

Proposed Draft of Covenant of Right Relationships **Lori Lerude/ Kathy Fletcher June 12, 2014**

History

The Transition Team held several forums for members to discuss their experiences as part of our church community. Interestingly, one theme which emerged from these conversations was that members felt that there was lack of expressed conflicts within our community and that conflicts which *were* expressed, were not resolved well. Additionally, Bob Sampson alluded to periods of rocky transition as each new minister has been settled. With that knowledge, the Transition Team proposed that the Board assemble a “Right Relations Team” in anticipation of calling a new settled minister in 2014.

What are “Right Relationships?”

Right relationship might be defined as an, “appropriate, healthy position in relation to others. [In right relationships,] people can relate to each other in relationships characterized by honor, respect, love, and care. Right relationships are creative, mutual, and generative.” (Sellon and Smith, 2005)

Unitarian-Universalism is a covenantal and not doctrinal faith. Our behaviors and relationships are not prescribed by scripture or mutually shared traditions. A Covenant of Right Relations would lay down the principles by which we all agree to work and be together in community.

The Board put together a team of interested folks to develop a written Covenant of Right Relations. This team read the literature on right relationships in faith communities. The team asked for help and input from the District, and reviewed the extensive materials on the UUA website. Ultimately, the team (with congregational input) produced a draft congregational covenantal agreement and recommends it for adoption at the 2014 Annual Meeting.

This draft covenant is only a beginning for the work on Right Relationships. If this covenant is adopted, in the 2014-15 church year, we might put together a team to introduce the Covenant at committee meetings, training them in the principles of right relationships. We might offer more workshops on non-violent communications. There are many practices on right relationships in the larger UU world for us to explore and, potentially adopt.

Our Process

Co-chairs of the committee, Lori Lerude and Kathy Fletcher, reviewed the literature and many other church websites for sample covenantal language. They then held three meetings of interested congregational members; one to introduce the concept and collect members’ input, one to ask members to reflect on language which might be meaningful

for our congregation, and one to put together the draft. Lori and Kathy are very grateful that more than thirty members of the congregation participated in this work and hope that those participants continue with the process moving forward.

This is the proposed Draft Covenant of Right Relationships:

Mindful of one another's inherent worth and dignity, we all covenant;

- to each bring our best selves to this place
- to listen intently
- to speak honestly and thoughtfully
- to trust in one another's good intentions and recognize that our action and words have an impact regardless of our intentions
- and when we find communication is difficult, we will ask for help and be open to loving guidance from others.