

A word cloud featuring various positive values and virtues. The words are arranged in a dense, overlapping manner, with some words being significantly larger than others. The colors of the words are primarily shades of blue, green, and purple, with some words in red. The background is white.

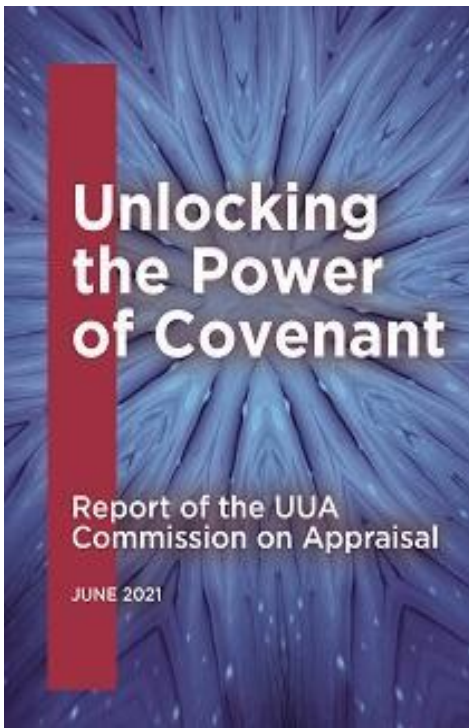
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empathy
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patience
humor
equality
dignity
change
service
open-mindedness
equity
inherent
beliefs
thinking
worth
commitment

Video: Meditation on Covenanting
Hilary Allen
UUA New England Regional Staff



Click here (skip ads):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lFWEARvrJY>

Why Focus on Covenant ?



Resources for the Journey



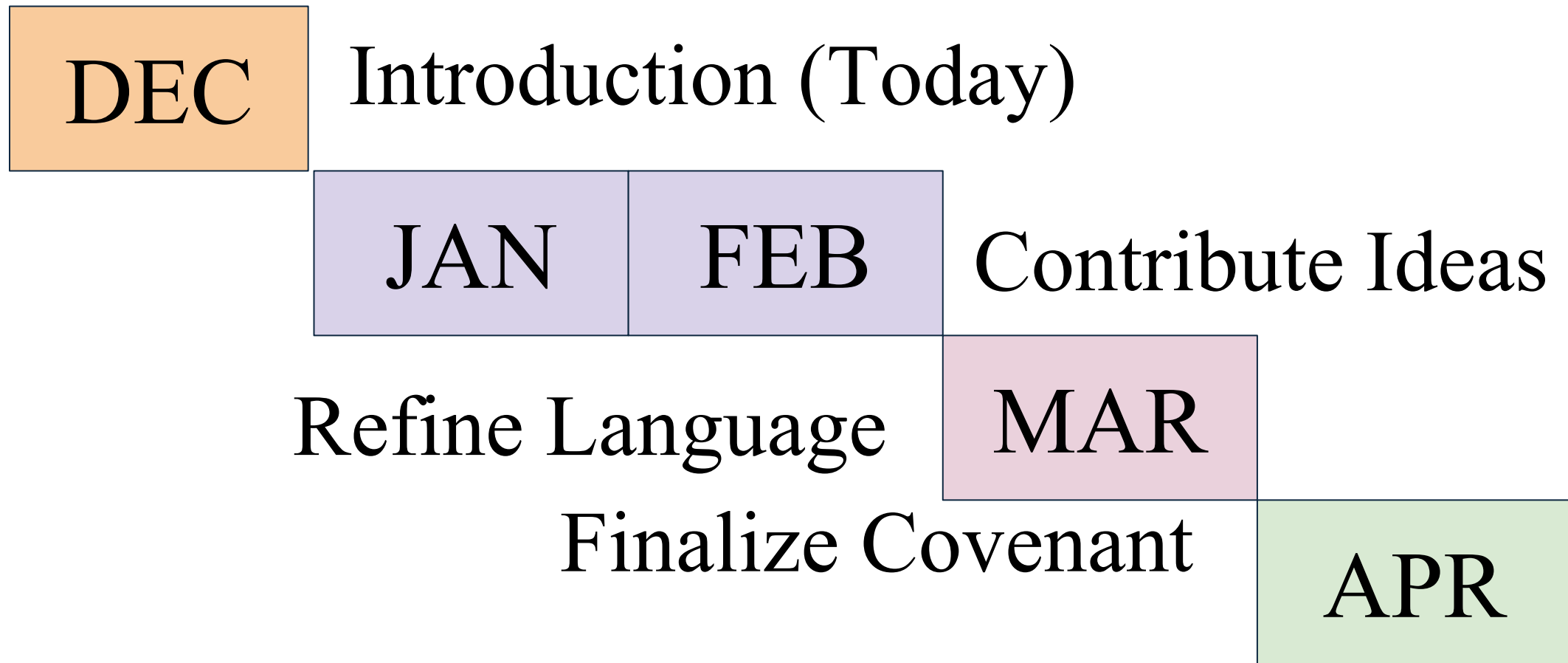
Peterborough Unitarian Universalist Church

Who We Are!

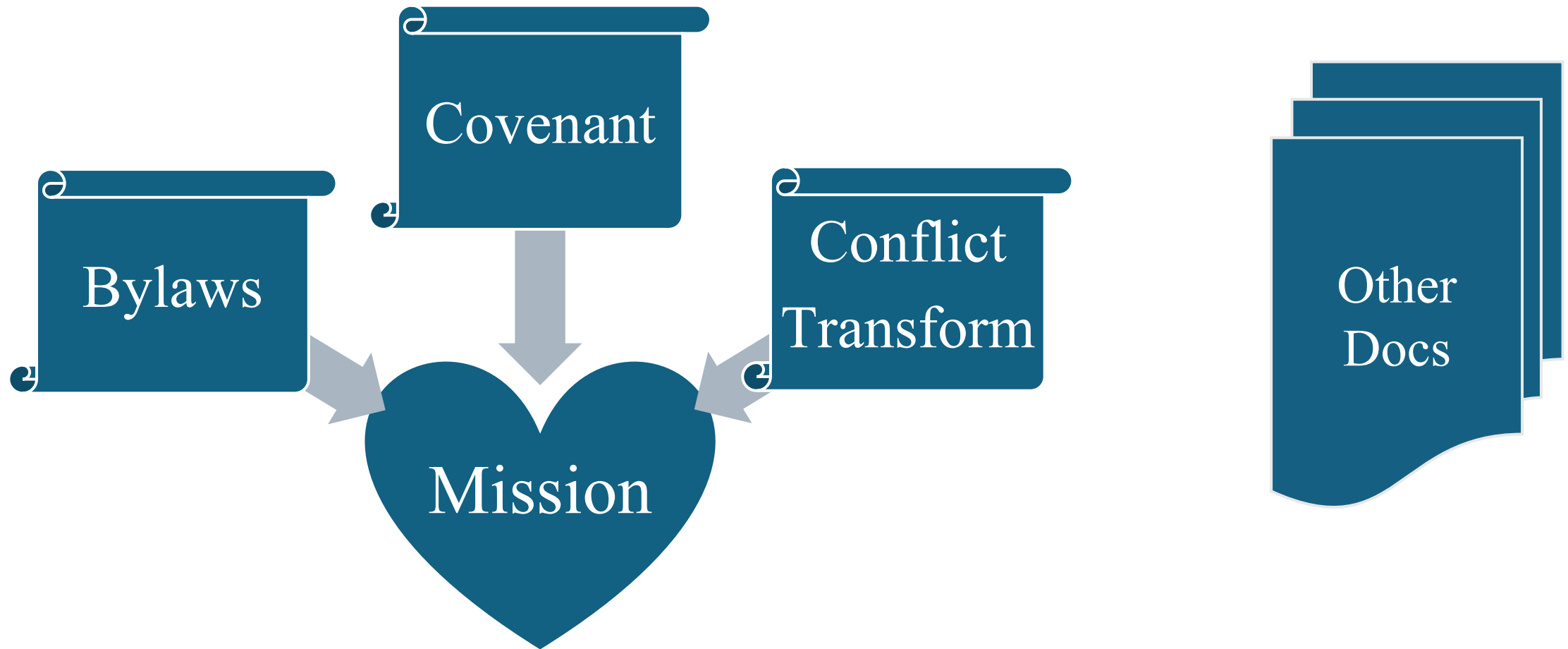
Final report of PUUC's "Who Are We?" process, May 2024

<https://uupeterborough.org/covenant>

Timeline and Outcomes: Target Vote at Annual Meeting



Interdependent Documents Support Mission



SAMPLE COVENANTS

Belfast, ME (2012)

CONGREGATIONAL COVENANT OF RIGHT RELATIONS

A covenant of right relations is an agreement to strive toward behavior that creates and maintains vibrant spiritual community—welcoming, safe, respectful, and compassionate. The covenant sets a higher standard than anyone can meet all of the time, but each individual's willingness to aspire to these guidelines will strengthen relationships and build community within our congregation.

Our Unitarian Universalist principles affirm our individual worth and rights to engage in free and responsible searches for meaning and to exercise our own consciences. This and our humanity guarantee that we will, at times, have differences and conflict. Consciously practicing right relations will help us to avoid unnecessary conflict and to grow in caring and commitment when our differences deeply challenge us.

As members and friends of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast, we agree to live and work with this covenant, revisiting it in the varied contexts of our church life.

In this spirit, we covenant:

1. To recognize that our church's ministry runs through all we do.
2. To bring love, humor, and creativity to our work and celebrations.
3. To practice respect and compassion for all, including those whose beliefs or backgrounds differ from our own.
4. To foster hospitality, welcoming all members, friends, and visitors and encouraging them to engage in congregational activities, with hope that no one feels he or she is a stranger.
5. To respect and nurture our children and youth in their growth and explorations of values and beliefs, actively seeking ways to give to and receive from them.
6. To practice stewardship by giving of our time, talent, and treasure to our church, contributing to our larger community, and protecting the Earth.

7. To have faith in the goodness of others and acknowledge our own mistakes, recognizing that we all are imperfect and evolving, and practicing forgiveness.
8. To make room for healthy dissent, listening open-heartedly, talking with rather than about one another, staying engaged when in conflict, and seeking mediation from a third party when conflict cannot otherwise be resolved.
9. To express gratitude and support to our church's staff and to members and friends who volunteer in our programs and governance.
10. As individuals, to examine frequently whether we stand in right relations with other members of our beloved community, taking personal responsibility for our feelings and actions.

This covenant was adopted by our congregation on December 12, 2012 and is subject to revision when the congregation calls for it.

Belfast, ME 2023

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Belfast Maine is a spiritual community that believes in the sacred practice of honoring an agreed upon set of promises to guide our individual behavior and all that we do together.

To that end, we covenant to:

- Practice love, respect, and compassion for everyone;
- Listen open-heartedly;
- Address conflict directly, with kindness and curiosity;
- Talk with, rather than about, one another;
- Have faith in the goodness of others, acknowledging our own mistakes and practicing forgiveness;
- Take responsibility for our feelings and actions.

Milford, NH

In our interactions at UUCM, we promise to:

- Actively reach out to each other.
- Listen and hear.
- Speak directly, with honesty, compassion and curiosity.
- Assume we are all doing the best we can.
- Keep an open mind.
- Accept and appreciate each other.
- Serve our community with generosity and good humor.
- Be responsible and accountable for our choices.
- Forgive each other and ourselves.

Ellsworth, ME

UUCE Congregational Covenant (accepted 10/2017)

We covenant as a loving community to:

- Be kind in word, tone, and deed;
- Communicate directly, and with honesty and thoughtfulness;
- Value a diversity of perspectives;
- Assume the best intentions in one another;
- Respectfully speak up when we are hurt and listen when we cause hurt; and
- When conflict arises, work constructively toward healing and forgiveness.

Peterborough, NH

Covenant of Right Relations

Peterborough Unitarian Universalist Church

As Unitarian Universalists, we are a people not of creed, but of covenant. What we hold in common is not a single theology, but a commitment to the Seven Principles of Unitarian Universalism. The first principle states that we “covenant to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person”, and the fourth states that we affirm and promote “justice, equity, and compassion in human relations.” These are not just ideals for how we interact with the rest of the world, but for how we interact with each other, here in this congregation.

Theologian Martin Buber is reported to have said that human beings are “promise-making, promise-keeping, promise-breaking, promise-renewing” creatures. A written covenant of right relations helps make clear what promises we are making, how we keep them, and how we renew them when they are broken.

The most important element of all those steps is respectful communication. When people speak passionately about subjects important to them, it is possible for disagreement to become conflict, and for people to be hurt by the way in which disagreement is expressed. When practicing right relations, people can disagree without being disagreeable. This is an important part of what we commit to with this covenant.

Covenant, however, is about more than just how to handle disagreement. It is about how to live out our commitment to our principles, so that we are in all cases striving to treat each other with the utmost respect and dignity, and are practicing compassion with each other.

As members and friends, lay leaders, minister, and staff of the Peterborough Unitarian Universalist Church, we commit to this covenant with each other. It applies to all of our relationships within the congregation. It exists to help us fulfill our mission statement, which includes the commitment “to nurture a loving, inclusive, spiritual community.” We do not always live up to our ideals, but we know we can choose to grow in a manner that promotes a religious community grounded in love and justice. In pledging to follow these guidelines, we will serve our own spiritual development, one another, our religious home, our local community, our larger faith, and our world.

I will.....

- communicate directly, respectfully and honestly in a spirit of loving kindness, in words, tone, and body language
- be friendly and welcoming to all members and visitors, and get to know them as individuals
- encourage and support the involvement of everyone in the life of our congregation honoring the boundaries and expressed wishes of others
- allow all a chance to speak, and listen so that all are heard and understood
- be curious and appreciative about perspectives that differ from my own, including the words and ways people choose to express their spirituality

- honor the contributions and needs of those who have been historically marginalized in society and our congregation
- be thoughtful and caring about how and when I share others' stories
- stay in conversation with others even when this feels difficult or stressful, within the limits of safety and respect, recognizing that uncomfortable conversations are sometimes necessary
- communicate with care and respect if my feelings have been hurt, and if I hurt others' feelings, acknowledge this and respond with care and respect
- follow through on my commitments and take responsibility for my words and actions
- address, as soon as possible, when I experience or witness behavior that seems contrary to this covenant
- accept reminders when I fail to live up to this covenant and both apologize, when warranted, and seek to make amends

THOUGHTS?

NEXT STEPS

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inclusiveness
accepting
learn
growth
spirituality
diversity
learning
ideas
empathy
spiritual
family
patience
humor
equality
dignity
change
service
open-mindedness
equity
inherent
beliefs
thinking
worth
commitment