

# **Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Northern Chautauqua**

## **Policy and Guidelines for Maintaining Our Covenants**

Adopted by the Executive Board of the Unitarian-Universalist Congregation of Northern Chautauqua, (UUCNC), Fredonia, NY, on April 17, 2012

As Unitarian Universalists, we are bound together by covenant – promises we make to one another as to how we intend to relate to each other and to our world. Our Unitarian Universalist Principles and our Living Tradition, our congregational Mission Covenant Statement and our Covenant of Right Relations provide us with direction and support.

It is our understanding, as a covenanted community, that each of us is empowered, and has the responsibility, to help each other maintain these covenants. We seek to uphold the common good and preserve safety for all who participate in our congregation.

As much as we wish to always uphold our covenant, there will be times each of us makes mistakes, and times there are misunderstandings between members or between committees or committees and the board. In being part of this religious community, we commit to striving to admit mistakes, resolve misunderstandings and reconcile if possible. It is our intention, as part of our covenant, to wish to repair breaches and invite one another back into covenant with each other.

To support us in finding our way back into covenant, the following guidelines are adopted.

- 1) Intervene in situations when a covenant is being broken, for example, when there is disrespect or rude behavior. Use “I” statements about feelings: “I’m feeling uncomfortable with what’s happening....”
- 2) Focus on behaviors rather than personalities.
- 3) Avoid triangulation. If an incident occurs between two people (or two committees, or a committee and the board) and someone comes to you to complain, asks you to take their side, or asks for you to “fix” it, refuse. Encourage the person to speak directly to the one they are having a problem with.
- 4) If you are involved in a situation where you feel covenant was forgotten or unheeded, and it is not an extreme situation as designated in the Disruptive Behavior Policy, first, consider your own behavior and how it may have contributed to the situation, then look again at the other’s behavior. This is not meant to encourage excusing times when the covenant has been broken, but to help us better understand what may have happened. Next, address your concerns directly to the other person, respectfully listening in order to understand and using “I” statements. Aim for forgiveness. Commit to returning to the covenant.
- 5) If no agreement is reached or if one of the parties refuses to meet with the other alone and the incident remains unresolved, either party may approach the minister or board president to meet with them to help them resolve their issue. It is the intention in this meeting that the two parties find their own way, with the third person(s) simply offering a process for how they might do that, not a solution.
- 6) If a satisfactory solution is not reached through the meeting in 5) above or if one of the parties refuses to participate in that meeting and the situation appears to be escalating and disruptive, the minister and board president may seek counsel in considering if this situation should be referred to the Right Relations Council for implementation of the Disruptive Behavior Policy.
- 7) If referral is decided, the Executive board is informed, and the board asks the Right Relations Council to convene and apply the Disruptive Behavior Policy, taking the necessary steps to assure the health and well being of the congregation.