

THE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF CHATTANOOGA
Agreement for Fellowship

Purpose of this Agreement for Fellowship

The purpose of this agreement is to encourage and promote “right relations” among the members and friends of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga, in part by providing processes for dealing with interpersonal conflicts when they arise. “Right relations” require the free expression of different points of view in a context of mutual respect.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga encourages every Member and Friend to embrace this Agreement for Fellowship as an essential part of our shared religious journey.

Our Collective Vision for Fellowship

This Agreement is grounded in the Unitarian Universalist Principles; we intend it to provide guidance in implementing these principles in our everyday lives. It is in loving relationship with those in our church community, including the youth in our Religious Education program, that we have the opportunity to grow spiritually as individuals and as a fellowship. It is here, in our church, that we come together to express our common purpose and to be strengthened through understanding, compassion, and forgiveness. We choose to become a part of a community with a common purpose to foster an atmosphere where the Unitarian Universalist Principles may be learned and practiced.

A Community of Common Purpose

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga is a safe haven that nurtures and enhances the personal and spiritual growth of all participants. It is a place of trust where personal enrichment arises from serving the community.

Awareness of Self and Others

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga is a welcoming place where those in the community respect themselves and others. We are a shelter of many beliefs where minority and opposing views are accepted and respected.

Personal Responsibility

We maintain our dignity and integrity by taking responsibility for our actions. The UUCC is a place where we invite constructive criticism when it is free of animosity. We strive to recognize when our conflicts have become selfish and non-productive.

Participation in the activities and leadership of the church is encouraged for all who would choose to act for the good of community and themselves.

Listening, Speaking and Acting with Respect

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga is a place where we openly listen to the ideas of others. We actively listen for the meaning and feelings within others words so that we may understand their message better.

We affirm the inherent worth and dignity of all in our church community and bring the intentions of kindness and respect to our spoken words. We are mindful of what we say and how our words may be interpreted by others, whether or not they are present. We are accepting of others views and, while we may disagree, we do not challenge the worth of the person behind those views.

We fulfill our commitments to the community and to each other. We give generously of ourselves within our means and are grateful that others do, as well. We come here to learn the skills of loving kindness and to practice what we have learned in our community.

Reconciliation & Forgiveness

We acknowledge and respect our personal differences. When disagreements arise, we help each other resolve them before they escalate to destructive levels of conflict. We offer the gift of forgiveness and are aware that reconciling conflict allows us to remain in fellowship.

With this Common Purpose as Our Source, We Agree to

- * Welcome all who come to us with acceptance and respect for the differences among us.
- * Keep our discussions to topics and issues rather than personalities.
- * Practice patience and speak the truth directly and with compassion.
- * Reflect carefully about the potential results of our words and actions before we speak or act.
- * Acknowledge that we may not always agree with group decisions; however, we will support the consensus of the larger church community and seek to find our common goals.
- * Seek to resolve our disagreements to our mutual satisfaction, and to ask for assistance when they cannot be resolved.
- * Speak directly to those with whom we have disagreements rather than to a third party. If we have concerns about the conduct of a youth in our Religious Education program, we will speak directly to his/her teacher or parent. In no case will we act as messengers between parties in conflict.

- * Contribute to the community at a level that is healthy for us as individuals—intellectually, financially, and with gifts of time and energy.
- * Act with loving kindness as best we can at all times, seeking to promote justice, equality, and compassion.
- * Understand that creating and maintaining fellowship requires learning and practice.

Resolution, Reconciliation and Healing (When Conflict Arises)

We know that there may be times in the life of relationships within the church when we do not model our vision of Fellowship. The following steps to resolve, reconcile and heal our inevitable differences are offered to those on the path to Fellowship so that we may remain in community.

A. Interpersonal Reconciliation and Healing (One-on-one Solution)

Affirmation: When we find ourselves involved in or experiencing conflict, we will not ignore it or pretend that it doesn't exist; rather we will talk to the person(s) involved with the intention of solving the problem. When someone tells us about a problem with a third party, we will encourage him/her to speak directly to that party and we will offer, if appropriate, to participate in that conversation.

Process: Individuals and leaders bear the responsibility to recognize and name problems as they arise and address them under the terms of this Agreement. In the event of threatening or dangerous behavior, our responsibility could involve calling the police. Under ordinary circumstances, when we find ourselves or the group we are leading involved in conflict, we accept this and become responsible for seeking solutions. As individuals, we will go directly to the other party and carefully listen to the others point of view until we understand it; we will ask the other party to do the same. If we believe that inviting another Member or Friend to join that conversation will help resolve the conflict, we will do so. We will avoid triangulation—telling others outside the conflict resolution process about the problem; instead, we will engage in open communication with the person(s) directly involved. While we may sometimes need to agree to disagree, if it is in the best interest of the community to resolve our conflict., we will attempt to find a compromise that leads to a mutually satisfactory solution.

Outcome: Our goal is the resolution of problems by negotiating a win-win collaborative or negotiated acceptable solution.

B. Conflict Mediation and Resolution (Getting Help from Others)

Affirmation: When the steps involved in interpersonal reconciliation and healing fail to resolve a conflict, we will seek mediation through a process that we will uphold as members of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga.

Process: When we are unable to resolve a conflict with another, we will ask for the assistance of

the Committee on Ministry, which can provide mediation, other processes, or request assistance from other sources (such as the Unitarian Universalist Church of Chattanooga Board of Trustees, the regional and/or national offices of the UUA, and persons/groups from the local community). With input from all involved, the Committee on Ministry will recommend the best methods to bring those involved to constructive interaction.

Outcome: Through mediation, we will offer compromise to our own positions, and accept a reconciliation of our once disparate goals.

C. Resources

- * The Unitarian Universalist Principles
- * This Agreement for Fellowship
- * Ourselves
- * Minister(s)
- * The Committee on Ministry
- * Community Mediation Resources
- * “Peace Treaty of the Community of Mindfulness”
- * Other resources as determined by the Committee on Ministry
- * On-going Training and Workshops in Conflict Resolution and Communication