feelings of others
- Take responsibility for our own actions
- Speak directly to the people concerned when issues arise
- Seek help when circumstances are beyond us*

*Help is available from individual Friends & Members, the Minister (anne@westwoodunitarian.ca / 780-434-5819), the Committee on Shared Ministry (cosm@westwoodunitarian.ca), and/or a member of the Board of Trustees (board@westwoodunitarian.ca).

You may leave a note for any of these people/groups in the church office, and they will contact you shortly.

As we do this, we will remember that

- Problems are circumstances, not people
- Relationships are at least as important as the issues
- There is often more going on, within another person, than we might know

We are creating a culture where

- Every person may speak freely and be heard
- It is safe to be different, or to be a dissenting voice
- When we know better, we do better ... and we consciously work to know better

Congregational Communication

In our actions, we will

- Help one another develop the skills & resources to succeed in congregational life
- Make careful decisions – remembering that people care deeply about Westwood
- Trust that decisions are made with care and consideration
- Recognize that some choices may need to be revisited
- Ask for clarification before making assumptions
- Resist the urge to assign ‘intent’ to someone else’s actions
- Be open to & patient with change

As we do this, we will remember that

- Westwood is a collection of individuals – together ‘we’ are Westwood
- We are a democracy that attempts to hear every voice
- Change is a given
- We take responsibility for problems and tasks as a community
- Safety and security are everyone's shared responsibility
- Volunteers, leadership and staff are all working on our behalf
- Often, a great deal more than we know went into a decision
- Each member is also an employer, a property owner, and a decision maker

We are creating a culture where

- We work together to create and sustain healthy community
- We value consensus but acknowledge that it is not always possible

- We are sensitive to the unintended consequences of our decisions
- We are ethical and sustainable stewards of the congregation – in trust for future generations
- Leadership is a satisfying experience & all people are treated with respect

Personal Responsibility

In our actions, we will

- Respect and honour the gifts and contributions of our leadership, our employees, and all who participate
- Mentor people who are new to roles and responsibilities
- Take responsibility for being informed
- Support one another in establishing and maintaining healthy, nurturing personal boundaries

As we do this, we will remember that

- Balance is both an individual and a community responsibility
- Not everybody understands, or works, in the same way
- At times, each of us needs to participate in the work of the congregation
- At times, each of us needs to rest

We are creating a culture where

- We share the responsibilities and tasks of the community, as a community
- New people are given time to settle in before they are asked to lead
- No one is coerced into taking on a role, especially leadership roles
- Sometimes, some things just might not get done ... and that's ok!

Working with Conflict

In our actions, we will

- Be gentle with one another
- Acknowledge and deal with concerns as promptly as we are able
- Attempt to address conflict through an invitation to discussion
- Begin with the person we have an issue with
- Take responsibility for our part within an issue
- Seek help when we need it*

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As we do this, we will remember that

- We begin from an assumption of good will
- If nobody knows that you are hurt / angry / upset, nothing can be done to help
- We value consensus but acknowledge that it is not always possible
- We are each free to choose whether or not to engage in resolution – but harmful behaviour is not acceptable

We are creating a culture where

- We support people in solving problems or addressing concerns
- No one is left standing alone, in fact or in feeling
- Conflict is addressed constructively, rather than left to grow or spread unattended
- Conflict is recognized as a natural, potentially healthy, part of community life

Diversity

In our actions, we will

- Learn about and understand one another, in recognition of our diversity
- Honour diverse needs through healthy interpersonal communications
- Enhance our 'welcome' by broadening our understanding of the wider community

As we do this, we will remember that

- People have diverse learning styles and different ways of communicating
- Newcomers do not automatically understand our culture, or know what will be happening next

We are creating a culture where

- We value and actively practice inclusivity
- We welcome diversity of opinion
- All persons of good will might feel welcome in our midst

Got a concern?

Have you tried ...

...writing out your thoughts, to clarify the issues?

...speaking directly to the person, or persons, involved in the concern?

...discussing it with someone you trust or asking someone else to be part of the conversation?

...listening, again, to all sides of the issue?

...looking for a new solution—a third way?

...asking for help?

...trying again?

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