

Covenant-Making for Busy Ministers

Something like 50% of the ministers who participate in congregations which have a minister do not have a covenant with that minister—often because that congregation’s minister is too busy to make one, or because the two colleagues have not run into any issues. But our Code of Conduct **requires** this activity of BOTH colleagues and the best insurance against not running into any issues is to have done the work of covenanting.

So here are two suggestions for simple covenant-making. You are welcome to copy, paste, add a date, and sign. Or, you can personalize either version to meet your own special needs. (Version II is such a personalized version, to give you some ideas.)

Version I — Super Simple Covenant

(replace underlined content appropriate to your own situation)

The Date

The Rev X, Developmental Minister of the Mid-State UU Congregation of Wyoming, and The Rev Y, a minister residing in the mid-state area and wishing to attend the congregation, agree to the following covenant.

Rev X and Rev Y intend to be colleagues in right relationship with each other and therefore agree to abide by the Code of Professional Practice and Guidelines of the UUMA, in particular those items which pertain to the relationship between a minister participating in another colleague’s congregation and that colleague. A copy of relevant sections of the Code is attached.

The Signatures

Attachment: A Compilation of items from the Code of Professional Practice which apply

(The attachment can be found [Here](#). We strongly recommend that you review and attach this document since misunderstandings and misquotations of our Code and Guidelines are rampant!)

Version II — The Covenant with some negotiated details

The Date

The Rev X, Developmental Minister of the Mid-State UU Congregation of Wyoming, and The Rev Y, a minister residing in the mid-state area wishing to attend the congregation, agree to the following covenant.

Rev X and Rev Y intend to be colleagues in right relationship with each other and therefore agree to abide by the Code of Professional Practice and Guidelines of the UUMA, in particular those items which pertain to the relationship between a minister participating in another colleague's congregation and that colleague. A copy of relevant sections of the Code is attached.

1. We agree to actively review this Code/Guidelines.
2. We further agree that if either feels that the other is violating the letter or the spirit of this document or the Code/Guidelines, we will bring that breach directly to our colleague in a timely way.
3. We agree that Rev Y will be welcome at worship, public events like concerts, lectures, memorial services, and social events, and to bring their child to RE. If Rev. Y wishes to volunteer, participate in small group activities, or take on any responsibilities in the congregation, they will first check in with Rev. X for permission.
 - a. Rev. Y has already requested and received permission to sing in the choir and participate in the church's homeless ministry.
 - b. Rev. X has requested that Rev. Y wait a year or so before asking to do things of a more ministerial nature, such as teach in the Adult Ed program or take any leadership positions in the congregation.
4. Rev X, who is very active with the Mid-State ACLU chapter asks that Rev. Y to allow her to be the only UU minister currently active with this organization, but hopes that Rev. Y will serve the community in whatever other ways she wishes.
5. Revs. X and Y agree that they will meet to check in on their relationship twice a year, Fall and Spring, with Rev. Y taking responsibility to initiate these meetings.

The Signatures

Attachment: A Compilation of items from the Code of Professional Practice which apply

(The attachment can be found Here. We strongly recommend that you review and attach this document since misunderstandings and misquotations of our Code and Guidelines are rampant!)

Notes on both versions:

1. Dating the document is helpful. Dating any subsequent revision is even more helpful!
2. Signatures make the document. A little celebratory something never goes amiss!

Notes on Version II

1. #2 is in the Code but it is such basic good relationship work that it is useful to spell it out.
2. #3 begins the process of personalizing and localizing the agreement, and this is but a sample of a specific item that could be added. Hopefully these specific requests will be few, but they should be discussed, agreed upon, and noted in the covenant.
 1. In this situation, Rev. X is relatively new to a small congregation and wants Rev. Y not to overwhelm her leadership in a fragile system and so is suggesting a “slow start” to her participation. There might be other situations in which, say, Rev X is working with a cantankerous and triangle-prone Social Justice Committee (or choir or....) and therefore asks Rev. Y to avoid that group or activity.
 2. #4 details a different kind of specific request, pertaining to the not-very-clear Code on “public ministry.”
3. Relationship Check-ins are a good practice, and giving one person responsibility for initiating them makes it more likely that they will occur.