

Living the Covenant

Treat one another with respect and civility

Honor diversity of individuals and of ideas

We cherish and benefit from the work of many minds having different perspectives and experiences.

We cultivate behaviors that welcome and encourage participation by all members.

We neither think nor speak of individuals by generalized “labels” nor characterize them pejoratively by groups.

Demonstrate civility, empathy, and compassion

We behave toward one another with courtesy, regardless of the degree of our differences.

We attempt to “put ourselves in others’ places” to promote understanding of opinions different from our own.

We avoid disrespectful behaviors, including body language and other non-verbal communications.

Speak of issues rather than the merits of individuals

Whether in conversations, forums, discussions, business meetings, or other contexts, we choose language and rhetoric that addresses issues.

We do not allow the perceived positive or negative qualities of individuals to influence our consideration of issues, neither accepting nor dismissing statements for any reason other than quality and validity.

Listen thoughtfully

We refrain from interrupting and we concentrate on understanding others rather than upon our prospective statements or responses.

We listen “actively,” paying attention to our own reactions to what is being said, seeking to better understand ourselves as well as what a speaker may be saying.

We listen with a generosity of spirit, searching for the good in another’s statement.

We listen “generatively,” to generate new ideas and understandings from what we hear.

Behave with integrity and responsibility

Be aware of our personal values and their relationship to our roles in the congregation

As value-driven individuals working together in a value-driven congregation, we frequently review our inner personal values to help assure that our behavior lives up to the standards we espouse.

Be fully open, truthful, and fair

We speak in pursuit of whole truths, refraining from distorting issues through statements that are untrue or only partially true.

In differing with others, we avoid distorting their positions.

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We do not obfuscate issues by raising peripheral thoughts not truly germane to the topic under consideration.

We cultivate an atmosphere of trust in which others are open, truthful, and fair toward us as we are toward them, and avoid allowing defensiveness to interfere with proper communication.

We speak with people with whom we differ rather than about them.

Accept the responsibility of helping the congregation to make decisions and do its work

We exercise our responsibility to be informed and speak up, and do not allow important information, opinions, or questions important to us to become problems because they have gone unexpressed.

We adapt to the changes of time and circumstance; in particular we try to understand the transition of a small and intimate congregation into one that must employ structured approaches necessary in a larger organization.

When we cannot persuade others to our point of view, we seek reasonable compromises of differences.

Honor collective decisions, even when we do not agree

Recognizing that we as individuals cannot always prevail, we honor and accept decisions made collectively by the congregation.

We support the common good over personal preferences.

Cultivate openness and transparency

Make congregational activities safe places for open discourse

We provide a “safe container” for open exchange of ideas, no matter how large or small a gathering.

We conduct ourselves so that each person feels secure in speaking any opinion openly and freely.

We pursue unity among the congregation and among individuals, and avoid setting one person or group against another.

We avoid engaging in exclusive groups for the purpose of strategizing against other groups or individuals in the congregation.

Communicate constructively

We carefully consider our thoughts before speaking or writing.

We speak straightforwardly to illuminate issues rather than to confuse or obscure them.

We ask and answer questions openly and completely.

“Frame” issues for accuracy and understanding rather than distort them for persuasive advantage

We avoid rhetorical constructions that slant complex issues only in our preferred direction, and seek instead to clarify matters.

If we believe the Board or the Minister should be leading the congregation in a different way, we speak of the leadership activities we desire and work with the leadership to effectuate the desired outcomes.

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Make official decisions through the democratic process

Understand and follow the congregation's bylaws and formal procedures

UUCSF bylaws describe how we conduct business.

We inform ourselves of the content of the bylaws in order to participate in the business of the congregation.

We follow the bylaws in order for congregational business to be fair, official, and not subject to later challenge.

Achieve maximum information and understanding through thorough discussion of issues and seek maximum practicable consensus

Because things work best when a high degree of agreement has been reached, when practicable we employ committees, task forces, forums, and other devices to improve understanding and agreement on complex or controversial issues before bringing them up for resolution in business meetings.

We encourage question-and-answer, judiciously conducted by the chair, as part of the discussion of motions.

We anticipate and schedule generous amounts of time for thorough discussion in congregational meetings.

Achieve official decisions by majority as per the bylaws

Because unanimity is seldom achievable, we make official decisions in formal business meetings conducted in accordance with UUCSF Bylaws which provide for rule by simple majority in most issues and for specific majorities on certain kinds of issues.

We respect and abide by official decisions of the majority.

We retain and may always exercise, within the UUCSF Mission and Bylaws, the right to try to change the mind of the majority.

Faithfully carry out official decisions

We count on board members, officers, employees, and volunteers to carry out official decisions and to abide by official policies of the congregation.

Other than through the democratic process, we will not work to prevent or to delay the carrying out of an official decision.