

The First Unitarian Church of Hamilton

COVENANT OF BELOVED COMMUNITY

October 2006

COVENANT OF BELOVED COMMUNITY

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1. A COVENANT OF BELOVED COMMUNITY

Throughout time, religious communities have often defined themselves by committing to a "covenant." A covenant is a mutual agreement or promise between parties that pledge to be in relationship to one another. A covenant confers both rights and responsibilities on all parties. While covenants may be made between parties of unequal power or position (the most well-known religious example being between God and God's people!) a covenant signifies equal responsibility. Each party's commitment to upholding the covenant is equally important; each plays an equally important part in keeping the covenant.

Our congregation already has a number of covenants in place, for example, our church's Mission Covenant Statement, Shared Ministry Groups use covenants, our Board has a covenant, weddings are covenants, our Minister's agreement is a covenant, and our Unitarian Universalist Principles ask us to "covenant to affirm and promote" our values. Framing this document as a covenant asks members of the community to think carefully and reflect deeply about its meaning before agreeing to be a part of it.

Covenants are often said to confer both "rights" and "responsibilities" upon those included in them. In voluntary religious community, we may choose to speak of "blessings" instead of "rights," and "commitments" instead of "responsibilities" recognizing that we are here by choice, not by chance, necessity or compulsion.

We enter into voluntary relationship with our community, and are blessed in many ways by doing so. These blessings are privileges conferred upon us by our membership in the community; they are ours not so much by "right" but by virtue of our commitment to the Congregation's shared agreements, faithfulness to its Mission and Vision, and willing and generous participation in its ongoing life.

Recognizing the important part we each play in creating community, we make a commitment to the whole, being blessed by and becoming a blessing to others.

To covenant means:

To confer both responsibility
and commitment
On both, on all parties

It means "we"
It means you and I and us
Saying we will be this
together

I am accountable to you,
You are to me
And we all are to the whole

To covenant means
to promise,
And to keep the promise
To put the whole before
the you or the me

If we all do this,
None of us will need to.



2. BELOVED COMMUNITY PROCESS

History

The First Unitarian Church of Hamilton, like most religious institutions, is a freely chosen gathering of human beings who come together to fulfill the mission and ministry of the congregation. Over the years, it has become more aware of the importance of *intention* in choosing ways to be and act within the community and beyond. It is a community that values good process, deep reflection, and reasoned, thorough examination of itself and its ways of being. It is also a place, like most human communities, that has experienced conflict as well as harmony in its history, and has endeavoured to learn and grow from these difficult and challenging times.

In the past, a growing awareness of the importance of community norms for behaviour has caused the church to seek advice, counsel and resources in a variety of ways. They include: UUA District Executives, professional mediators, denominational consultants, Good Offices Representatives, CUC Wellness Consultants and Directors of Regional Services, ministerial and staff expertise and congregational resources that produced guidelines for community behaviour such as our Mission/Covenant Statement, Norms Document, Code of Ethics for Adults, Child Protection Policy and Volunteer Code of Conduct.

Shifts in understanding the role that the whole congregation plays in Shared Ministry gave rise to the creation of a Committee on Ministry (Latham "Co-Ministry", now called "Shared Ministry" Model) adapted from the previously existing Ministerial Relations Committee. Later the Committee on Ministry became the Committee on Shared Ministry and Congregational Health, and then became the Congregational Health Committee, with its focus on overall congregational health and the part that each person in the community plays in enhancing it.

Mandate

Over the years, both outside consultations and our own growing self-understanding made us aware that we could enhance congregational health by developing a more explicit and updated code of conduct or behavioural Covenant for all. The Committee on Ministry (now the Congregational Health Committee) was given a Mandate by the Board to design a process that would develop this document.

The Committee presented a detailed report to the Board outlining its work plan for developing the Covenant of Beloved Community. It included the Context, Frame, Scope, Process, Time-lines and Integration of the final Document.

The Work Plan has included:

- Committee (CHC, formerly COM) Retreat January 2004 to begin work
- Review of gathered resources; i.e., existing church covenants (e.g.: Norms and various safety policies) and history, input from individual members; researching many other churches' sample documents.

Work Plan continued:

- Internal Communication: Newsletter articles and other internal publicity eg. Annual Reports, invitations to focus groups and retreats etc. .
- Congregational survey/questionnaire "10 UU Commandments" spring 2004
- Leading Congregational Retreat - Building Healthy Communities October 2004
- Church Service Introducing Topic November 2004 - CSMCH members led
- CSMCH Leadership and Participation in CUC Statement of Principles (values) Congregational Workshop winter 2005
- Draft Covenant to Board for Policy Recommendation/input/feedback spring 2005
- Complete writing and formatting of Covenant fall/winter 2005
- Shared Ministry Groups - Beloved Community topic created for feedback spring 2005
- May 28 Congregational Q and A luncheon after the service with CHC members
- Late Spring/Summer - Integration of insight and final writing of document
- Saturday, September 23 - Half-Day Retreat on the CBC, led by members of CHC
- Congregational Vote ratifying/supporting Covenant October 1, 2006
- Church service to celebrate adoption/implementation of Covenant late fall 2006
- Implementation of CBC into church life to make it a "living covenant" - ongoing

Our Committee's presentation to the Board closed with the commitment that we would be *"closely considering the balance of lead, consult, and listen throughout the year."* As a Committee, we have done this to the best of our ability.

Research

Our committee researched many different documents from many different churches and discovered a wide range of expressions as well as agreements that range from the philosophical to the extremely detailed and prescriptive. Unsurprisingly, they often reflect a particular focus or experience that was instrumental in shaping their creation, for example:

- Unitarian Church of Montreal: **Disruptive Behaviour Policy**
- First Unitarian Church of Victoria: **Congregational Covenant of Good Relations**
- All Souls Unitarian Church of Colorado Springs: **Covenant of Beloved Community**
- West Shore Unitarian Universalist Church: **Behavioral Covenant**
- Unitarian Church of Vancouver: **Peace-Making Covenant**

Most of our congregations also have **Mission/Covenant Statements** that express their commitment as a community in a positive way. We chose to develop a **Covenant of Beloved Community** because it represented a commitment to an ideal and framed our expectations of ourselves in the context of a wide and expansive vision of "Beloved Community." We wanted it to be inclusive and positive, and based upon our values and vision. We wanted it to be more about the spirit than the letter of the law, more of a touchstone or guide than a series of rules. No policy can legislate the infinite variety of human behaviour. But we wanted this document to name in a clear and positive way what does enhance healthy community while offering positive suggestions and solutions for behaviours and ways of being that do not.

3. SECTIONS OF THE COVENANT

A. VISION AND VALUES

As a congregation, we are guided first and foremost by our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources and The Mission-Covenant Statement of the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton. Together they form the foundation of who we are and all we do.

Supported by this foundation, our congregation is guided by a Vision of living our shared religious values in loving community. We make a commitment to do this in each and every part of church life, and to extend this commitment outward to others beyond our walls, to our neighbourhood, and to the world. We proclaim our religion by how we speak, act and live—within and beyond our religious community.

Our Principles and Sources and Mission-Covenant Statement are powerful touchstones to guide our behaviour. They make explicit our expectations of ourselves as Unitarian Universalists. They name the values that distinguish our faith and our community.

As members of a freely gathered congregation, we choose to enter into covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support in living our commitment.

**Where there is no vision
the people perish.**

Proverbs

Love is the spirit of this church.

UU James Villa Blake

**Ministry is all that we do
together.**

Rev. Gordon McKeeman



Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources

Our Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources, affirmed by votes of our Unitarian Universalist General Assembly in the mid 1980s, are presently being re-articulated by a process of congregational input conducted by a Task Force of The Canadian Unitarian Council. It is our belief, however, that the essence of our existing Principles and Sources will be present in their new incarnation. The new expression of our Principles and Sources will be included in this document when the process is completed.

Unitarian Universalist Principles and Sources

We, the member congregations of the Canadian Unitarian Council, covenant to affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of existence of which we are a part.

The Living Tradition we share draws from many sources:

Direct experience of that transcendent mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life;

Words and deeds of prophetic women and men which challenge us to confront powers and structures of evil with justice, compassion, and the transforming power of love;

Wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life; Jewish and Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by loving our neighbours as ourselves;

Humanist teachings which counsel us to heed the guidance of reason and the results of science, and warn us against idolatries of the mind and spirit;

Spiritual teachings of Earth-centred traditions which celebrate the sacred circle of life and instruct us to live in harmony with the rhythms of nature.

Grateful for this religious pluralism which enriches and ennobles our faith, we are inspired to deepen our understanding and expand our vision. As free congregations, we enter into this covenant, promising to one another our mutual trust and support.

The Mission Covenant Statement of The First Unitarian Church of Hamilton

“We covenant to build a spiritual home,
A house of many rooms.
Its foundation is the earth;
its timbers are the Unitarian Universalist
principles of belief and behaviour
its roof is our commitment to one another;
its windows are open to the light of truth
and the fresh air of tolerance and respect.
Dwellers here find knowledge, strength and hope.
nurtured in our home, we are inspired
to carry out our mission,
reaching out to the wider community.
We light candles of welcome,
of caring and commitment.
their warmth and light
stream out into the night.
Strangers become friends;
travellers find rest.
The doors of this home
Swing open to the lightest touch.”
–adopted May 1995

B. SHARED MINISTRY

Our congregation fulfills its mission within a vision of Shared Ministry, a model of ministry consciously embraced by the church since 1995. Shared Ministry arises when each member of the community recognizes that they play an integral part in the health, strength and meaning of our ministry, and make a commitment to act in ways that contribute positively to that ministry.

Shared Ministry means that all are called to minister to one another and to the whole community. While the roles of the ordained or professionally trained may differ from those serving as laity, each is vitally important to the overall success and meaning of our ministry together. None can function without the help, support and commitment of the other; the whole depends upon each of the parts. It is both the privilege and the responsibility of every member of this community to take up this calling.

This Shared Ministry is held in trust, handed down by those who have come before, preserved and strengthened for those who will come after. It transcends any individual minister or member, existing to nurture the health of the community over time so that the Church's mission may always be fulfilled. The people who are gathered become the Church.

Shared Ministry means that we are responsible to and for the other members of our community as well. Commitment to the whole means that we acknowledge our inter-relatedness. We cannot see the actions of others in the community apart from our own actions and from the community as a whole. We recognize our responsibilities to self, to others, and to the whole.

Shared Ministry means we model ministering to one another and to the whole community as best we are able, and we encourage each other to do the same. When we fall short, we stretch ourselves further and try again. When we see others fall short, we support them gently back along the path to their best selves.

We approach each other with trust, positive intent and a presumption of goodness on our own and each other's part. We are faithful, soulful, spiritual presences, sharing grace with one another, self-aware and understanding that how we are affects others deeply. Always, we hold out the health of the community as a beacon to guide us. This light shines through all we do.

What makes my experience in the ministry so hopeful for me is that I am not alone in this careful hearing of both pain and excitement. This is not something reserved for only one ordained and robed. It is something we all do for one another. Ours is a shared ministry, a giving and receiving.

Rev. Robert W. Karnan



We Covenant... Shared Ministry

- By my presence, I am called to serve in the ministry of my religious community. How I live, act and behave, and who I am, becomes a part of my church's ministry. Therefore, I accept the responsibility of Shared Ministry inherent in my membership.
- I accept the privilege of holding the church in trust from those who have come before, for those who will come after, honouring its past and being a good steward of its future. My commitment to it transcends any one person, place or time.
- I commit to nurture the spirit and life of the church. My commitment extends beyond myself to the very existence of the congregation, which I cherish.

C. COMMUNITY AND COMMITMENT

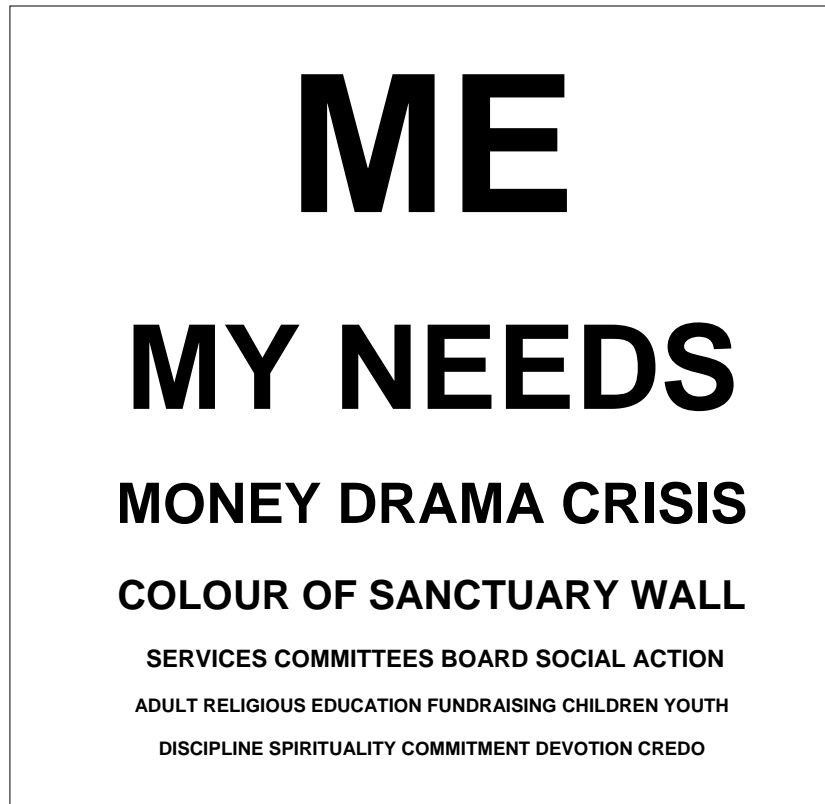
The word community comes from the Latin "com-munis" meaning 'with the whole'.

The African word "ubuntu" expresses the idea that "a person is a person through other persons." By freely choosing to become part of a religious community, we are making a commitment to the whole, to something greater than ourselves. We consciously bring ourselves into relationship, commit to that relationship, and are willing to be changed by it. As individuals, it is part of our spiritual responsibility to seek to understand what we bring to this relationship—our gifts and our needs, and to offer what is beneficial to the community. A healthy individual practices self-knowledge in understanding his or her relationship to the whole. A healthy community knows how to sustain a balance between the rights and responsibilities of the individual and the good of the whole. When an imbalance occurs, both the committed individual and the beloved community act to choose the good of the whole.

It is natural in community to feel and find tension between the will of the one and the will of the group, between groups, and between individuals. We are all unique beings, choosing to co-exist in an intentionally diverse and spiritually challenging community. We recognize that our chosen companions offer us many blessings and opportunities, both in rewarding and in challenging times. In community we find many companions to accompany and to support us on our spiritual path, as well as people who challenge us to be our best selves.

Our commitment to the community cannot be shaken by storms of conflict, challenge or disagreement. We commit to the existence of the church and lean in, not away during difficult times. Our commitment is not based on our own individual feelings and needs always being met, but on the ministry offered to all by the existence of the church. To reap the benefits of strong spiritual community, we must sow seeds of commitment and diligent effort.

The community that we make together has a life and spirit of its own. We commit to actions that nurture that life and spirit. The community has a right to be safe, healthy, and vibrant. We affirm actions, presence, and ways of being that keep the community safe, add to its health and increase its vibrancy for future generations.



The eye chart (I chart) above is found in "Church Works" by Rev. Anne Odin Heller.

Right knowledge entails right action.

Plato

We Covenant... Community and Commitment

- I commit to self-awareness and self-understanding to help me understand what I bring to my church community and its relationships; why I act and feel the way I do and how that affects others in community
- If my individual needs and desires and the good of the church come into conflict, I will hold sacred the good of the whole.
- I commit to behaviours which help to build healthy community, including: clear, honest and direct communication, kindness, humour, empathy, hospitality, respect, openness, willingness to engage, encouragement to trust, following good process, honouring the whole and keeping my commitments
- I commit to actions that create a safe and nurturing environment, especially where vulnerable people are concerned. I abide by safety policies and best practices in my role as a volunteer in community, safeguarding the community by my actions.
- I commit to actions which create a vibrant church, which include sharing my gifts, affirming the contribution of others, cultivating abundance, inviting others in, proclaiming positive values and growing our ministry
- I support the congregation with my right action, right speaking, right giving and right process.
- In times of challenge, I redouble my commitment, use appropriate channels to solve difficulties, keep coming, keep pledging and keep the faith in my fellow members and my religious community.

Be the change you want to see in the world.

Mahatma Gandhi

D. POWER AND PROCESS

Power

We often think of power in traditional ways, for example the power obtained through position, influence or control. Examples include the employer, the person who controls the money, the politician, the law enforcement agent, the health care provider, the religious leader, the president of an organization.

In a church community, there are both formal and informal ways in which power is held. There are people with familiar titles, the minister, the president of the board, and the chair of the committee. There are people who are seen as influential because they may possess certain gifts or talents that are valued or who are seen to have spiritual authority. Others may possess leadership skills or social skills that result in many friendships. Some make substantial financial contributions, and others may have been members for many years. Paradoxically, some may seem to have influence because they appear to be powerless and in need of special treatment.

There are many different kinds of power (both implicit and explicit) held by individuals and groups in community. Owning, naming and understanding the power we have to affect the whole is an important part of building healthy community. For example:

Hierarchical Power - actual power that a boss has over an employee, e.g., to hire or fire

Relational Power - power and influence that someone has by virtue of who they know

Positional Power - the power of leadership to influence the behaviour of others

Personal Power - persuasiveness or charisma that makes some people more persuasive

Financial Power - the power that comes in utilizing one's financial means to persuade

Moral Authority - moral suasion, the ability to influence because of perceived authority

No matter what kind of power we have, each one of us has power within a community simply by virtue of our presence within it. In community we empower others and are in turn empowered by others in order to carry out tasks, to assume leadership responsibility, or to accomplish goals. We can use our power to affect the whole positively or negatively.

Positive examples of power include the ability to embody our values, to live by our principles, to lead by example, to point to good process, to model good behaviour, to speak positively, to demonstrate commitment and generosity, to have positive regard, to assume good intent.

Negative examples of power include the ability to influence negatively, to triangulate (draw others in or be drawn in ourselves), to speak badly of others, to withhold or use silence to control, to feel entitled, to judge or criticize, to act selfishly, to misuse authority, to ignore good process, to stop pledging, to withdraw from the community.

We each have a responsibility to examine our own power in community, and to commit to using our power in positive ways and to reject misuse or abuse of it. Members of the community have different kinds of power and with that comes different kinds of responsibility, as well as different kinds of vulnerability.

- Ministers have vows of Ordination and Installation, Professional Guidelines and Codes of Conduct that hold them accountable to self, other, colleagues and congregation. Their position can give them both greater power and greater responsibility. This can sometimes “set them apart” in the community and because of their role, give them a special vulnerability.
- Religious Professionals employed by the church are accountable to their professional bodies for behaviour that applies to self, others, colleagues and congregation. All staff have positional power and are also vulnerable by virtue of their employment.
- Leaders have positional and influential power to affect the community’s direction and tenor, while at the same time sacrificing some of their relational power in being set apart by leadership.
- Long term, charismatic or very involved members have relational power, the ability to influence through connection.
- Everyone has emotional power, the ability to engage with others in ways that invite them to care, become involved, take up a cause, defend or simply share a passion. This emotional power is positive when it invites empathy, enthusiasm, and caring; negative when it invites conflict, manipulation, and involvement in another’s issue.



I suddenly realized that the more you know, the less you can say!

lay participant in a consciousness-raising exercise on ministry speaking about the role of the minister.

Process

In a congregation when all is going along peacefully, we do not think about how we communicate but when there are difficulties, how we communicate is of critical importance. Guidelines for managing challenging situations in religious community exist that have proven effective. However, it is not possible to foresee every possible area of conflict and when conflict occurs, there can be a tendency to look to the letter of the law rather than to the spirit. It is important to accept that guidelines or recommendations are limited at best.

Most congregations realize that conflict resolution cannot be effectively managed by the church as a whole, and empower special bodies to do this important ministry. It is critical in a church community that we promote a level of trust in others, especially those chosen to help resolve problems and make difficult recommendations. Assuming that these members have the best interests of our church at heart and will strive to be fair allows them to get on with their work.

Conflict

It is said that all conflict is autobiographical, and certainly we all have a story from our past that tells us how to deal with it. Even having no experience of conflict is a story about how to deal with conflict. Most of us have had no training in how to deal with conflict or disagreements and they often arouse anxiety or anger. We do what we learned to do growing up in our homes, in our schoolyards and among our peers. We run, avoid, attack, hide, cry, or feel ill and upset. Church communities are no different; in fact sometimes they are worse because we have higher expectations.

The most powerful skill that a church member can develop in the face of conflict is self-reflection. When we experience unease or distress, can we ask ourselves "What is this I am feeling? When have I experienced it before? Why do I feel this way? Does the emotion fit the situation? Is my reaction proportionate? Am I reacting or responding? Am I really listening to what is being said? Do I need to take time to think before I respond?"

Speaking skilfully is another valuable asset, again one in which most of us have not had good teaching. Speech that is direct and clear includes speaking to the right person at the right time and in the right way. Active listening and assuming that another's intentions are honourable add to helpful speech.

Many misunderstandings and conflicts could be avoided simply by speaking directly to the person involved rather than to a third party. This can also be described as speaking with, not about. In most instances, this is the first appropriate step. Exceptions to this approach may occur when congregational health is threatened (see Unacceptable Actions, below)

We Covenant—Power and Process

- I commit to examining the power I own in community. The greater my power, the greater my responsibility to examine it and make choices that use it for the good of the church.
- I speak for myself alone, and I speak with - not about.
- I do not invite other community members into negative perceptions or conflicts about the church or its members, nor do I enter into others' conflicts if invited.
- If I have a serious concern with an individual or group in the church, my first response is to speak privately with them. If more resolution is needed, I encourage them to come with me to the Congregational Health Committee and seek resolution.

Unacceptable Actions

Unfortunately, there are some actions that are unacceptable even in a covenanted loving and forgiving community. These are actions that compromise the physical, mental, emotional or spiritual safety of the community or any of its members. These include criminal acts, abuse of any kind, dangerous or risky behaviours, disruption of essential church activities, abuse of trust, words or actions that diminish the appeal of the church to existing and potential members, and words or actions that run clearly counter to our expressed Unitarian Universalist values. The well-being, openness, safety and stability of the congregation, as a whole, must be maintained and this takes precedence over the needs or wishes of any individual.

All members of the community have a responsibility to hold themselves and their fellow members accountable for these unacceptable actions. The limits of some of these unacceptable actions are expressed in several ways; in our criminal laws, in existing church agreements and codes of conduct, and in professional codes of conduct binding for clergy and staff (please see Appendices for examples).

Just as important but harder to legislate are behaviours that diminish the community by creating an atmosphere that runs counter to our vision of beloved community. These may include words and actions that are unkind or cruel, that denigrate or insult, racist, sexist, or homophobic remarks, gossiping or bearing false witness, ways of acting that create fear and unease in others such as shouting, hostility, bad-mouthing or lying.

We Covenant—Unacceptable Actions

- I will be gentle but courageous in confronting those who are diminishing our community by their behaviour. I will express my concerns, as appropriate, to the member of the community and let them know that they and I have a responsibility to address the issue through appropriate channels.
- I will refrain from any activity that seriously jeopardizes the mental, physical, emotional or spiritual health of any congregant, or the reputation of the church. If aware of a fellow member who engages in any of these activities I will uphold the community's right to safety, and bring the matter to the attention of church authorities, including board president, minister, staff or Congregational Health Committee.



It is wrong to waste the precious
gift of time on acrimony.

Bernardine

E. DIVERSITY AND DIFFERENCE

As Unitarians we affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. This reflects our commitment to honouring and valuing the diversity and differences among us as individuals. A healthy church offers us many opportunities, one of the best being the opportunity to experience the richness and challenge of engaging with the infinite variety of humankind. Diversity is a fundamental requirement for healthy, vibrant, flexible and adaptive life of all kinds, both individual and collective. Life thrives at the edges and change is inevitable. Lack of diversity leaves life/us vulnerable to changing environments, unable to adapt and with no pool of difference to draw on when something different is needed.

As we rub up against difference we experience tension and are challenged individually and collectively to reconsider ourselves, our opinions, our notions of what is right and what is wrong. We are given an opportunity to think bigger thoughts, to open our hearts even wider, to learn about ourselves and to grow spiritually.

At times we will be faced with conflicts within our congregation that are distressing to individuals, groups, or to the congregation as a whole. When handling these difficult situations we must at all times avoid inviting aggression, self righteousness and blame into our hearts and congregation. When challenged by difference, tempted by conflict, can we be tender and open and not so certain about who's right and who's wrong? Can we dare to not shut anyone out of our hearts and not make the other into an enemy? Even when confronted with behaviours that we cannot tolerate we can act with gentleness and compassion.

Just as the irritation of a grain of sand inside an oyster creates a pearl, so can the challenges of difference and diversity lead to new growth. We come up against our edges in our dealings with others, especially with those we find distasteful or wrong.

Spiritual growth requires that we begin by dealing with ourselves, that we consider the possibility that what we label as a negative 'difference' in someone else may also be an aspect of ourselves we have yet to make peace with.

Diversity and difference offer us a life-giving gift of personal and spiritual health and growth. To those who challenge us the most we can strive to cultivate respect and gratitude for the gifts and opportunities they offer us.

**There never were in the world two opinions alike,
no more than two hairs or two grains;
the most universal quality is diversity.**

Michel de Montaigne
French Philosopher and Writer
1533–1592

We Covenant—Diversity and Difference

- As a Unitarian Universalist, I affirm the positive value of diversity, and the positive worth inherent in encountering difference
- I recognize that the difficulty I experience in conflict with another may be a reflection of some part of me that I have yet to embrace
- I commit to the spiritual growth and transformation that comes in deep engagement with the other, even those with whom I disagree.
- I accept that conflict is inevitable in human community and commit to learning and practicing good conflict management techniques.
- It is a blessing to be in a religious community that values the individual voice and singular path, that makes a place for the "one among many." Because I cherish this freedom, I extend it to others, and express my commitment to listen to others' stories, recognizing that vital spiritual community may be formed of those who "need not think alike to love alike."



The First Unitarian Church of Hamilton

Covenant of Beloved Community

Vision and Values

- As a committed Unitarian Universalist, I pledge to live my life, as best I am able, by Unitarian Universalist Principles, guided and inspired by the sources of our Living Tradition.
- As part of my commitment to a positive faith tradition, I presume good intent in all my relationships in religious community.
- As a committed member of the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton, I pledge to live my life in religious community, as best I am able, with the guidance and inspiration of the Mission-Covenant of the Church.
- I recognize that our living tradition is created by our many covenants. I agree to abide by all the policies, covenants and guidelines we create together.

Shared Ministry

- By my presence, I am called to serve in the ministry of my religious community. How I live, act and behave, and who I am, becomes a part of my church's ministry. Therefore, I accept the responsibility of Shared Ministry inherent in my membership.
- I accept the privilege of holding the church in trust from those who have come before, for those who will come after, honouring its past and being a good steward of its future. My commitment to it transcends any one person, place or time.
- I commit to nurture the spirit and life of the church. My commitment extends beyond myself to the very existence of the congregation, which I cherish.

Community and Commitment

- I commit to self-awareness and self-understanding to help me understand what I bring to my church community and its relationships; why I act and feel the way I do and how that affects others in community
- If my individual needs and desires and the good of the church come into conflict, I put the good of the church first. I put the well being of the whole ahead of myself.
- I commit to behaviours which help to build healthy community, including: clear, honest and direct communication, kindness, humour, empathy, hospitality, respect, openness, willingness to engage, encouragement to trust, following good process, honouring the whole and keeping my commitments.
- I commit to actions that create a safe and nurturing environment, especially where vulnerable people are concerned. I abide by safety policies and best practices in my role as a volunteer in community, safeguarding the community by my actions.
- I commit to actions which create a vibrant church, which include sharing my gifts, affirming the contribution of others, cultivating abundance, inviting others in, proclaiming positive values and growing our ministry
- I support the congregation with my right action, right speaking, right giving and right process.
- I support the congregation with my right action, right speaking, right giving and right process.
- In times of challenge, I redouble my commitment, use appropriate channels to solve difficulties, keep coming, keep pledging and keep the faith in my fellow members and my religious community

Power and Process

- I commit to examining the power I own in community. The greater my power, the greater my responsibility to examine it and make choices that use it for the good of the church.
- I speak for myself alone, and I speak with, not about, others.
- I do not invite other community members into negative perceptions or conflicts about the church or its members, nor do I enter into others' conflicts if invited.

-
-
- I have a serious concern with an individual or group in the church, my first response is to speak privately with them. If more resolution is needed, I encourage them to come with me to the Congregational Health Committee and seek resolution.
 - C I will be gentle but courageous in confronting those who are diminishing our community by their behaviour. I will express my concerns, as appropriate, to the member of the community and let them know that they and I have a responsibility to address the issue through appropriate channels.
 - I will refrain from any activity that seriously jeopardizes the mental, physical, emotional or spiritual health of any congregant, or the reputation of the church. If aware of a fellow member who engages in any of these activities I will uphold the community's right to safety, and bring the matter to the attention of church authorities, including board president, minister, staff or Congregational Health Committee.

Diversity and Difference

- As a Unitarian Universalist, I affirm the positive value of diversity, and the positive worth inherent in encountering difference
- I recognize that the difficulty I experience in conflict with another may be a reflection of some part of me that I have yet to embrace
- I commit to the spiritual growth and transformation that comes in deep engagement with the other, even those with whom I disagree.
- I accept that conflict is inevitable in human community and commit to learning and practicing good conflict management techniques.
- It is a blessing to be in a religious community that values the individual voice and singular path, that makes a place for the "one among many." Because I cherish this freedom, I extend it to others, and express my commitment to listen to others' stories, recognizing that vital spiritual community may be formed of those who "need not think alike to love alike."

As
a
freely
gathered member of this beloved community,
The First Unitarian Church of Hamilton,
I pledge my firm commitment to this
Covenant of Beloved Community
and pledge to
do all in
my power
to uphold it.

5. CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH COMMITTEE

The Role of the Congregational Health Committee

The Congregational Health Committee has a major role in our vision of living out our shared religious values in loving community, in informal and formal ways. They can assist individual members who need help to develop skills that will help them communicate more effectively and solve problems. They also help the congregation as a whole receive the skill training that will help members deal more effectively with differences and to grow in peace-enhancing directions. Please see Appendix i for a more complete description of the role that the CHC plays in sustaining and enhancing overall congregational health.

The Congregational Health Committee: A Resource during Challenging Times

The Congregational Health Committee (CHC) exists to educate about healthy church community. It assists the church in developing policies, to develop understanding, to provide training, to offer evaluation and to show appreciation for both leaders and members. It also exists to offer assistance during conflicted times—both to individuals and groups. It offers the following services: (FACTOR).

- F**acilitated conversations between individuals or groups in conflict
- A**dvice and assessment to empowered bodies and individuals within the church
- C**onflict management and mediation techniques
- T**raining recommendations for Congregational Wellness and Skill Development
- O**ne-on-One listening, counsel and support
- R**esources within and beyond the congregation—denominational or outside resources in situations that require them

The Committee has a policy of “no anonymous complaints” and encourages everyone who has an issue or conflict to invite the participation of those with whom they are conflicted in an initial meeting with the Congregational Health Committee.

It is important to understand that even in a community of loving, committed souls, not all conflicts are resolvable. Some parties may forever “agree to disagree” and some issues and conflicts may remain unresolved in the minds and hearts of those involved and also within the larger community. At such times, the members of the community honour their pledge to the life of the church, and move forward even without agreement. Over time, positive change may help to illuminate one, both or all sides of an unresolved conflict, shedding new light on long-ago behaviours, opinions and conclusions.

Conclusion

According to our Mission-Covenant Statement, our “doors swing open to the lightest touch.” Yet membership in a “Beloved Community” such as ours is not easy. It requires spiritual discipline, commitment, personal growth, hard work, faith, humility and a willingness to be changed. It calls forth the best within us, asking for the best from us.

This Covenant makes explicit some of our community’s expectations of responsible membership in our “Beloved Community. It is our hope that this Covenant will be and become a “living document”—known and understood by new and long-time members alike, shared at committee meetings and referred to both formally and casually when we meet; its precepts practiced in workshops, conversations and gatherings of all kinds. It is our hope that it becomes a model for covenants by our own children and youth, as well as for other congregations.

As members, we too have learned and grown in the process of considering, discussing, researching, crafting, creating, piloting, testing, writing and re-writing the Covenant.

Formed of the history, experience, wisdom and learning of the church, it is our hope that it becomes a gift of health and strength that will be felt for many years to come.

The Congregational Health Committee, May 2005

APPENDICES

i. Congregational Health Committee Brochure

The First Unitarian Church of Hamilton:

- ii. Code of Ethics for Adults (relates to involvement with Youth)
- iii. Child Protection Policy (relates to Children's Programming)
- iv. Volunteer Code of Conduct (relates to all Volunteer Positions)

v. Norms Document 1995–2005

Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA) Code of Conduct

Liberal Religious Educators' Association (LREDA) Code of Conduct

Bibliography

Websites

Other Resources

Our work as a committee is informed and guided by our shared religious values, as expressed in our Unitarian Universalist Principles and the church's Mission Covenant Statement.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PRINCIPLES

“We covenant to affirm and promote:
The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
Justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

THE MISSION COVENANT STATEMENT

“We covenant to build a spiritual home,
a house of many rooms.
Its foundation is the earth;
its timbers are the Unitarian Universalist principles of belief and behavior
its roof is our commitment to one another;
its windows are open to the light of truth and the fresh air of tolerance and respect
Dwellers here find knowledge, strength and hope.
Nurtured in our home, we are inspired
to carry out our mission,
reaching out to the wider community.
We light candles of welcome,
of caring and commitment.
Their warmth and light stream into the night.
Strangers become friends;
travelers find rest.
The doors of this home
swing open to the lightest touch.”

WHO IS ON THE COMMITTEE?

A selection of members who meet the following criteria are nominated by the committee and then chosen and appointed by the Board.

“Persons selected to the committee on Shared Ministry and Congregational health should believe in the Ministry of the church, be accountable to the shared ministry of the church and understand the vision of the church, have leadership abilities, have the ability to be objective and ask hard questions when dealing with issues, be discreet and understand when confidentiality is important, have the trust and respect of the minister and the congregation and have the ability to evaluate the performance of the shared ministry of the congregation.”

Church Year 2005-2006

Chair: Angela Ross

Members: Roy Dahl, Barb Jepson, Pat Oertel, Karen Trollope-Kumar

Rev. Allison Barrett, ex-officio

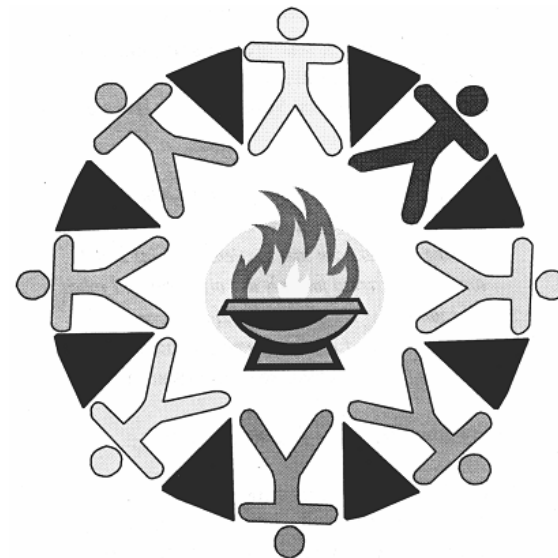
Former Members: Elizabeth Beckett, Miranda Borisenko, Bill Fulton, Rosemary Foulds, Cheryl Jewell, William LaFerla, Angela Carol, Heather Gardner, Sue Ryan, Sylvia Moyle



First Unitarian Church of Hamilton

170 Dundurn St S,
Hamilton, ON L8P 4K3
(905) 527-8441

Congregational Health Committee



A Resource

For

Congregational Living

What is The Committee on Shared Ministry and Congregational Health?

- ❖ Supports Leadership Development & Congregational Education
- ❖ Assesses the Health & Strength of our ministries
- ❖ Provides guidance and support to individuals & groups
- ❖ A resource, a neutral party to help us live our UU values in our congregation

The committee is a resource, a safe place, a touchstone and a guide in helping us to live our Unitarian Universalist values in our lives and in our congregation.

“What makes my experience in the ministry so hopeful for me is that I am not alone in this careful hearing of both pain and excitement. This is not something reserved for only one ordained and robed. It is something we all do for and with one another. Ours is a shared ministry, a giving and a receiving.” UU Minister Rev. Robert Karnan

Our Commitment to Shared Ministry

Several years ago, our church made the important shift to a vision of Shared Ministry that includes everyone in the congregation. Instead of focusing on a minister as primary “deliverer” and “model” of ministry, it places the responsibility for the quality, effectiveness and health of our ministries on each and every one of us, and on all of us together. Shared Ministry affirms that the actions of each person in the congregation are essential in forming a loving, healing and justice-seeking community. Shared Ministry holds each and every person accountable to the vision of ministry embraced by the church.

“Church is a place where you get to practise what it means to be human.”

Unitarian Theologian James Luther Adams

Enhancing Congregational Health—Shared Ministry Excellence and Evaluation

The Committee’s primary role is to assess and enhance the quality and strength of our congregation’s ministries; to support the healthy functioning of our church so that we may live out our vision of loving community in all our ministries. A spiritually healthy community is identified by many characteristics. It is a community with a clear vision of its ministry and a commitment to live that vision in each and every part of church life. It is a community where members’ words and actions are reflective of their shared values. It is a community that is committed to offering its ministry to the world. The Committee’s role is to engage in ongoing assessment of our shared ministry. Retreats, surveys, circle meetings, consultations, workshops, conferences and formal and informal evaluation processes may all be used to assess and strengthen the church’s ministries.

Leadership Development

The Committee on Shared Ministry and Congregational Health is a key component of the leadership team of the congregation. It assists the Board as well as individual leaders and groups within the church in their roles as leaders and shapers of our church’s ministries. The Committee plans and conducts annual Board leadership retreats, and occasional congregational workshops that enhance our understanding of healthy leadership in the church. It aims to teach and lead by example, to train and develop an awareness of the practices that embody mature spiritual leadership, and to hold members and groups accountable to that vision. It encourages leadership training among church members, and helps to facilitate training when necessary.

A Resource in Challenging Times—the Committee and Conflict Management

Conflict between individuals and groups is a normal part of diverse and lively communities like churches. Conflicts effectively managed can sometimes even be transformative for the individuals or groups affected.

However, our church (like most religious communities) recognizes the risk to congregational health that can occur when interpersonal conflicts spread within the community. Therefore, the Committee on Shared Ministry and Congregational Health is the body empowered to help manage and resolve conflicts of all kinds. It aids individuals and groups within the church by setting up processes that allow parties to communicate better, feel heard, and to seek resolution if at all possible, and it accesses many different resources and approaches in doing so. At all times the Committee’s highest value and greatest concern is congregational health. It “speaks for the church” in matters of conflict and disagreement.

An interesting feature of the Committee’s conflict management role is that when it is being utilized and working well, its work is almost invisible. Because the Committee maintains confidentiality* in matters of congregational conflict, and because it encourages members of our community to talk with rather than about each other when at all possible, the best evidence of the Committee’s help may often be a church that appears to have no conflict! But beneath the scenes, church members and the Committee are working very hard to resolve the inevitable differences that occur in community.

* except in matters that would legally require mandate reporting

“The committee helped to put the matter in perspective, maintain focus on a resolution, was totally supportive and at the same time, being non-judgmental. Thanks!” Hamilton Congregant

I- PREAMBLE

OBJECTIVES

These norms are to:

- Help church members manage conflict,
- Keep relationships and behaviour consistent with UU Principles and Purposes.

BACKGROUND

The UU Principles and Purposes calls for us to "affirm and promote:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- Justice, equality and compassion in human relations;
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations;
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- The rights of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large;
- The goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part."

In keeping with these principles and purposes, we recommend the following norms for the guidance of members of the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton.

SCOPE

These norms cover dealings between individual church members. Dealings between church institutions such as committees, boards of directors and the minister are not covered. These will be covered in a later document.

DEFINITIONS

NORM - an established standard of behaviour shared by members of a social group to which each member is expected to conform.

MEMBER - a member of the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton.

CONFLICT- when differences between members' ideas and interests escalates into interpersonal hostility and animosity.

INTRODUCTION

Difference is the essence of our denomination and only requires resolution when:

- The church needs to formulate action on an issue.
- A member's behaviour is not in keeping with our Principles and Purposes.

If members always acted in a manner consistent with our Principles and Purposes differences of opinion would never escalate into conflict. However, since we are human, personal animosity and hostility can escalate from differences of opinion, ideas and interests. Therefore, these norms exist as a detailed

guide in dealing with each other as people of inherent worth and dignity:

II-THE NORMS

1) INTERPERSONAL DEALINGS

1.1) STAGE 1 - ESCALATION & HOSTILITY AVOIDANCE

It is inevitable that Church Members will have differences in ideas and interests. When such differences are so strong that they must be settled, negotiation is required. While seeking to resolve differences, escalation will be avoided by treating others kindly, gently and with respect.

1.1.1) The following behaviour detracts from the dignity and inherent worth of the participants:

- Speaking loudly,
- Being sarcastic,
- Questioning motives,
- Interrupting one another,
- When in conflict complaining to a third party to avoid dealing directly with the opponent,
- Listening to complaints about a third party without recommending direct dealing with the opponent,
- Taking sides in another's conflict,
- Spreading unpleasant information about others,
- Disseminating sensitive information about church members,
- Speaking adversely of members in their absence (Bad mouth).

1.1.2) The following behaviour enhances the dignity and inherent worth of the participants:

- Dealing directly with each other,
- Supporting each other in dealing directly when in conflict,
- Speaking softly,
- Slowing down,
- Having a laugh (about something non-threatening),
- Taking a break,
- Breaking bread together,
- Being creative in problem solving,
- Listening, actively by:
 - Checking assumptions with each other,
 - Letting others have their say.

1.2) STAGE 2 - PREPARATION FOR MEDIATION

If, after dealing with each other in the manner detailed above, conflict still threatens then mediation is indicated. Before seeking mediation:

- Be sure that person to person dealing possibilities have been exhausted.
- Write down your analysis of the conflict and the steps taken so far towards a resolution.

1.3) STAGES-MEDIATION

The disputants should attempt to select a mediator acceptable to all. Depending on who the disputants are, candidates for a mediator are:

- The Committee on Ministry
- The Minister
- A Professional Mediator outside the Church.
- UU District Representative.

On accepting the position, the mediator should adopt a generally accepted, documented mediation procedure, acceptable to those in dispute, designed to handle the mediation in a win-win manner. The mediation should continue until the issues are resolved or the mediator decides a negotiated resolution is impossible. The mediator will then issue a report to those in conflict containing the following:

- A concise definition of the differences.
- Details of the resolution or irreconcilable differences.
- Further action recommendations.

At this point if the conflict requires executive action, it can be referred to:

- The Board of Directors
- Subject to the Bylaws and as a last resort, a Special Congregation Meeting.

Executive action is essential if the dispute:

- Threatens the peace of the Church,
- Involves legal consequences.
- Requires financial action by the Church.

1.3) STAGE 4- CONGREGATIONAL RESOLUTION

The only limitation on a Special Congregational Meeting is that it must be called and handled according to the Constitution and Bylaws. The chair should take special care when handling personal conflict situations in a congregational meeting to encourage an atmosphere where people will listen and reason rather than argue and accuse—using lateral thinking rather than tunnel vision.

2) FORMAL DEALINGS BETWEEN CHURCH MEMBERS

Formal dealings between church members take place in Committee and Board Meetings. Members should be courteous to each other in their committee work.

Courtesy involves:

- Respect of others and their opinions,
- Being on time at meetings,
- Starting and finishing meetings on time,
- Keeping "homework" commitments,
- Informing the Chair when planning to be absent,
- Returning phone calls,

3) MEMBERS IN THE PULPIT

Those who frequent the Pulpit, such as the Minister, know well the responsibilities of the Pulpit. Others should remember to handle themselves and their subject matter with decorum and keep their presentation free from:

- Derogatory remarks about the Church, its members or any sub-group therein,
- Language likely to be thought of as offensive for a Church environment.

4) GENERAL BEHAVIOUR IN CONFLICT

- When you are unhappy with the church:
- Talk to the Minister,
- Tell the Committee on Ministry,
- Keep attending church,
- Honour your pledge,
- Keep your commitments.
- Don't sulk.

REVISED DRAFT

Recommendations of the Youth Adult Committee
On Safety Issues Pertaining to Youth Events and Leadership
15 February 2004

Leadership of Youth Group

A minimum of 2 adults will be present at all youth gatherings. All adults working with youth will meet the criteria set out below. Ideally, both will have received training, either at an in-service education session held at First Unitarian Church of Hamilton, or at a CUC (Canadian Unitarian Council) sponsored training. However, if two trained advisors are not available, one trained advisor and another responsible adult who

meets the criteria below is acceptable.

- Known to several in the church
- Listed in the church database
- Has participated in a variety of areas of church life
- Demonstrated knowledge of/commitment to UU values
- Age 25 or older

A signed copy of the "First Unitarian Church of Hamilton Code of Ethics for Adults" will be submitted to the Program Director before an advisor participates in youth events, (see Appendix A)

Events held at the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton

A minimum of 2 adults will be present. At least one adult will be a trained youth advisor.

Invited Guests

Guests with knowledge or skill applicable to youth programming may be invited, on a single occasion, under the following circumstances:

- Two youth advisors must be present at the event at which a guest is invited.
- Invited guests are to be referred by a member of the congregation to whom they are known.
- Advance notice of the visit will be distributed to parents and to the staff person responsible to the youth program, along with an acknowledgement form to be signed by parents and returned prior to the meeting featuring a guest.

Sleepovers

An overnight event will be open only to members of the youth group (see "Youth Membership"). Youth group members will not invite friends or visitors to attend.

Adult leadership will adhere to the criteria noted in "Leadership of Youth Group" above.

Adults or youth who are invited to attend the early evening segment of an overnight event in the role of programmers will limit their participation to that of a programmer or presenter, at no time taking on the role of a youth advisor and will depart by 11:00 p.m.

See recommended advisor complement and procedure for overnight events attached

Events away from First Unitarian Church -

Youth and Youth Advisors will conduct themselves according to the "Youth Covenant" and "Youth Safety Guidelines" of the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton when attending events away from our church. Youth and advisors are expected to travel together and no outside excursions by individual youth will be permitted. Permission slips for all youth attending will be in the possession of the Youth Advisor before departure. (See Appendix B)

Travel -

At no time will a youth advisor transport a single youth in their private vehicle. All youth will travel together with licensed drivers in insured vehicles.

All drivers will be asked to provide proof of valid insurance and licensing before departure by presenting these documents for inspection by youth advisors and/or staff as appropriate.

Parents offer to transport youth to events: where parents offer to transport youth to events away from church with a round trip distance of more than 100 kms or where overnight stays will be required, parents will be offered mileage reimbursement at the rate set by the Canada Customs and Revenue Agency. Parents will not be invited to attend the youth event or to stay overnight with youth and will make separate arrangements for church billet or other accommodation.

Youth Membership

Youth who are eligible to join the youth group of First Unitarian Church of Hamilton are:

- currently attending secondary school
- have a direct adult affiliation in the church (a parent or guardian is listed in the church database, or a person who has accompanied the youth to church while they were registered in the church school.)

Parents will provide signed acknowledgement that they have received a copy of the 'First Unitarian Church of Hamilton Code of Ethics for Adults', (see Appendix A)

Further reflection:

The Youth Adult Committee and Youth Group of First Unitarian may wish to reflect further and covenant or develop guidelines regarding:

- * Dispute resolution
- * Intersecting authority between First Unitarian Youth Advisors and Con organizers

respectfully submitted,
Evan Hutchison, Beverly Horton, Angela Klassen

Appendix A

**First Unitarian Church of Hamilton
Code of Ethics for Adults**

Adults are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore especially important that adults be qualified to provide the special nurture, care, and support, that will enable youth to develop a positive sense of self and responsibility. The relation between young people and adults must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential of their relationship is to be realized.

There are no more important areas of growth than those of self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Adults play a key role in assisting youth in these areas of growth. Wisdom dictates that youth and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; therefore, leaders will refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with youth. Neither shall they sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth which constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse.

Leaders shall be informed of the code of ethics and agree to it before assuming their role. In cases of violation of this code, appropriate action, up to and including dismissal, will be taken.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

APPENDIX B

**FIRST UNITARIAN CHURCH OF HAMILTON
YOUTH PERMISSION FORM AND
AUTHORIZATION FOR EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT**

I, _____, give permission for my son/daughter, _____, to participate in the following adult supervised activity:

The Spirit of Harriet Tubman (theatrical presentation by Leslie McCurdy)
Stewart Memorial Church
114 John St. North, Hamilton

The activity will take place on Wednesday, February 18th from 7pm to 10:00pm . We will be departing from, and returning to the church.

I give permission for my son/daughter to be transported to and from the event by reasonable and safe means. I understand that youth advisors will remain with the youth at the church until all youth have been picked up. (Please give details on the back of this form if your son/daughter will not be picked up by you, but will be responsible for returning home from the church at the end of the event on his/her own)

OR

My son/daughter will be transported directly to Stewart Memorial Church and will arrive at _____ pm and be picked up at _____ pm by (name) _____.

I agree and hereby do release and hold harmless any and all adult supervisors for the activity, from and for any and all liability which may arise for damages, loss or injuries, either to person or property, which my son/daughter may sustain while engaged in the activity conducted, including, but not limited to, any damages, loss or injuries that may be sustained through transportation to and from the activity .

Should any injury occur, I give permission for my son/daughter to receive emergency treatment from an appropriate health care provider to be selected by the adult supervisor of the activity, when, in such supervisor's opinion, the need for such treatment is immediate, and when efforts to contact me (us) are unsuccessful. I also agree to pay and be responsible for all medical, hospital or other expenses which may be incurred as a result of securing such treatment.

I further agree to assume responsibility for any liability which may arise for damages, loss or injuries which may be caused or contributed to by my son/daughter to the person or property of others while travelling and/or participating in this event.

I understand that church safety policies require that two responsible adults be in attendance with youth at all times, and that therefore, youth must travel together and remain together at the event location in order for youth advisors to adhere to this policy.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Home address: _____ Email _____

Home phone number: _____ Emergency phone number: _____

Family Physician/Practice: _____

Physician's phone number: _____

Health Insurance Number _____ Version Code ____

Additional Information you wish to share about your son/daughter which might be required in case of emergency: (eg: current medications, medical conditions, drug allergies etc)

Other needs _____

Child Protection Policy

The First Unitarian Church of Hamilton, as a spiritual community, takes seriously its responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all who come to it.

We recognize that we often are in a unique position to learn of circumstances in the lives of children and adults where there may be a need for intervention and healing.

To provide a safe and nurturing environment we shall:

1. promote self-esteem and the right to a personal voice in all our religious education programs.
2. provide age-appropriate information about development and sexuality to our children and youth.
3. provide training and support for our teachers and youth leaders. We make sure that they are aware that they must report to Children's Aid Society any child who is in need of protection.
4. arrange that there be a minimum of 2 responsible persons with any group of children in church school.
5. maintain classrooms with windows open to casual supervision.
6. ensure that teachers are established members/friends and are known to several in the congregation.

The Code of Professional Practice

for the Unitarian Universalist ministry

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

As Revised at the UUMA Annual Meetings

1987, 1988, 1992, 1996, and 1998

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, give full assent to this code of professional life as a statement of our serious intent, and as an expression of the lines and directions that bind us in a life of common concern, shared hopes and firm loyalties.

1. SELF

Because the religious life is a growing life, I will respect and protect my own needs for spiritual growth, ethical integrity, and continuing education in order to deepen and strengthen myself and my ministry.

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

I will sustain a respect for the ministry. Because my private life is woven into my practice of the ministry, I will refrain from private as well as public words or actions degrading to the ministry or destructive of congregational life.

As a sexual being, I will recognize the power that ministry 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 or with an unwilling adult, with a counselee, with the spouse or partner of a person in the congregation, with interns, or any other such exploitative relationship.

Because the demands of others 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 spouse, parent and friend.

2. COLLEAGUES

I will stand in a supportive relation to my 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.

Should I know that a colleague is engaged in practices that are damaging, as defined in our Code of Professional Practice, I will speak openly and frankly to her/him and endeavour to be of help. If necessary, I will bring such matters to the attention of the UUMA Executive Committee.

I will not speak scornfully or in derogation of any colleague in public. In any private conversation critical of a colleague, I will speak responsibly and temperately.

The nurture of the relationship between a congregation and its called minister is of utmost importance to the strength of the movement and to the integrity of our ministry. For this reason, consultation among colleagues practicing the diverse forms of our ministry within the same geographic area is essential to promote healthy congregational life. The purpose of such consultation is to reach mutually acceptable understandings about the appropriate roles that ministers in the same geographic area should play. Irreconcilable disputes should be referred to the Chapter Good Offices Person for mediation.

I will defer accepting any requests for any ministerial services whatsoever from members of any congregation I am not now serving until I have consulted with the incumbent minister. In order to maintain my colleague's free choice in this matter, I will inform the person requesting my services of the necessity to consult our professional Guidelines. If my colleague asks me to refrain from performing the service, I will comply. Should emergency circumstances make such a consultation impossible, I shall render only limited services and consult with my colleague at the earliest possible opportunity.

I will inform my colleague in advance of any public engagement I may accept in the church he or she serves, and I will inform my colleague in advance of any public engagement I may accept in his or her community, which might bear upon congregational issues or policies. In a multi-staff situation I will see that all colleagues serving that church are informed. If approached by a member of any colleague's congregation for advice on matters affecting my colleague's ministry, I will consider carefully the circumstances of the request. If the advice sought indicates a possible violation of the Code of Professional Practice, I will listen carefully and explore appropriate ways of addressing the issue within the context of our Code and Guidelines. If the advice requested is not of this nature, I will inform the person of my professional obligations under this Code, and carefully consider whether it is appropriate for me to respond in any way. When in doubt I will err on the side of deference to the prerogatives of my colleagues call.

If I am to share the ministry of a congregation with (an) other minister(s), I will earnestly seek clear delineation of responsibility, accountability, and channels of communication before responsibilities are assumed. I will thereafter work in cooperation and consultation with them, taking care that changing roles and relations are re-negotiated with clarity, respect and honesty.

If I am a member of or a participant in a congregation served by a colleague, I will in all ways honor the priority of his or her call to the ministry of that congregation, and I will avoid influence which other members may tend to yield to me in the light of my experience, status and prestige. If I serve a congregation of which another minister is a member, I will be generous toward my colleague in word and spirit. I will extend these courtesies to all colleagues in multi-staff situations.

If I am a member of a congregation which I previously served, I will be welcoming to the settled minister, and seek to be useful in ways my successor may request. If I serve a congregation of which the retired minister is a member, I will recognize the continuing value of her or his

presence in the congregation. I will extend these courtesies to all colleagues in multi-staff situations.

I will share and support the concerns of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, especially as reflected in these Guidelines.

I will keep my collegial relationships alive by attending UUMA Chapter meetings whenever possible and by thoughtfully considering matters of mutual professional interest.

3. CONGREGATION

I will uphold the practices of congregational polity including both those of local self-government and those of counsel and cooperation within our Association. I will only serve regularly a congregation(s) issuing a call in the manner prescribed by the Bylaws of the congregation(s) or under a program instituted by the UUA or its member groups. Throughout my ministry I will teach the history, meaning and methods of congregational polity, recognizing informed and faithful adherence to these practices as the bond preserving and reforming our free corporate religious life.

I will respect the traditions of the congregation, enriching and improving these in consultation with the members.

I will hold to a single standard of respect and help for all members of the congregational community of whatever age or position.

I will respect absolutely the confidentiality of private communications of members.

I will remember that a congregation places special trust in its professional leadership and that the members of the congregation allow a minister 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.

I will not invade the private and intimate bonds of others' lives, nor will I trespass on those bonds for my own advantage or need when they are disturbed. In any relationship of intimate confidentiality, I will not exploit the needs of another person for my own.

I will not engage in sexual activities with a member of the congregation who is not 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 the congregation, I will take special care to examine my commitment, motives, intentionality, and the nature of such activity and its consequence for myself, the other person, and the congregation.

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 critical spiritual leadership.

I will take responsibility for encouraging clear delineation of responsibility, accountability and channels of communication for the minister(s) and other staff.

I will take responsibility for encouraging adequate and sensible standards of financial and other support for minister and staff.

Prior to sabbatical or other leave, I will clearly negotiate a minimum amount of time to serve as minister to the congregation upon my return before making myself available as a candidate for another pulpit.

I will inform the Board of the congregation immediately when I have accepted a call to another position.

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

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

I will inform myself of the established candidating procedures of the Unitarian Universalist Association and I will strictly observe them.

I will make myself a candidate for a pulpit only with serious intent.

Because respect for the worth and dignity of every person is fundamental to our Unitarian Universalist ministry, I will work to confront attitudes and practices of unjust discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, disability, or ethnicity, within myself and in individuals, congregations, and groups I serve.

5. 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 maintain a prophetic pulpit, offering to the community religious and ethical leadership.

I will encourage members' participation in efforts to solve community problems.

I will offer sympathetic support to neighbouring ministers of other religious bodies.

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES

Preamble

We, the members of the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA), do affirm this Code of Professional Practices as our standard of commitment to the practice of religious education. This Code will be followed by all LREDA members who are or have been engaged as professional religious educators.

It is supported by all who, by joining LREDA, indicate that they honor the importance of religious growth and learning in the congregations or communities they serve.

I. Self

As a professional religious educator, or as a supporter of religious education within the Unitarian Universalist Association or the Canadian Unitarian Council, I commit myself to honor the ideals of liberal religious education, and to actively explore and articulate the underlying values and principles that those ideals express.

I recognize that as a religious leader in whom trust and power have been placed, I am called to be faithful both morally and legally to my professional relationships. I must never abuse the authority of my position by manipulating others to satisfy my personal needs. (Examples of such abuse would be sexualized behavior with any child, adolescent, or vulnerable adult seeking advice or comfort; sexualized behavior with any adult who is in another committed relationship; sexualized behavior with interns or youth advisors).

I pledge that I will not engage in any other exploitative relationship that abuses the power and damages the trust that a specific individual, a congregation, or an institution has placed in me. As a religious education professional, I have the responsibility to have read and understood this Code, and to live in accordance with its contents. I expect that my colleagues will do likewise.

I accept the responsibility to confront a colleague's misuse of power or to report concerns about suspected misconduct to a LREDA Good Officer. Furthermore, I will be aware of and observe the legal requirements of my State or Province regarding reporting of physical or sexual misconduct.

The recognition of the importance of religious education by my congregation or employer requires acknowledgment of my worth as a professional religious educator.

Understanding that other religious educational professionals will follow after me, I will work with the appropriately designated group within my congregation or place of employment to help establish up-to-date standards of fair compensation and working conditions that support professional religious education.

Because the role and the demands on the religious educator require continual updating of professional perspectives, I will seek and maintain outside collegial contacts and continuing education opportunities to provide such professional growth.

As an individual who brings a complex variety of needs and boundaries to my professional life, I commit to seek any needed personal assistance and counseling from a professional outside of my congregation. Since the demands of others upon me will be many and constant, I will try to keep especially aware of my rights and limits, and if I am not single, of the rights and limits of my family, and of my relation to them as a spouse, partner, parent, or friend.

II. Colleagues

I will stand in a supportive relation to my ministerial, religious education and staff 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.

I will not speak scornfully or in derogation of any colleague in public. In any private conversation critical of a colleague, I will speak responsibly and temperately.

Should I know that a LREDA colleague is engaged in practices that are damaging, as defined in our Code of Professional Practice, I will speak openly and frankly to him/her and endeavor to be of help. If necessary, I will bring such matters to the attention of the LREDA Board of Trustees.

Since I share the welfare of the congregation or community I serve with the parish minister and/or other staff, I will seek to be part of mutually cooperative and consultative relationships with them as we carry out our shared and separate responsibilities. When difficulties arise, I will seek help judiciously and express my concerns professionally, keeping in mind the worth and dignity of all parties involved.

I will share leadership opportunities and responsibilities with my colleagues openly, honestly, and ethically. In particular, I will consult with them in advance of any professional or public engagements that I may be asked to undertake in their communities or congregations.

When leaving a position of religious education leadership for any reason, I will refrain from being involved in the process of selecting my successor. Further, I will support my successor by leaving room for her/him to establish her/his own identity and leadership in the congregation and by refraining from accepting positions on policy-making bodies in the congregation (such as the Board, Religious Education Committee, Finance Committee, or Personnel Committee) for two years after my professional leadership has been concluded in that congregation. For two years, I will not accept or volunteer for roles in the religious education program, and will encourage members of the congregation to speak to the current religious educator or other appropriate persons for answers to all current religious education issues or concerns.

III. Congregation

I will uphold and honor the practice of congregational polity within the congregation I serve, knowing that by educating and modeling the practice of such polity, I am strengthening the experience of free corporate religious life.

I will respect the traditions of the congregation or community I serve and will seek changes that reflect liberal religious principles of inclusivity in consultation with others in that body.

I will honor absolutely the confidences shared with me by members of the congregation or place of employment keeping in mind that such confidentiality should not contribute to personal or professional misuse of power.

In the case of planned or forced resignation or significant change in role or responsibility, I will consult with a LREDA Good Officer for counsel and assistance in executing a well-managed departure or change. I will refrain from actions or public statements that intentionally initiate or foster divisiveness in the congregation.

IV. Movement and Association

As a LREDA member, I understand my responsibility to educate lay people and ministerial colleagues about the qualifications for and dimensions of religious education leadership, and to enlist their help in according appropriate status to liberal religious educators.

To promote professional integrity and leadership, I will be familiar with and advocate for LREDA's Code of Professional Practices and Guidelines.

I will support and participate in activities and programs of the Unitarian Universalist Association and the Canadian Unitarian Council and encourage the participation of others in such events, knowing that wider participation will lead to deeper understanding of our goals as liberal religious educators.

Recognizing the relationship between liberal religious goals and values and adequate financial resources needed to support those goals, I will work to support fair and appropriate funding efforts advocated by the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Canadian Unitarian Council and associated interests and programs of liberal religious educators.

V. Community

As a professional religious educator, I understand that whenever I participate in the wider community, I represent my particular faith group and should provide a living model of ethical and religious leadership for people of all ages and circumstances.

I will honor our liberal religious imperative to work for social justice. In turn, I will encourage all people within my congregation to participate in community and world issues as the embodiment of living religiously in the liberal tradition.

Practicing Right Relationship: Skills for Deepening Purpose, Finding Fulfillment and Increasing Effectiveness in Your Congregation No. AL304

by Mary K. Sellon and Daniel P. Smith

Why is it that some pastors flourish wherever they go, while others with superior theological and practical training continually fail? Why do some insignificant events end up touching people in significant ways? Why do people leave churches with vibrant and exciting programs while others remain loyal to churches that seem to have very little to offer? What makes the difference?

In a book that is both profound and practical, Mary Sellon and Daniel Smith make the case that the health of churches and synagogues depends on congregations learning how to live out love in “right relationships.”

The authors found that the effectiveness of a congregation, as well as the participants’ sense of fulfillment and commitment, varied according to the quality of their relationships with each other.

“Pastors who possessed strong relational skills and worked at establishing healthy relationships thrived almost anywhere they went,” write Sellon and Smith. “Pastors less adept at relationships continually struggled even though they engaged in the same best practices as their colleagues.”

The quality of relationships seemed to be the key. Leadership is not a matter of using certain skills and implementing particular practices, nor it about being right. Leadership is a relationship.

Sellon and Smith bring together the wisdom they gained in their work with dozens of pastors and congregations with the findings of prominent researchers on emotional intelligence and relationship dynamics to show the practices that are central to building relational leadership.

Practicing Right Relationship offers theories, stories, and tools that will help congregations and their leaders learn how to build and maintain the loving relationships that provide the medium for God’s transforming work.

“Sellon and Smith combine profound research on relationships with practical examples from congregations to create a handbook on building faith-based communities. The book takes the reader on a journey of development, from right relationship with self, to other, and finally with Spirit. We all know we should ‘love our neighbor,’ but this book give us a step-by-step map for how to do that!”— Faith Fuller, co-director. The Center for Right Relationship

“Have you ever walked away from a meeting with the sense that God had been in the conversation powerfully? This book helped me understand why. To the extent that our relationships are right, our interactions manifest God’s love and care. Both novice and advanced practitioner alike can improve their skills for right relationships by practicing the simple exercises in this book. Thanks be to God for this very wise book!”—Susan W. N. Rauch, director of conference spiritual leadership development, General Board of Discipleship, The United Methodist Church

Mary K. Sellon is a United Methodist minister who has been a pastor in new church start and redevelopment settings as well as worked with leader development regionally and nationally. She is a certified professional co-active coach who helps clergy and congregational teams find effectiveness and fulfillment in their work.

Daniel P. Smith, a United Methodist minister, has been a resource for congregations in a variety of ways. He has served as a pastor, a district superintendent, a judicatory executive, and currently as a coach and consultant. He also is a certified professional co-active coach who works with clergy and congregational teams.

They co-authored, with Gail Grossman, *Redeveloping the Congregation: A How To for Lasting Change* (Alban, 2002).

Growing a Beloved Community
Twelve Hallmarks of a Healthy Congregation
Tom Owen-TowIe
\$14.00

“Rather than focus on the dumb and destructive things our parishes do, which are all too familiar, I’ve chosen to accentuate the positive, arouse the possibilities, and spur us on toward the very best we can become.” -Tom Owen-TowIe

Grounded in liberal religious thought and history, Owen-TowIe identifies 12 distinct attributes that are vital to all successful UU churches. Aimed at Sunday worshippers, lay leaders, religious professionals, and social justice activists alike, here is a visionary primer on what it means to do and be church the Unitarian Universalist way. (Skinner House)

2004. 104 pp. ISBN 1-55896-464-9

From a Workshop I attended one time - here is the nutshell version, though this list has 15 items:

1. Occupies Holy ground—sites seek the holy
2. Welcomes All souls—gets to who we are using Radical hospitality
3. Inclusion
4. Control
5. Affection
6. Cares for its own
7. Give everyone a voice
8. Embodies diversity
9. Balances justice and joy
10. Looks around, looks ahead, celebrates leadership
11. Spreads our good news
12. Practices respect
13. Nurtures Stewardship
14. Keeps journeying
15. Knows that you are not alone.

And two others that are related:

Behavioral Covenants in Congregations: A Handbook for Honoring Differences No. AL199

by Gil Rendle

This down-to-earth workbook gets to the heart of modern congregational life: how to live creatively together despite differences of age, race, culture, opinion, gender, theological or political position. Alban Senior Consultant Gil Rendle explains how to grow by valuing our differences rather than trying to ignore or blend them. He describes a method of establishing behavioral covenants that includes leadership instruction, training tools, resources (visual models, examples of specific covenants), small-group exercises, plans for meetings and retreats.

Holy Conversations: Strategic Planning as a Spiritual Practice for Congregations No. AL276
by Gil Rendle and Alice Mann

Planning can be challenging in the contemporary congregation, where people share a common faith and values but may have very different preferences and needs. Much of the literature on congregational planning presents it as a technical process: the leader serves as the chief problem solver, and the goal is finding “the solution to the problem.”

Popular Alban consultants and authors Gil Rendle and Alice Mann cast planning as a “holy conversation,” a congregational discernment process about three critical questions:

- Who are we?
- What has God called us to do or be?
- Who is our neighbor?

Rendle and Mann equip congregational leaders with a broad and creative range of ideas, pathways, processes, and tools for planning. By choosing the resources that best suit their needs and context, congregations will shape their own strengthening, transforming, holy conversation. They will find a path that is faithful to their identity and their relationship with God.

I’ve attached two documents that might be of use, and suggest you also include a link to this article on the use of e-mail in Beloved Community:

http://www.alban.org/weekly/041213_Netiquette.asp

**Volunteer Code of Conduct For High-Trust Positions
First Unitarian Church of Hamilton**

DRAFT

As volunteers in positions of trust and responsibility at First Unitarian Church of Hamilton, it is essential that we understand that staff, board and other congregational members and adherents are relying on us to carry out our duties with care and diligence. Please signify your agreement with the statements below by reviewing and signing this code of conduct.

As a volunteer in a position of trust and responsibility at the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton I pledge:

RESPECT

1. I will behave in a fair and equitable manner toward everyone.
2. Confidential information should never be shared except when harm could result from not sharing it with the appropriate staff person.
3. I will not engage in inappropriate behavior of a sexual nature. This includes speaking to others in a sexually suggestive way, allowing sexual innuendo in my own or other's speech, activity of an intimate or sexual nature, unwanted touching or physical abuse.

BEHAVIOUR & RESPONSIBILITY

4. I will bring a positive attitude to my work and interaction, and conduct myself in a professional manner which reflects positively on the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton.
5. I will dress in a manner which does not distract from my volunteer work or pose a hazard, whether working at the church or in another venue.
6. I will communicate my questions, suggestions or concerns about my volunteer role or work to the committee chair or staff person supervising the specific task/project on which I am working, to avoid any misunderstanding.
7. I will ask for appropriate training and orientation if I believe I have not been adequately prepared for my volunteer role.
8. I will not consume alcoholic beverages and/or controlled substances or be under the influence of alcohol or drugs while performing my duties as a church volunteer.

SAFETY CONSCIOUSNESS

9. I will work with at least one other appropriate volunteer or staff person when handling money or interacting with vulnerable persons i.e. children, youth, and those with physical, mental health or intellectual challenges.
10. I will be alert to and will report to the appropriate staff person and/or my committee chair any form of abuse from other sources directed toward volunteers, staff, members/adherents and others.
11. I will report to the appropriate staff person any situation which I recognize as potentially hazardous to my own or others' health or physical well being.
12. I will report any emergencies to the appropriate staff person after first taking immediate action to ensure the health and safety of others. I will endeavour to provide for the general welfare, health and safety of any persons in my charge during the course of my assigned duties.

I hereby certify that I have reviewed, understood and agree to this Code of Conduct. I understand that violating one or more of the provisions of this code may lead to action up to and including dismissal from my volunteer role.

Dated this _____ day of _____, 200_

Name of Volunteer: _____

Signed: _____