

RRUUC Covenant Frequently Asked Questions

What is a covenant?

At its core, a covenant is an aspirational statement, a promise we make with ourselves, together with others, about how we wish to be when we are our best selves. It is also a declaration of interdependence, a way of recognizing our need for one another.

What role do covenants play in society?

Covenants help to repair the social fabric that binds us together. They counteract the forces that separate us from each other and from those who are different than us. They are a response to the harshness in the world and the alienation many of us feel.

Is the Covenant related to the River Road mission statement?

The Covenant is closely tied to RRUUC's vision of "growing and deepening in Fellowship, Spirit, and Service for all ages." Some of the language used in the Covenant (choosing connection over isolation, helping to shape the world as it could be) is taken directly from the vision statement.

What other covenants are in place in our Congregation?

Each religious education class at RRUUC, from first grade to the high-school youth group, creates a covenant at the beginning of each school year. In addition, the members of the Board of Trustees enter into a covenant with each other.

Has something happened which has made this Covenant particularly important now?

No, a covenant is something that has been missing from our Congregation. It is not a response to any specific incident or controversy. Many medium and large UU congregations have covenants. Our Congregation is vibrant and healthy, making it an ideal time to craft a covenant. It will help to ensure the vitality of our Congregation as we continue to grow and change.

How will this Covenant enhance the life of the Congregation?

The Covenant will help bring us deeper in relationship with one another. It will serve as a framework when we tackle contentious issues, both within our Congregation and beyond. It will guide our interactions when we see each other on Sundays and at all other times we come together in fellowship.

The Covenant states what I will do, but it doesn't say what I can expect in return. Why is this?

The Covenant is not a contractual agreement in which one thing is exchanged for another. It is meant to be your vow, your guidepost to which you can return when

you, I, or we are not our best selves. It is a place from which to begin again in love. Abiding by it will serve us in reaching our highest aspirations, both as individuals and as a collective whole.

Is the Covenant mainly about how we treat each other?

We are a Congregation bound not by creed, but by covenant. While the Covenant is intended to encourage positive social interactions, a covenant is about more than agreeing to respect one another. It is about how we connect and the kind of future that is made possible when we commit ourselves in this way.

If the Covenant is approved by the Congregation, how will it be used?

RRUUC staff, in service to the congregation, along with key lay leaders, will be responsible for its implementation and integration into programming. We plan to display the Covenant in our building and on our website, and we will share it with individuals interested in joining our congregation. It will not be used to reprimand, but rather to remind us of how we have agreed to be together. According to Rev. Green in her sermon on November 19, 2017, “When behaviors or speech or actions land outside the framework, discussion begins. There is no shunning, but rather engagement. There is simply dialogue about how to begin again in love.”

What was the process that was used to craft the Covenant??

A Covenant Task Force (CTF) was appointed by the Board to draft a covenant. The group was composed of four congregants and one staff liaison. UUA Regional Lead Rev. Megan Foley suggested that the First Unitarian Church of Portland’s Covenant would be a good starting point. The CTF created an initial draft to reflect RRUUC’s ideals and values, which it then presented to the congregation. The CTF solicited feedback from the congregation during several forums as well as through face-to-face and electronic communication. The CTF then drafted a second version that was sent to the congregation to obtain additional comments and suggestions. After considering all feedback, the CTF circulated a final version of the proposed Covenant on January 16 to be voted on at a special congregational meeting on January 28.

What is the significance of Beloved Community as stated in the Covenant?

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote and spoke about the Beloved Community, an all-inclusive, "truly brotherly society" in which conflicts are resolved peacefully and love and trust triumph over fear and hatred. We experience Beloved Community when we choose connection, individuality, creativity and mindfulness over separation, individualism, destruction and denial. Beloved Community is centered in the awareness that we belong to one another.