

1. WHO WE ARE AND HOW WE BUILD COMMUNITY TOGETHER

1.1 OUR VISION AND PRINCIPLES

“We kindle the light within and inspire courage to nurture the web of life and to create a just and compassionate world”. (Vision statement)

Our principles affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity, and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregation and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.

As many of the principles suggest, we welcome people of all races, sexual orientations, cultural and religious backgrounds, genders, abilities, and ages. We support the dignity and worth of every person and strive to raise awareness and respect for the realities and needs of all. In practical terms, this means respecting and honouring difference in our community and beyond. It means ensuring physical accessibility to the church premises and promoting active participation in activities for all who may require additional supports. For example, headsets are provided for the services as well as Braille and large print hymns (at the Welcome Table). It also means trying to be sensitive to things such as food and other allergies (e.g. scents such as perfume).

1.2 BEING A WELCOMING CONGREGATION - WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

We are an intentionally Welcoming Congregation. This means we embrace two-Spirit, gay, lesbian, bisexual, trans, queer, asexual, intersex, and questioning (2SLGBTQ+) people into our spiritual community. We work to promote acceptance, inclusion, understanding, and equity for 2SLGBTQ+ people and families in Ottawa and society at large. We fight homophobia, transphobia, biphobia and other forms of hatred and oppression. See more information on our website: [here](#)

For more information on Welcoming Congregations go to the Canadian Unitarian Council website: [here](#)

1.3 BEING A LIFE SPAN LEARNING CONGREGATION – WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

Lifespan learning is all about finding ways to draw out our potential through our religious communities. More information on Lifespan Learning can be found on our website: [here](#)

We hope that the practical information on operational activities for leaders and volunteers, provided in these online resources will foster the conditions which encourage spiritual growth and learning.

1.4 OUR COVENANTS

A covenant is a solemn promise to do or not do something. In Unitarian Universalism, we covenant to affirm and promote our Unitarian principles and as a process to help create safe intentional communities.

In a volunteer setting, you may call a covenant “committee guidelines”. They define expected behavioural norms and are especially important when working together in a virtual environment or cross-functional team. Groups will be more successful when the guidelines or covenant is written and can be referred to on a regular basis.

In a spiritual setting, a group covenant helps build trust and to provide a safe space to do committee work and explore spirituality. If the members of the committee or group create the covenant, they are more likely to feel ownership of the guidelines, and therefore, they are more likely to follow them.

FIRST UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF OTTAWA ▪ CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT

We, the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa, are committed to living our lives and shaping our church in ways that are compatible with the principles and purposes of the Canadian Unitarian Council and the Unitarian Universalist Association, and do hereby in good faith covenant together to uphold our principles:

Nurturing our relationships with each other

Aware that we shall not always be of the same mind, we create an inclusive, welcoming, and safe space in which we value each other and everyone's contributions and opinions. We demonstrate our caring and compassion with kindness and empathy.

Living our faith

We share our vibrant, living Unitarian Universalist culture in ways that are relevant to current and future generations. Understanding that we choose to walk diverse spiritual paths demands of each of us to seek and foster our own and others' spiritual growth. We encourage and support each other in striving towards social and environmental justice by respecting the interdependence of all existence.

Celebrating the democratic process

The democratic process, with its acknowledged imperfections, is an essential element in our Congregation's governance.

We resolve our differences and make decisions through fair and transparent processes. We respect these decisions and when necessary, we advocate for change by honouring the existing structures and working from within. When we encounter challenges, we forgive each other and ourselves and begin again.

Embracing Diversity

Grateful for the broad diversity among us, we willingly accept responsibility for our own behaviours and our obligations to honour each other. We strive to challenge oppression and discrimination in all its forms. We are committed to upholding social justice principles and working towards inclusion and equity.

Ensuring that our congregation continues to thrive

We share the work of stewardship within the Congregation which includes resources of time, money, energy, property, ideas, and each of our individual talents and skills. We gratefully embrace all contributions large and small, knowing that whatever we each contribute, will strengthen our relational bonds so that we may live our Unitarian Principles.

We freely enter into this covenant and agree to honour its spirit.

FIRST UNITARIAN CONGREGATION OF OTTAWA ▪ RELATIONAL COVENANT

I will strive to honour our Congregational Covenant and the principles of Unitarian Universalism by:

- Speaking for myself with honesty.
- Being aware of how my words and actions may affect others.
- Listening. Assuming good intentions. Remembering that people differ in their perceptions, previous experience and communication styles.
- Interacting respectfully. Acknowledging other people's views and confirming my understanding of what is being said.
- Speaking directly to a person with whom I disagree rather than about them. Engaging a third party to mediate, if needed.
- Following through with actions on my promises and commitments.
- Serving as I am able with my time, talents and treasures.
- Celebrating our diversity by ensuring that all feel welcome and included.

The Congregational and Relational Covenants are intended to be living documents reflecting current language and approaches. They will be periodically reviewed to ensure they continue to reflect our best intentions of how we are with each other.

November 25, 2020