

***COVENANT/CODE OF ETHICS  
CONGREGATIONAL LIFE STAFF  
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST ASSOCIATION***

***Preamble:***

As either co-employed or fully employed staff of the UUA, we understand that the ultimate goals of our work are strengthening Unitarian Universalism, strengthening our congregations, and transforming the world in ways consistent with our UU principles and values in line with the Ends policies of the UUA. We further understand that the work that we do with our member congregations and their leaders arises out of trusting relationships that themselves arise out of the standards of care and ethics. This document is intended to spell out the basis of those standards of care and ethics, and all Congregational Life staff will be bound by this code.

We also understand that for those of us who are ministers in fellowship with the UUA, we will be bound by the Code of Professional Practice of the UU Ministers Association and the rules of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee, and for those of us who are religious educators, we will be bound by the Code of Professional Practice of LREDA. In cases of conflict between these professional codes and the Congregational Life code, the Congregational Life code shall have precedence, and such conflict will be brought to the attention of the Director of Congregational Life as soon as is reasonably possible.

**1. SELF**

In order to deepen and strengthen myself as a professional, I will respect and protect my own needs for spiritual growth, ethical integrity, and continuing education.

I will commit myself to honest work, believing that the honor of my profession begins with the honest use of my own mind and skills.

I will refrain from private as well as public words or actions degrading to colleagues or destructive of life in our congregations or our Association.

As a sexual being, I will recognize the power that this profession gives me and refrain from practices which are harmful to others and which endanger my integrity or my professional effectiveness. Such practices include sexual activity with any child, with an unwilling adult, with a counselee, with the spouse or partner of any person in a congregation with which I'm professionally engaged, with interns, with students for the ministry, or in any other such exploitative relationship.

Because the demands upon me will be many and unceasing, I will try to keep especially aware of the rights and needs of my family and my relation to them as partner/spouse, parent and friend.

**2. CONGREGATIONAL LIFE OTHER ASSOCIATION STAFF COLLEAGUES**

I will be supportive of my Congregational Life colleagues and keep for them an open mind and heart.

I will strictly respect confidences given me by colleagues and expect them to keep mine, with the exception of illegal conduct, or threat of harm to self or others.

I will not speak in scorn or derision of any UUA staff colleague. In any conversation critical of a colleague, I will speak responsibly and temperately. I will not make disrespectful comments about UUA staff colleagues in oral or written reports.

If I need to be critical of the behavior of UUA staff colleagues, I will do so with respect. If such comments must be made publically, I will endeavor to advise the colleague of such comments in advance, or as soon after as is reasonably possible.

Should I know that a Congregational Life or UUA staff colleague is engaging in practices that are derogatory or disrespectful of others I will speak openly and frankly to her/him about my concern. If necessary, I will bring such matters to the attention of the Director of Congregational Life. If I need to speak about colleagues in confidence while talking with other members of the UUA staff, I will take care to do so with respect.

When approached by congregations not in my geographic area, I will advise them to be in touch with their appropriate Congregational Life staff members. I will refrain from having substantive conversation with congregations or leaders outside of my geographic area without notifying my Congregational Life colleague(s). Before accepting a request for service outside of my ordinary geographic area, I will first be in touch with my Congregational Life colleague(s) in that area. If I deem an exception is warranted, I will consult with the Director of Congregational Life. It is understood that these geographic area boundaries and our ways of working together are changing, and that a definitive line of “mine” and “yours” may be hard to draw; when in doubt, I will still consult with and advise my Congregational Life colleagues.

### 3. CONGREGATIONS AND CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS

In working with congregations and their leaders, I will bear in mind the practices of congregational polity, including teaching the history, meaning and methods of congregational polity, and ensure that I do not interfere with congregations’ internal operations.

I will respect the traditions of the UUA and its constituent parts, enriching and improving these in consultation with the leaders. I will hold to a single standard of respect and help for all leaders within the UUA and its congregations.

I will deal respectfully with leaders and members of congregations. I will be judicious in reports concerning their behavior and will speak to them first if my public report criticizes them.

I will hold as confidential information that I receive from leaders operating in their roles, and will help leaders understand how to address complex and contentious issues within their congregation. I will hold the overall well-being of the congregation as the standard by which I

determine what (if anything) is to be shared with others. Confidentiality does not extend to communication which threatens violence to self or other, including sexual or other abuse.

If leaders become critical of their religious professionals (or vice versa) in manners that cross the line of coaching them in their roles, then I will work with said person(s) to determine appropriate ways of dealing with such concerns, which may include my informing the religious professional (or vice versa) of remarks made. I will hold as uppermost the internal reconciliation of issues and concerns, and will work to further that end; however confidentiality does not hold when leaders or religious professionals step outside of their roles in conversations, email, or other communications.

I will remember that congregational leaders, religious educators and ministers place special trust in UUA leadership and that the members of congregations allow UUA staff to become a part of their lives on the basis of that trust. I will not abuse or exploit that trust for my own gratification, or for any other reason.

In the interest of maintaining positive and professional relationships with the UUMA, LREDA, UUMN, AUUA and other religious leaders' professional organization members serving congregations with whom I interact, I will refrain from having substantive contact with members of a congregation without notifying the minister or religious professional. If I deem an exception is warranted, I will consult with the Director of Congregational Life.

I will honor the private and intimate bonds of the lives of those with whom I work. I will not engage in sexual activities with a member of a congregation with whom I work unless that person is my spouse or partner, if I am married or in a committed relationship. If I am single, before becoming sexually involved with a person in a congregation with whom I work, I will take special care to examine my commitment, motives, intentionality and the nature of such activity and its consequences for myself, the other person, his or her congregation and the UUA.

When engaged in worship, I will exercise a responsible freedom of the pulpit with respect for all persons, including those who may disagree with me.

I will encourage by my example an inclusive, loyal, generous and spiritual leadership.

I will take responsibility for encouraging clear delineation of responsibility, accountability and channels of communication with leaders, ministers, and other church staff members in the congregations with whom I work.

I will take responsibility for encouraging adequate and sensible standards of stewardship, including financial and other support for ministers, religious educators, other staff, and programs within our congregations.

I will not speak in scorn or derision of any colleague. In any conversation critical of a colleague, I will speak responsibly and temperately. I will not make disrespectful comments about UUMA, LREDA, UUMN, AUUA and other religious leaders' professional organization members in oral or written reports.

If, in the course of consulting with a congregation, I find that there is evidence of “conduct unbecoming” on the part of a UUMA member, or a member of LREDA, I will not first discuss such matters in a public report. Instead, I will first inform both the religious professional involved and the Director of the Ministries and Faith Development staff group to determine next steps.

#### 4. MOVEMENT AND ASSOCIATION

I will encourage the growth of our congregations and the spread of the ideals of the Unitarian Universalist tradition and fellowship.

I understand that the UUA has made a commitment to be an anti-racist, anti-oppressive multicultural religious association working to eradicate racism and all forms of oppression in Unitarian Universalist institutions and the larger community. While diversity includes everyone, the Association’s anti-oppression focus emphasizes historically marginalized groups, specifically bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender, Latina/Latino/Hispanic, people of color, people with disabilities, economically oppressed people, and women. I will work toward the Association’s goal of becoming an anti-racist, anti-oppressive multicultural institution, personally, congregationally and Association wide.

I will participate and encourage lay participation in the meetings and activities of our Association.

I will encourage financial support of the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Districts and associated programs.

According to procedures established by the UUA, I acknowledge that it is inappropriate for any member of the UUA staff to publicly support any candidate for office within the UUA.

#### 5. FAITH COMMUNITY

In word and deed, I will live and speak in ways representing the best Unitarian Universalist tradition and leadership in the larger community.

I will offer religious, ethical and prophetic leadership.

I will encourage members’ appropriate participation in efforts to resolve problems within their faith community.

I will offer support to ministers and lay leaders of other religious bodies serving within the areas I work.

**Affirmed June 2011**