

## A Behavioral Covenant for First Parish Congregational Church as We Walk Together

### Behavioral Covenants are:

- promises, not rules
- descriptions of behavior, not changes of personality
- integral to our Christian daily spiritual practice
- modeled by us in church, home, workplace, and community
- reviewed regularly

### Behavioral Covenants guide us in:

- sharing information
- setting priorities
- making decisions
- exercising leadership
- addressing complaints
- resolving conflict

**“Making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Ephesians 4:3), as both individual members and the body of Christ, we pledge that we shall:**

### **IN THOUGHT**

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|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Accept conflict</b>  | 1. Acknowledge together that conflict is a normal part of our life in the church. <i>Romans, chapter 14</i>             |
| <b>Affirm hope</b>      | 2. Affirm that as God walks with us in conflict, we too can walk together in hope for a resolution. <i>Psalms 23:4</i>  |
| <b>Commit to prayer</b> | 3. Admit our needs and commit ourselves to pray for a mutually satisfactory solution. <i>James 5:16; Ephesians 6:18</i> |

### **IN ACTION**

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| <b>Go to the other...</b>         | 4. Seek resolution to conflict by directly addressing the person and/or committee with whom there is a problem. <i>Matthew 18:15-20</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| <b>...in a spirit of humility</b> | 5. Go in gentleness, patience and humility, without casting blame on others. <i>Galatians 6:1-5</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Be quick to listen</b>         | 6. Listen carefully, summarize and check out what is heard before responding, seek as much to understand as to be understood. <i>James 1:19; Proverbs 18:13</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Be slow to judge</b>           | 7. Suspend judgments, avoid labeling, end name calling, discard threats, and act in a nondefensive, nonreactive way. <i>Romans 2:1-4; Galatians 5:22-26</i>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>Be willing to negotiate</b>    | 8. Work through the disagreements constructively. <i>Acts 15; Philippians 2:1-11</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify issues, interests, and needs of all sides</li> <li>• Generate a variety of options for meeting all parties' needs (remain open to all opinions)</li> <li>• Evaluate options by how they meet the needs and satisfy the interests of all sides</li> <li>• Collaborate in working out a joint solution (so all sides gain and so everyone grows spiritually, as individuals and as a congregation)</li> <li>• Cooperate with the emerging agreement (accept and be part of the solution)</li> <li>• Acknowledge and celebrate positive steps toward resolution</li> </ul> |

### **IN LIFE**

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| <b>Be steadfast in love</b> | 9. Be firm in our commitment to seek a mutual solution; be stubborn in holding to our common foundation in Christ; be steadfast in love. <i>Colossians 3:12-15</i>                     |
| <b>Be open to mediation</b> | 10. If we cannot reach agreement among ourselves, we will use those with gifts and training in mediation, either from the congregation or the broader church. <i>Philippians 4:1-3</i> |