

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.

generosity
honesty
compassion
love
kindness
community
respect
integrity
curiosity
caring
authenticity
interdependent
spirituality
growth
learning
ideas
diversity
empathy
spiritual
family
patience
humor
social
justice
action
fairness
dignity
change
service
equity
open-mindedness
inherent
beliefs
thinking
worth
commitment
human
life
things
welcoming
world
living
people
others
nonjudgmental
inclusiveness
accepting
learn
social
things
life
web
human
worth
commitment
interdependent

Agenda

Review of the purpose of having a covenant and why we are undertaking this work

Reminder of what a covenant is and what it is not

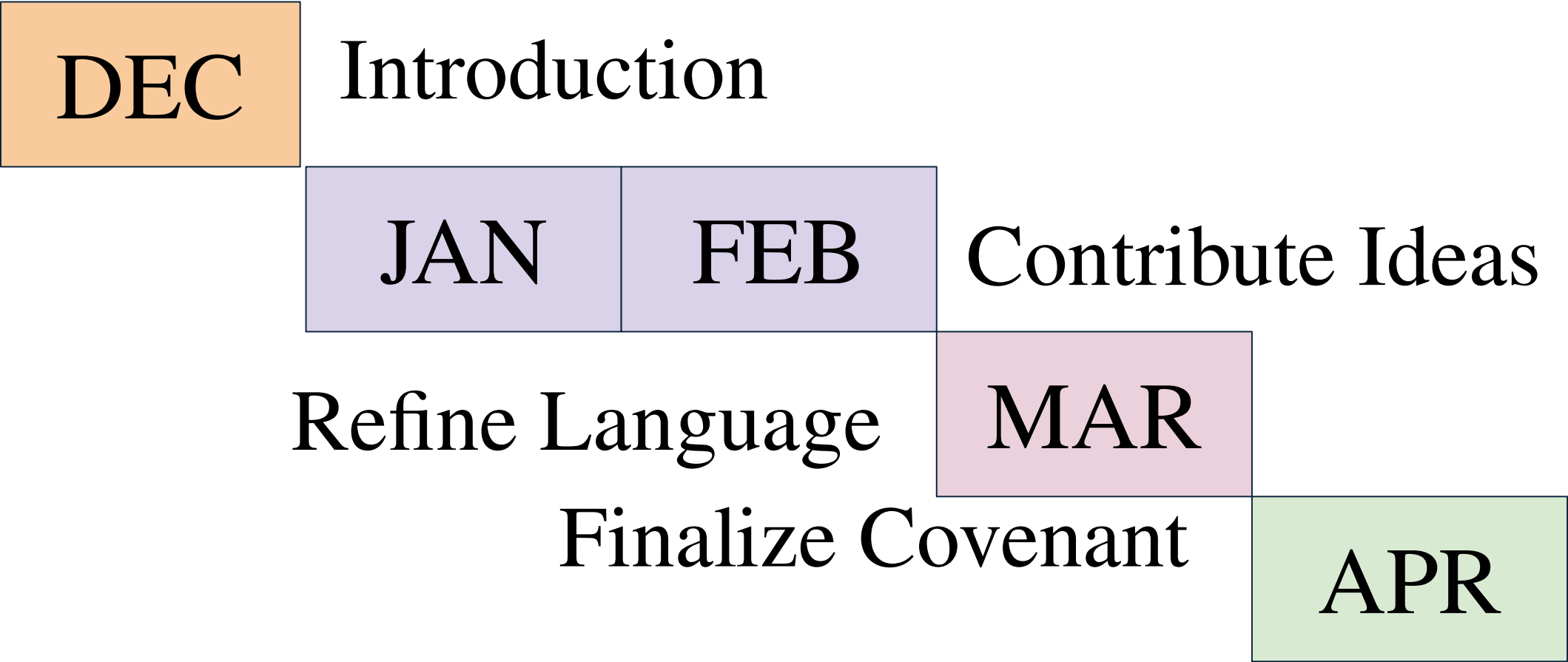
Share samples of aspirational covenants
(<https://www.uupeterborough.org/covenant>) and explore themes

Open discussion and input from you

We expect half of the meeting to be devoted to open discussion.

Timeline and Outcomes:

Target Vote at Annual Meeting



Covenant: What it is/is not

Why do we need a Covenant?

Creed vs Covenant

Time to update Covenant statement to keep it relevant

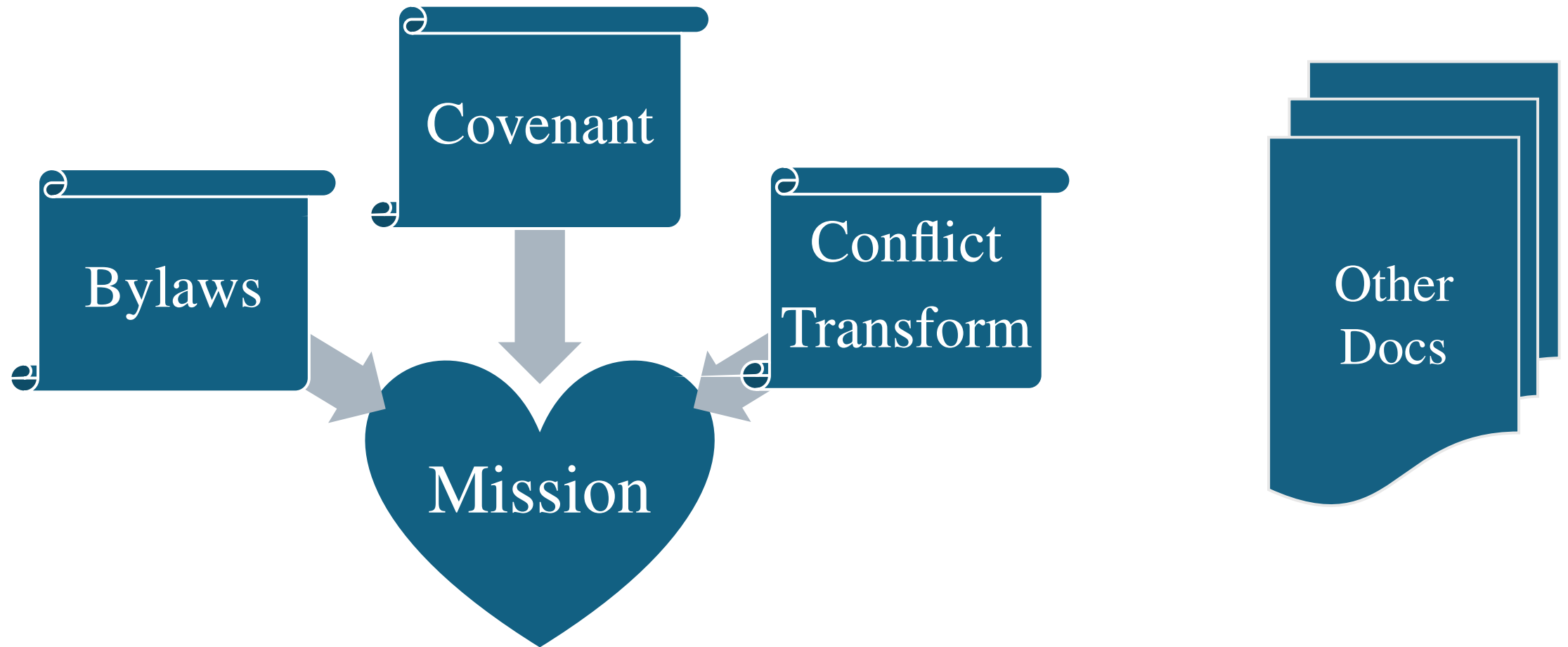
Aspirational vs Behavioral Covenants

Aspirational: Brief, describes how we hope to be in community

Behavioral: Longer, includes consequences of certain behaviors

Conflict Transformation process will follow to address behavioral challenges

Interdependent Documents Support Mission



Covenant Themes from the Samples

- Accountability/Responsibility
- Mutual Support/Nurture
- Community/Sense of Belonging
- Accept, Appreciate, Savor Difference/Diversity
- Foundation of Love/Kindness/Compassion
- Openness/Honest/Direct Communication
- Listening/Hearing/Respecting
- Welcoming
- Dream Boldly/Act with Courage not Fear
- Inspire and be Inspired
- Giving/Generosity
- Trust/Assume the best in Others/Open Mind
- Practice our Principles (internally and externally)
- Decision Making/Democratic Process
- Enable Healing & Forgiveness
- Awe/Divine/Reverence/Sacred/Spiritual Journey

SAMPLE COVENANTS

All Souls Church (UU) of Brattleboro, VT

We build our church on a foundation of love and covenant with one another,
To freely explore our values and honor our diversity as a source of communal strength,
To accept responsibility for our individual acts and promote justice and peace,
To celebrate the joys of discovery, embracing the fullest measure of our humanity,
To communicate with kindness and support,
To serve with compassion and commitment,
To openly share our laughter and tears and,
To show reverence for the divine in all that it is.

Denton (TX) UU Fellowship

We affirm our commitment to this community by covenanting

To listen with compassion,

To speak with respect and kindness,

To take responsibility for our own acts and feelings,

To support the church as we are able,

To engage in open, caring, and informed discussion of the decisions that affect us,

To practice our UU principles at DUUF and in the world.

UU Congregation of 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.

UU Fellowship of Atlanta, GA

We covenant to:

Commit time, talent and treasure to promote positive change in ourselves and in the world

Care for each other through deep listening and genuine kindness while assuming good will

Create a safe environment by respecting and trusting one another

Encourage each other to express our authentic selves, supporting, inspiring, and challenging each other's quest for truth, meaning and spiritual growth

Nurture a diverse and welcoming congregation.

UU Church of Belfast, ME

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.

UU Fellowship of Centre County, State College PA

We, the members and friends of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Centre County, covenant to come together in a spirit of trust and respect; to love, listen, cry and laugh, shaping a mutually supportive community that nurtures our minds and spirits and celebrates the worth and dignity of us all. We commit ourselves to do this with caring, compassion, and understanding through open, honest communications.

UU Church of Brunswick, ME

We, the Congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Brunswick, believing in the value of beloved community, affirm that we will:

- Respect one another and support the work of the Congregation.
- Listen respectfully to one another.
- Celebrate and encourage diversity.
- Be present to one another and attend to one another's needs.
- Dream boldly; act with courage and integrity.
- Give generously of our time, energy, talent, and money.
- Encourage the spiritual journeys of all our generations.
- Bring conscience, compassion, and kindness into our interactions and our search for justice.
- Take responsibility for ourselves and our actions and for upholding the values and aspirations of our covenant.

UU Church of Palo Alto, CA

We come together to create a community committed to a free, open, and loving search for spiritual meaning. Our community calls on each of us to extend compassion and kindness; to act from courage rather than fear; to treat one another with respect; and to honor one another's contributions.

We commit to listen to one another, to acknowledge and address disagreements, and to express our concerns directly with those involved.

We embrace diversity for it is our differences that enrich us; we embrace democracy for it allows our voices to be heard; we embrace forgiveness for it opens us to hope; and we embrace this life for it is what we have together.

We accept responsibility for making our community everything we want it to be.

UU Church of Peoria, IL

As a community of love and hope, we covenant together:

To welcome with open minds and hearts all who gather here - newcomers, members, and friends.

To nurture one another with caring words, kind actions, and compassionate concern.

To share ideas freely, listen willingly, disagree respectfully, and forgive easily.

To inspire one another, youngest to eldest, to thrive in body, mind, and spirit.

To work cooperatively toward our goals and openly appreciate each other's unique gifts.

To enrich our congregational life by participating, leading, pledging, and giving.

To celebrate life and savor its diversity, beauty, and creativity.

UU Church of Ellsworth, ME

UUCE Congregational Covenant

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.

UU Minister's Association

We covenant to support one another in the work of ministry.

We want to be together as our best selves with our best behavior.

We want each other's help; radical honesty to see the truth more clearly, radical hospitality to open us to one another.

We want to be accountable to ourselves and to each other.

Because we want to be able to be vulnerable with each other, we will not exploit each other's vulnerabilities and we will be forgiving.

We want a lightness of heart and a depth of spirit.

We know it's complicated; we know there are differences among us in power, in practice, in belief; we know this covenant requires presence and kindness and mindfulness and courage.

We come together to share gifts:

the depth of our wisdom and experience

the clarity of our vision

the strength of our hope.

Discussion

A word cloud featuring various positive values and virtues. The words are arranged in a dense, overlapping manner. The largest words, in blue, are 'compassion', 'love', 'kindness', 'community', and 'respect'. Other prominent words in blue include 'generosity', 'honesty', 'justice', 'people', 'others', 'integrity', and 'growth'. Smaller words in green include 'spirituality', 'empathy', 'patience', 'humor', 'world', 'fairness', 'dignity', 'change', 'beliefs', 'thinking', 'caring', and 'authenticity'. Words in purple include 'nonjudgmental', 'inclusiveness', 'accepting', 'learn', 'social', 'action', 'things', 'life', 'curiosity', 'human', 'interdependent', 'equity', 'inherent', 'worth', and 'commitment'. Words in red include 'diversity', 'spiritual', 'family', 'equality', 'service', and 'open-mindedness'. The background is a light beige with a subtle, repeating pattern of small, stylized human figures in various colors.

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