

First Parish Church in Beverly Unitarian Universalist Congregational Covenant of Right Relation

As members of the First Parish Church in Beverly, Unitarian Universalist, we aspire to welcome all, so in turn each of us shall feel we belong and are appreciated, seen and respected. In our quests to learn and to grow, to pursue our diverse spiritual paths, to engage in trusting relationships, to commit ourselves to a community that grows and changes, even when change can be challenging, we aspire to love one another, to act and to speak and to listen with open hearts and minds, and to enable each person to feel safe and supported.

We value physical dignity, emotional health, and spiritual well-being, and we strive to share our burdens. In doing so, we aspire to cultivate our best selves and make meaningful our individual and collective lives.

Aware that our individual quests for truth may conflict with others, we strive to perceive these conflicts as opportunities for individual and communal growth, enlarging our capacity to love and to affirm the inherent worth and dignity of all persons. In open, honest, and compassionate dialogue, we aim for healthy resolutions to conflicts that enable all persons the freedom to seek out their faith among ourselves and with all others. We strive to perceive conflict as an opportunity to learn, to grow, and to seek understanding.

While recognizing that at times we fall short and do harm, we return to our covenantal aspiration to love and to serve one another, believing that firmness in our boundaries and expectations, honesty in our relations, a commitment to our democratic processes, and forgiveness for ourselves and one another are the ways we best foster and build the community we envision.

We commit ourselves to be accountable to one another and to make this church community healthy and nurturing.

Committed to the values and vision of Beloved Community expressed above, we will:

- Respect one another, appreciating each other in our diverse identities and for our unique abilities and strengths. We will accept our differences with compassion and understanding. We will respect the way others identify.
- Be gentle with one another.
- Give everyone space and time to be heard as we listen to each other.
- Communicate directly and honestly, avoiding gossip and drawing others unnecessarily into a conflict. We will be willing to have difficult conversations. If we have a problem with someone, we will take it to them directly if at all possible.

- Take responsibility for our feedback when we offer it. Anonymous comments, especially when dealing with disagreements and conflicts, run counter to the need for direct communication.
- Be willing to stay in relationship. If the first level of direct communication does not resolve a conflict, be willing to join a more formal process of mediation or resolution..
- Prioritize face-to-face communication, especially when dealing with conflict.
- Be accountable for ourselves, listening and considering our own responsibility in any conflict or confusion. We will be willing to acknowledge any harm we have caused another person and apologize for our role in causing or perpetuating harm.
- Understand and accept our own limits as well as the limits of others.
- Accept gracefully that we all sometimes fail. We will be willing to allow forgiveness to occur in its own time.

To help us to create the Beloved Community to which we aspire, we must integrate this covenant into our congregational life, habitually sharing and reflecting on it, and in particular situations asking ourselves what it calls from us. As a living agreement, it needs periodically to be revisited by the community as a whole to assure that it reflects our values and our evolving commitments. In this spirit, we affirm this Covenant of Right Relation.