



History and Process of the OUUC Covenant Project

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.

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.

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.

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.

In December 2023 and February 2024, we held two more congregational forums to discuss covenant and how the behavioral covenant might be implemented.

As decided by the Board, the Healthy Congregations Team and rev. Mary recommend that the proposed changes be brought to the congregation at the annual meeting on June 9, 2024.

They recommend that two changes be considered individually--the revision to the current covenant and the addition of a behavioral covenant. Further, they recommend that the questions be:

1. Are you ready to vote on this change?
2. If so, there is a vote.
3. If not, the next question is , "What would help you feel ready to vote?"

The Healthy Congregations Team and Rev. Mary are committed to helping the congregation build and practice the skills needed to live the aspirations of the covenant.