
Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert
Right Relations Policy¹
Policy

Right Relations: *Right relationship is both an ethic and a practice. Right relationship as an ethic refers to our affirmation of the principles of interconnectedness and interdependence. Right relationship as an aspirational practice is manifest in our history and heritage as a covenantal people.*² As the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert (UUCOD) strives to move toward Widening the Circle to embrace diversity, strengthening a culture of right relations is essential.

The Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert strives to be an inclusive community, affirming our differences in beliefs, opinions, and life experiences. We strive to create a brave space where those who attend can bring their whole selves, fully and safely. In a community where right relations are held as an important principle, Members, Friends, and Staff will:

- Exemplify Unitarian Universalist Principles and Purposes in interactions with others especially as we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person while enacting justice, equity and compassion in human relations.
- Live the promises we make to each other as expressed in our own church covenant.
- Work to understand the perspectives of fellow UUCOD Members, Friends, and Staff and encourage their free and responsible search for truth and meaning.
- Disrupt gossip by not engaging in it and actively discouraging it.
- Support community accountability by taking responsibility for our own words and actions that may cause harm and speak directly to the person or people who were affected in a sincere effort to reconcile.
- Help ensure that UUCOD group activities are healthy and safe for everyone by addressing harmful situations or words.
- Talk directly to a person who intentionally or unintentionally causes harm in group settings.

In a community of right relations, we abide by, live into, and keep the promises we make to each other as stated in our church covenant, adopted by our congregation in 2017. Note that the full covenant can be found on our webpage in church documents (uucod.org/governance). The main sections of our church covenant state that at UUCOD we will:

- Be mindful of how we communicate with and about others.
- Seek a respectful and constructive resolution when conflicts arise.
- Enrich our own lives by celebrating the diversity within our community.
- Build beloved community.

¹ This policy does not replace or supersede the UUCOD Destructive and Disruptive Behaviors Policy.

² Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, Draft section of the Good Office Handbook for the Right Relationship Specialization Created for consideration along with the Guidelines Revisions Resources June 2020. https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.uuma.org/resource/resmgr/good_offices/draft_section_of_go_handbook.pdf

Policy: The UUCOD aspires to support and retain Members, Friends, and Staff through thoughtful and meaningful engagement that encourages exploration, and acknowledges and respects varying views, backgrounds, lived experiences, and perspectives. The UUCOD will seek to encourage, advance, support, and facilitate right relations within our community. We encourage reconciliation in the face of conflict, provide a mechanism for our congregants who experienced harm or who have caused harm to reconcile, and, when needed, plan return into our community and its covenants.

Purpose: The purpose of this policy is to build and maintain right relations within our beloved community.

Background: We each come to the UUCOD in part to create a shared culture of right relations built upon trust, respect, and cooperation. We open our hearts and welcome people of diverse backgrounds, lived experiences, and cultures without regard to ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, class, beliefs, and perspectives. We hold sacred the belief that diversity in all its beautiful manifestations enhances our beloved community.

Definition: Conflict, as used in this right relations policy, is defined as:

- Disagreements are not necessarily, conflict. They can be healthy for expressing varying ideas, perspectives or challenging norms that privilege one person or group over others; however, conflict between people, groups, etc., suggests aggression, inflicted pain or a struggle for power that may result in angry arguments, rumors, threats or in pushing someone away from our community.
- Conflict may not be confrontational, but subtle as in comments (conscious or unconscious) that unintentionally express a prejudiced attitude toward a member of a marginalized group (such as a racial or linguistic minority, or someone who is differently abled or economically challenged) thus inflicting pain.

Scope: The Committee on Ministry (COM) may become involved in helping mediate issues and behaviors that are disrupting right relations in the UUCOD community and its related activities. Examples of issues triggering COM involvement include interpersonal conflict that inhibits church operations or is maligning to UUCOD Members, Friends, and Staff. Members of the COM may be engaged to help congregants think through next steps in rebuilding right relations with UUCOD Members, Friends, and Staff. The COM is also not meant to serve as counselor, provide pastoral care, or participate in resolving routine differences of opinions.

Responsibility and Authority: The COM is responsible for this policy. This includes policy creation, maintenance, communication, and implementation based upon delegated authority [parameters] conferred by the UUCOD Board of Directors. The UUCOD Board of Directors has authority for approving this policy and for ensuring how a culture of right relations is cultivated, promoted, and maintained.

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