

In the Fall 2022, we began the process of revisiting the OUUC covenant and creating a behavioral covenant. Rev. Mary started this project because there has been confusion about what it means to be in covenant and how covenant holds us when we are in conflict. This suggested to her that a clear behavioral covenant would be helpful. A behavioral covenant would not replace the current covenant but would be added to it. Rev. Mary also noticed that it had been many years since the current covenant was crafted and it should be revisited.

Preparation:

In October 2022, Rev. Carol McKinley and Rev. Summer Albayti led a worship service and covenant workshop. As part of that workshop, small groups discussed what it meant to be in covenant. Out of that, a writing team crafted the proposed behavioral covenant that could be added to the current covenant. Thank you to the writing Team of Martha Nicoloff, Helen Henry, Jenée Wolfram and Rich Kalman.

We held two congregational forums in the Spring of 2023 to discuss the proposed changes, one in April and a second in May. The writing team took feedback from these forums and provided an update to the behavioral covenant in August 2023.

In addition, in October, 2023, the OUUC Board of Trustees considered and answered two questions:

1. What is the process for adopting these changes? When the changes have been thoroughly discussed and there is general agreement on the changes, they will be brought to a congregational meeting for a vote.

2. Should ministers and other staff be included in the covenants? Rev. Mary advised against this as ministers and staff are held accountable to the congregation (and many others) by the OUUC Employee Handbook, professional affiliations, and other sources. The Board agreed.

Current OUUC Covenant

In the Spring of 2023, Rev. Mary reviewed the current covenant and proposed one word change to remove ableist language. Based on the Board decision to remove staff, there are two proposed changes to the OUUC covenant:

1. Remove ableist language
2. Remove ministers and staff from covenant; their behavior and expectations are covered elsewhere.

Proposed changes:

We the **congregants** (~~removed members, ministers and staff~~) of the Olympia Unitarian Universalist Congregation, enter into this covenant as an expression of our commitment to each other.

Because we value our congregation, we promise to...

enhance its health with our time, talent, energy, and financial resources; and honor our commitments here.

Because we seek to be a friendly and inclusive congregation, we promise to...

provide a safe and nurturing environment for all our members, young and old; assist those among us who have urgent needs for care and support; and provide opportunities for personal and spiritual growth.

Because we choose to **journey** (~~removed walk~~) together we promise to ...

create and support an organizational structure that is responsive, responsible, identifiable, and accessible; share our gifts as we participate in the leadership of the congregation; and encourage our congregational leaders to listen and speak openly, understand deeply, work with fairness, and serve with passion.

Because we need not think alike to love alike, we promise to...

speak and work openly, honestly, and lovingly with our leadership, providing informed, constructive feedback when we believe change is needed.

Because we recognize that conflict is normal we promise to...

 speak with each other directly and honestly from a position of respect, kindness and love, recognizing that to do so, there will be times we need to seek counsel from the community.

Because we strive to live our Unitarian Universalist principles, we promise to ...

 inform ourselves about and engage issues that concern our larger communities.

Proposed OUUC Behavioral Covenant 2023

Revised November

As **congregants** of OUUC, we are united in our commitment to treat one another with dignity and love. This Behavioral Covenant formalizes our commitment. It requires making promises and trusting that we will *embrace* those promises. We know we will make mistakes and disappoint one another, but when we cause harm, we promise to take the necessary steps to return to right relationship.

This Behavioral Covenant is a path for ensuring that we at OUUC will be seen, heard, cared for, and accompanied on our journey. We bring this Behavioral Covenant into all situations and interactions, as we work together toward fulfilling our *Vision, Mission, and Goals*. It will guide us in becoming our best selves, *within, among, beyond, and throughout* our congregation. As we fulfill these sacred promises to each other we become the congregation we aspire to be.

- 1. I will create and foster a safe space to allow all who come in peace to feel *welcome* and included.**

- 2. I will work to acknowledge and eliminate my own biases, and to dismantle systems of oppression in the congregation and in our communities.**

3. I will speak honestly about my personal experiences and will express my views in a **productive** manner. ~~that is respectful of others.~~
4. I will listen to others with attention and curiosity, and will stay open to alternative perspectives, **recognizing that I may not fully understand.**
5. ~~I will assume that others have positive and productive intentions and are equally committed to achieving our vision, mission, and goals.~~
5. I will express my discomfort in a timely and respectful manner when I perceive behaviors toward others or myself to be **harmful** creating space for resolution.
6. I will communicate directly with the person with whom I have a conflict or concern. If I need support, I will promptly seek assistance from the Healthy Congregations Team.
7. I will consider the potential impact of my words and actions, and will work to remedy any negative impacts, recognizing that the impact of my words and actions can differ from my intent.
8. I will respect others' gifts, experience, knowledge, and commitment, and will work cooperatively with our leaders to understand and respect the decisions that are made on behalf of the congregation.
9. I will, to the best of my ability, contribute my time, talent, energy, and financial resources, and will honor my commitments to OUUC.

Behavioral Covenant with Examples

These examples are offered to help provide clarity about behaviors and are not intended to be an exhaustive list.

1. I will create and foster a safe space to allow all who come in peace to feel *welcome* and included.

Examples:

- Make services and gatherings open, and accessible to those with differently-abled bodies, special needs, dietary restrictions, or limited transportation. Include online programs whenever feasible.
- Respect people's boundaries, whether expressed verbally or non-verbally.
- Honor and respect the pronoun preferences of others.
- Follow all health and safety protocols.

2. I will work to acknowledge and eliminate my own biases, and to dismantle systems of oppression in the congregation and in our communities.

Examples:

- Avoid bias based on race, sex, gender identity, class, ability, age, and beliefs.
- Actively inform myself about systems of oppression, and reflect upon my own biases.

3. I will speak honestly about my personal experiences and will express my views in a **productive manner. ~~that is respectful of others.~~**

Examples:

- Engage with openness and humility.
- *Bridge* to build connections.

4. **I will listen to others with attention and curiosity, and will stay open to alternative perspectives, recognizing that I may not fully understand.**

Examples:

- Seek first to understand through deep listening and respectful questioning.
- Trust that other people's stories, comments, experiences, points of view, and spiritual journeys are valid and deserve to be heard.
- Assume we are all attempting to be productive as we collaboratively work toward our shared goals.
- *Embrace* different learning styles and different methods of accomplishing a task.

- ~~5. I will assume that others have positive and productive intentions and are equally committed to achieving our vision, mission, and goals.~~

5. **I will express my discomfort in a timely and respectful manner when I perceive behaviors toward others or myself to be harmful, creating space for resolution.**

Examples:

- Uphold this covenant by speaking up for myself and on behalf of others, especially when my privilege affords me more opportunity to do so.
- Express and honor my personal boundaries.
- Avoid the use of profanity when addressing others.

6. **I will communicate directly with the person with whom I have a conflict or concern. If I need support, I will promptly seek assistance from the Healthy Congregations Team.**

Examples:

- Avoid speaking about a person, or conflict, with others who are not directly involved.
- Act promptly in an attempt to resolve any conflict.

- Respect confidentiality as I work to resolve conflicts, issues, or concerns with others.
- **Respond to a person's concerning words or actions by addressing their impact.**

7. I will consider the potential impact of my words and actions, and will work to remedy any negative impacts, recognizing that the impact of my words and actions can differ from my intent.

Examples:

- ~~Before I speak, I will ensure my words are~~ **Say only what is** true, helpful, and kind.
- Consider the audience and communicate with sensitivity to each unique circumstance.
- Acknowledge that my impact is my responsibility to make right.

8. I will respect others' gifts, experience, knowledge, and commitment, and will work cooperatively with our leaders to understand and respect the decisions that are made on behalf of the congregation.

Examples:

- Support the decisions made by the volunteers and staff to whom that responsibility has been delegated.
- Respect others' schedules, boundaries, limitations, and their efforts overall.

9. I will, to the best of my ability, contribute my time, talent, energy, and financial resources, and will honor my commitments to OUUC.

Examples:

- Make and fulfill a supportive annual pledge **toward congregational stewardship or** request a waiver as necessary.
- Contribute to the **Capital Campaign** Fund, and/or volunteer to help maintain our building and grounds.
- Volunteer to lead, or participate in, spiritual, social justice, educational, and social activities

