

First Congregational Church of Camden, Maine, United Church of Christ
COVENANT OF RIGHT RELATIONS

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself.” Matthew 22:37, 39

As an Open and Affirming congregation of the United Church of Christ, we celebrate people of all sexual orientations, gender identities, ages, races, economic physical and mental abilities, social economic background, marital status, and faith background, acknowledging that many have experienced previous religious trauma. We accept responsibility to live according to God's teaching.

The integrity of our faith and the vitality of our congregation depend upon the respectful expression not only of our similarities, but also of our differences. Therefore, in order to create a beloved religious community where every person can worship and search for truth and meaning in an environment that builds connections, renews spirit and inspires action, we enter into this Covenant of Right Relations as expressed by the ideals listed below. We commit to living and working with this covenant in all our human imperfection and acknowledge that this is a living document which may change in the future.

Our ideals:

1. Welcome and Hospitality

We welcome and engage members and visitors alike.

We share the vision of the United Church of Christ and invite others to join us.

We greet friends and strangers warmly while respecting their boundaries.

We take the time to get to know one another.

2. Furthering Diversity

We work to foster a community that sees diversity in all its manifestations as a sign of our strength.

We practice inclusiveness and uphold the dignity of each individual in our congregation.

We work to empower the disempowered.

We speak for justice and inclusion.

3. Listening and Speaking

We listen with respect and attention and speak with care.

We consider the impact of our words and actions on others before we speak or act.

We monitor how much and how little we speak.

We value and respect expression of differing opinions.

We listen to understand, deeply and compassionately.

We encourage people to speak their truth without blaming, shaming, judging or competing with them when they do.

We concentrate on issues and problems rather than personalities, and we avoid gossip.

We respect confidentiality.

4. Serving our Church Community

We serve our church community with generosity and good humor, and we acknowledge the service of others.

We respect and honor the office and persons of all pastors, staff members, and lay leaders.

We honor all levels of service to the church.

We seek to discover what is best for our church as a whole.

5. Stewardship

We give generously of our time, talents, and financial resources so that our church will thrive.

6. Working with Conflict

We work to resolve conflicts directly, with openness and compassion. We make every effort to settle differences directly. We pray that through such conversation the conflict will be resolved.

We stay engaged with each other through difficult conversations.

We speak only from our own experience and responses and do not presume to speak for others.

We refrain from triangulation (we do not ask others to relay potentially emotional or conflictual communications to a third person on our behalf, nor do we relay such information for others.)

We hold ourselves responsible for hearing all sides.

We do the inner work required to show up, stay present and remain open-minded.

We do not make a conflict or difference of opinion a source of personal injury.

We honor group decisions that have been reached because we love and respect each other, even when we may disagree.

We refuse to create factions within the congregation.

We seek the guidance of others to help mediate our differences if we are unable to resolve a conflict. We utilize the processes for reconciliation and resolution approved by the congregation and its leaders.

7. Forgiveness and Reconciliation

We acknowledge our mistakes and shortcomings.

We forgive ourselves and others.

We acknowledge our own and others' imperfections.

We honor commitments made during reconciliation of conflicts.

8. Learning and Growing

We support and encourage one another's spiritual journey and learning in all its forms.

We participate in meaningful worship services.

We support religious educational opportunities for all ages.

We are open to growth and to new perspectives.

9. Solidarity and Accompaniment

We support each other in times of need and celebrate with one another in times of joy.

We honor the history of the First Congregational Church, UCC, of Camden, Maine and the beauty of our physical structures.

We remind others of the spark of divinity within them.

We celebrate our sense of humor.

We know that the feelings of others matter to the wellbeing of our entire community.