



# CENTRAL UNITED CHURCH

## CONSTITUTION



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## **DEFINITIONS**

### **THE MANUAL**

Guidance is taken from the 42<sup>nd</sup> edition of *The Manual, 2024 (The Manual)* of The United Church of Canada which came into effect on January 1, 2024.

### **CONSTITUTION**

The Constitution of Central United Church (Central) is the written instrument embodying the governance principles by which the church is organized and administered. It outlines the basic principles that determine the powers and duties in effect that govern the church and it also guarantees certain rights to the people who are members or affiliates of it.

The Constitution itself is governed by *The Manual* of The United Church of Canada.

### **COMMUNITY OF FAITH**

Central is a Community of Faith within the governance structure of The United Church of Canada. It is a group of people who gather together locally as part of the worldwide Christian faith community, following the Protestant Reformed Tradition. A Community of Faith is under the spiritual leadership of a Minister(s) and a duly appointed leadership team known as the Board.

### **REGIONAL COUNCIL**

A Regional Council is a decision-making body responsible to serve and support Communities of Faith within its bounds and provide necessary oversight. Laypeople and ministers meet to oversee the work of the church within each region. Central is a member of the Chinook Winds Regional Council.

### **DENOMINATIONAL COUNCIL**

The Denominational Council is The United Church of Canada's highest legislative court. Ordained, commissioned, and lay commissioners are elected by the regions and meet every three years to set church policy. A Denominational Council Executive and Sub-Executive govern between meetings of the Council.

## INTRODUCTION

Central is a Community of Faith as described in *The Basis of Union: Polity, Article III of The Manual*.

Central is situated on the traditional lands of the Treaty 7 Indigenous Nations which include Bearspaw First Nation (Stoney First Nation/Nakoda), Chiniki First Nation, Blood Tribe (Kainai Nation) (Blackfoot), Piikani Nation, Siksika Nation, Tsuut'ina Nation and Wesley First Nation, as well as the Region 3 Metis Nation.

Our Community of Faith started as a mission outpost of the Morley Methodist Church in 1875, first meeting in the original Fort Calgary. With the growth of the community, it moved a number of times before settling on the corner of what we now call 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Street S.W.

Our church has served our city from its current location since February 5, 1905, first as Central Methodist Church and, after “union” in 1925, as Central United Church.

Central serves as a beacon in our urban landscape, illuminating surroundings with the light of God, helping travellers navigate difficult journeys and casting the light of hope and love to those around it. Central is a place for pilgrims. With open hearts and hands, we provide space for recovery, for restored dignity, for exploring life, and for experiencing authentic change.

Central is a place of prayer, of sharing, of teaching, of listening and of healing; a church community that believes we are not fans of Jesus Christ... but followers; a spiritual community that values the gospel of peace and reconciliation, trusts in the scriptures of our faith and anticipates the leading of the Holy Spirit with energy and involvement. Central is ultimately a community of love. Love that forgives quickly; love that exhibits compassion; courageous love that seeks the will of God; love that provides each person space to grow in their understanding of God in an environment of authenticity, grace and safety.



## **VISION, MISSION AND VALUES**

### **OUR VISION**

Central United Church, an historic downtown hub, is committed to living out the mission of knowing the unconditionally loving God we follow.

We are a community in which God is encountered, the message of Jesus Christ is received and the Holy Spirit transforms lives. Our music ministry is integral, some remarking they come for the music and stay for the message.

Central is a crossroads where connections and interactions are made, attracting individuals and groups of varied interests, concerns and expressions.

### **OUR MISSION**

To create a vibrant community in which God's unconditional love is demonstrated by people who choose to follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, led by the Holy Spirit.

### **OUR VALUES**

#### **Connecting**

- Accepting others
- Praying

#### **Caring**

- Refusing to look away from other's pain
- Practicing kindness and generosity
- Forgiving

#### **Committed**

- to sharing the message of the unconditional love of God
- to creating an environment where people can grow in their faith
- to making connections within the church and the wider community

#### **Courageous**

- Having the courage to be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit
- Having courage that is risk-taking, creative and kind

## **COMMUNAL WORSHIP**

Two worship services are held on Sundays. The morning gathering is referred to as the "Spirited Traditional Worship Service". The evening gathering is referred to as the "Celebrate Life Recovery Service." Our Community of Faith is a reflection of God's wide diversity in human creation and strives to be welcoming and affirming to all in our practises of worship at Central.

## GOVERNANCE

Central's representative Board model of governance promotes accountability, diversity, responsibility for all aspects of the ministry, and broad lay participation using a shared leadership model.

### Membership

Board members are:

- a) full members of the Congregation elected by the Congregation;
- b) members of the Order of Ministry who have been called or appointed to the Community of Faith or a Community of Faith Supervisor who has been appointed by the Regional Council;
- c) designated lay ministers who have been recognized by the Regional Council and appointed to the Community of Faith; or
- d) any other full members that the Congregation chooses to be included in the membership of the Board to fulfill specific roles.

Central's Board is to be made up of:

- Chair
- Past-Chair
- Recording Secretary
- Finance Team Chair or Treasurer
- Order of Ministry personnel
- Regional representatives
- Ministry and Personnel Committee Chair
- Chair of every Team except the Duty of Care Team

Responsibilities of the Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are described in *Bylaws B. Community of Faith, Section B.7.6 of The Manual*.

#### Term of Office

The term of office for the Board Chair is two years. The Chair may serve only two consecutive terms. At the end of the two or four year period, the Chair remains on the Board in the capacity of Past Chair for another two years, after which time he/she is encouraged to step down for at least one year.

All other Board members, excluding the Order of Ministry personnel, are elected for a three-year term, serving a maximum of two consecutive three-year terms. Upon completion of the six-year period, they are encouraged to step down for at least one year.

#### Admission to Office

The Congregation elects members to the Board at its Annual Congregational Meeting.



If any person serving on the Board is unable to complete their term of office, for whatever reason, the Board is given the authority to appoint someone to the vacant position until the next Annual Congregational Meeting, at which time the candidate's name can be officially ratified by the Community of Faith.

#### Resignation

A member of the Board may resign.

#### Removal from Office

A Board member may be removed from office

- a) by the Board through a discipline process;
- b) by the Board if the member has been absent from meetings for a year without adequate reason;
- c) by the Congregation; or
- d) by the Regional Council if the Regional Council decides it is in the best interests of the Congregation.

### **Responsibilities of the Board**

The Board follows the policies set by the Congregation in fulfilling these responsibilities:

#### Spiritual Matters

The Board oversees the spiritual interests of the Congregation, including

- a) admitting people as full members;
- b) removing people as full members;
- c) granting certificates of transfer of membership;
- d) the discipline of members;
- e) the administration of the sacraments;
- f) Christian education;
- g) public worship;
- h) the use of the church building;
- i) pastoral care and visiting; and
- j) outreach and social action.

#### Financial Matters

Central is a not-for-profit religious organization granted tax-exempt status by Canada Revenue Agency. Central pays no income tax on donations received or on any money earned through fundraising. All income is returned to Central if extra funds beyond budget needs are generated.

The Board, through its Finance Team, has general oversight of the finances of the Congregation, including

- a) fundraising;
- b) disbursement of funds; and
- c) the annual budget approved by the Congregation.

It may also authorize borrowing funds for the Community of Faith.

#### Pastoral Relations Matters

The Board deals with pastoral relations matters as directed by the Congregation.

#### Proposals

The Board receives, makes decisions on, and transmits proposals to the Regional Council.

#### Recommending Members for Ministry Leadership

The Board recommends suitable members for consideration by the appropriate body as

- a) licensed lay worship leaders;
- b) sacraments elders; and
- c) candidates for ministry.

#### Property Matters

The Board gives orders and directions to the Trustees on property matters.

#### Representing the Community of Faith to Regional Council

The Board represents the Congregation when the Congregation has authorized it to communicate with the Regional Council about:

- a) the pastoral relationship; or
- b) the amalgamation, realignment, re-forming, or disbanding of the Congregation.

#### Reporting

The Board reports to the Congregation at least annually on

- a) the life and work of the Community of Faith; and
- b) the Community of Faith's financial situation, with details of all income, expenses, assets and liabilities.

#### Records

The Board is responsible for maintaining and keeping safe the following records:

- a) the historic membership roll of the Congregation;
- b) the register of baptisms, marriages, and burials; and
- c) approved meeting minutes and reports received at Board meetings.



### Sharing Reports of the Regional or Denominational Council

The Board must share with the Community of Faith reports and policy directives, for action, issued by the Regional Council and the Denominational Council.

### Completing Statistical Forms

The Board must complete the Annual Community of Faith Statistical and Information forms, returning them, either electronically or in written format, to the Denominational Council by the date prescribed.

## **Meetings of the Board**

The Board must meet on at least a quarterly basis.

Board meetings must be called by the Chair or by a member of the Order of Ministry. The person who calls the meeting is responsible for giving advance notice of the meeting, including the purpose of the meeting.

Quorum – A Board meeting may take place or continue only if at least one-half of its members are present. Corresponding members are not counted for this purpose.

In order for a Board meeting to take place, a member of the Order of Ministry who has been called or appointed by the Congregation or a member of the Order of Ministry who has been appointed by the Regional Council as the Community of Faith Supervisor must be present.

The Board may set procedures for conducting its meetings. In the absence of such procedures, the Board may use *The Manual* and *Bourinot's Rules of Order* as guidelines.

## **Committee and Teams**

The Congregation and its Board fulfill their responsibilities with the assistance of duly appointed committees, teams, task groups, steering groups and any other cluster of lay people or Order of Ministry personnel named by the Board.

The only committee deemed mandatory is the Ministry and Personnel Committee. Its responsibilities are described in *Bylaws B. Community of Faith, Section B.7.8.5 of The Manual*.

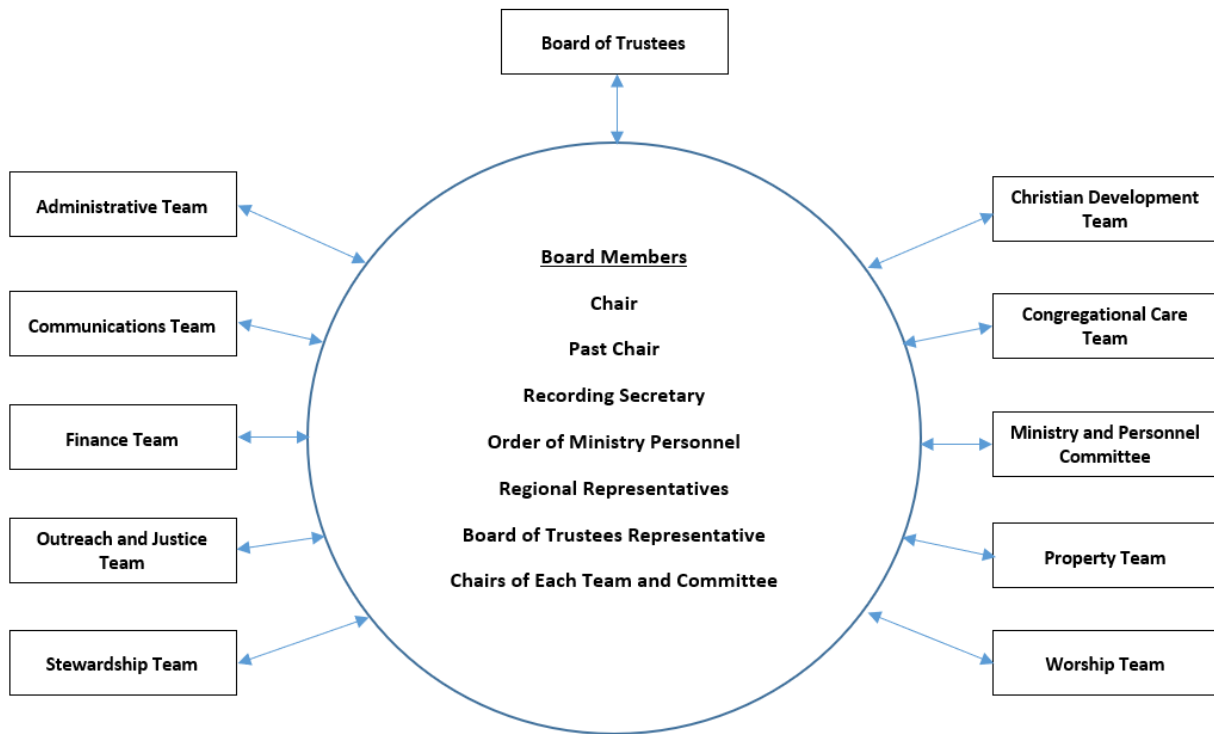
Also noted are three other areas of work which must be undertaken by the Board:

- a) Christian education – meeting the faith formation and Christian education needs of the Congregation.
- b) Stewardship
  - educating the Congregation on the mission of the United Church, both locally and in the wider church;
  - educating the Congregation on the funds needed for this mission and how they will be used;
  - encouraging commitment and participation from the Congregation in this mission; and
  - regularly reviewing the balance of funds given for local purposes and funds given for the Mission and Service fund.

- c) Nominations – recommending people who are eligible, suitable and willing to serve in positions deemed necessary by the Congregation and its Board to fulfill its vision, mission and values.

## Governance Structure

The following diagram illustrates Central’s governance model, showing the Board organization in the centre circle and all the supporting teams and committee surrounding it:



### ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

The Administrative Team will promote operational efficiency, consistency and effectiveness by acting as a repository and manager of information at Central. It will function as the glue between all sectors of the church striving to ensure structure, order and accountability in all things administrative, reducing risk and duplication.

### CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT TEAM

The Christian Development Team is responsible for providing leadership, direction, encouragement and oversight for all Christian education programs conducted by Central. It is devoted to the Christian nurture, discipleship and development of faith in all who call Central their faith home.

## COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

The Communications Team is tasked with sharing, through a multiplicity of channels and media platforms, the essence of who we are as a faith community and the work to which we have been called in God's name. Communication is an essential part of our work as a faith community; the vehicle by which we share the "good news" of God's love for the world. There are any number of communication channels that can be used to share our faith and ministry, but we are called, at all times, to a high standard of ethical conduct in the use of those channels and media platforms. Copyright infringement is subject to severe fines and consequences for a Community of Faith and must be upheld as rigorously as possible.

## CONGREGATIONAL CARE TEAM

Congregational Care offers compassionate concern, assistance, support, nurture and prayer to Central's Congregation and the community at large. The Team is responsible for oversight of all pastoral care offered by Central and works in collaboration with the Minister. The work of the Team involves connecting with people in the Congregation who are in crisis and offering support, informing the Minister of any special needs that are expressed by people in the pews, and embracing all who are in need of our healing love. The Team also celebrates, in a multitude of ways, with those who call Central home.

## FINANCE TEAM

The Finance Team of Central performs functions that are crucial in the stewardship of the financial resources entrusted to Central by its members, adherents and rental groups. The Team is key to enabling Central to carry out its mission and plays an important role in ensuring Central's compliance with government legislation and with policies of The United Church of Canada. *Bylaws G. Congregational Life, Section G.4 of The Manual* details responsibilities associated with Finance.

## MINISTRY AND PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

The Ministry and Personnel Committee is the only mandated committee of The United Church of Canada. It is tasked with assisting all Central's staff members, including the Minister of the Community of Faith, in their work. The Committee is involved with coordinating the hiring of non-ministerial staff and is responsible for human-resources related issues for all Central staff, as well as the administrative work that accompanies their employment. The Committee's goal is to create a safe, productive and enjoyable work environment that enables staff members to serve Central to their fullest potential. They facilitate communication to promote stronger working relationships among the staff, the Minister, the Board and the Congregation.

Calling a new Minister remains the responsibility of the Board and the Community of Faith, working in collaboration with the Office of Vocations of the Regional Council.

## OUTREACH AND JUSTICE TEAM

The Team for Outreach and Justice at Central helps the Congregation respond to the call to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world. The Team focuses on local, national and international projects and initiatives which address matters of social justice. It also focuses on issues surrounding addictions and their impact on the lives of the addicted and their families. Central operates on the “Imago Dei” principle, proclaiming that all people are made in the image of God and worthy of love.

## PROPERTY TEAM

The Property Team is tasked with all maintenance and upgrade work related to the operation of the church. The Team is responsible for ensuring the church property is safe, in good repair and able to accommodate the requirements of the faith community and its user groups.

## STEWARDSHIP TEAM

The Stewardship Team encourages people of the Congregation to contribute financially to the ministry of the church, as well as offering their time and personal abilities in service to God. The Team invites the Congregation to thoughtfully reflect and act upon the meaning of stewardship and the personal gifts one has to offer. The Team also reminds the Congregation to act responsibly when using the earth’s resources.

## WORSHIP TEAM

The Worship Team is responsible for providing deeply spiritual, scripturally centred, vibrant and relevant worship experiences that include the whole people of God. Through scripture, prayer, the Sacraments, and music, the community of Central is invited into a deeper relationship with God, lived through the ministry of Jesus Christ.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Trustees of Central are legally appointed by the Congregation. All Congregational property is held by Central’s Trustees. This includes land, buildings, funds, investments and any other kind of property. Based on the Model Trust Deed, which was part of *The United Church of Canada Act*, the Trustees hold the Congregational property, in trust, for The United Church of Canada. The Board of Trustees is a consultative body providing support to the Board.

With respect to buying, selling, leasing and renovating Central’s property, the Board of Trustees must give written permission for anything like this to be done. Central then must cooperate with the Regional Council, within denominational guidelines, and the Regional Council must cooperate with Central in this regard and in the distribution of any proceeds within denominational guidelines.

## **Organizations and Groups**

All organizations and user groups operating within the Congregation are accountable to the Congregation through its duly appointed Board. Oversight of these organizations and groups is carried out by the Property Team on behalf of the Board.

## **GENERAL**

The Central Community of Faith adheres to the following Behavioural Covenant that embraces Holy Manners.

### **BEHAVIOURAL COVENANT**

*As the people of God, then, the holy people whom God loves,  
you are to be clothed in heartfelt compassion,  
in generosity and humility, gentleness and patience.  
Bear with one another; forgive each other.*

*Colossians 3:12 and 13 (NRSV)*

This document reflects our core belief that our God is a good God, loving all of creation and loving each one of us as part of that creation. We are created in love and are called by God to love one another.

At the instruction of God, we are to clothe ourselves in compassion, generosity of heart, humility, gentleness and patience, bearing the burdens of each other and forgiving each other in times of hurt and conflict. With this in mind, the congregation of Central United Church (Central) commits itself to the following **Behavioural Covenant** which will govern our interactions in the congregation; on the Board; with our paid, accountable staff, including ministry personnel, salaried staff and contract staff; with our Celebrate Life Recovery ministry; with our volunteers and in all aspects of our shared life as a community of faith.

### **SPIRITUAL PRACTICE**

In all of our interactions in the church, we will remind ourselves that we are the people of God. When we gather for meetings, congregational functions, worship services and any other gatherings related to the ministry of Central, prayer, meditation or some other form of Christian spiritual practice will be included in our gathering time.

### **RESPECTFUL LISTENING AND SPEAKING**

We value the warmth and concern for others that is expressed in our community life at Central. In affirming that value, we will treat each other with respect and dignity, listening carefully to one another, responding with care and attention, knowing that wisdom comes to us through mutual respect and a determination to fully understand the perspectives of each other. We will refrain from personal, judgemental comments about others, seeking always to honour the Godliness in each person, respecting where each person is at in the journey of their life. However, we will not be reticent about naming inappropriate behaviour when it occurs, including gossip and triangulation, recognizing that grace, mercy and love must guide our actions.

We will seek to communicate with each other directly and respectfully. We will respect boundaries that we have set for ourselves, and boundaries set by those with whom we are interacting.

This document recognizes there are many ways in which human beings interact and communicate with one another, including direct conversation, body language and gestures, written and digital communication methods that may include e-mails, Facebook, Twitter, Messenger and other social media platforms.

We also recognize that in all human interactions, messages are sent and messages are received. In this document, we stress that it is important for there to be reciprocal agreements in place to govern our interactions with one another; in other words, if a message is sent that is not welcome, the person receiving the message should indicate that such is the case, so that awareness is raised and, ultimately, all are able to participate comfortably in the life of the community.

We also reiterate in this document that unsigned or anonymous correspondence, letters, e-mails or social media correspondence will not warrant any effort at a response. If such communication contains threats to the personal safety of persons or the property of Central, appropriate action will be taken to immediately address the threat.

### **EMBRACING DIVERSITY**

We will honour diversity, as well as the breadth, depth and uniqueness of each person's perspective and life journey. We will create a space where it is safe to express opinions and ask questions, without an atmosphere of judgement or disapproval. We will create an environment where openness and transparency are considered normative for our work together. We recognize that all of us are vulnerable at times, with some more vulnerable than others, and have written Duty of Care Policy and Procedures to minimize power differentials that may exist in our faith community.

We also recognize the uniqueness of our Celebrate Life Recovery gathering and the gifts such a ministry brings. This ministry deepens our awareness of the vulnerability of the people who come to us in their recovery, compelling us to provide protection for them as part of our behavioural covenant.

### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

We acknowledge that conflict is a normal part of human relationships and organizations. We will resolve conflict guided by Matthew 18:15-17a

*If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church ...*

The conflict resolution model used for this document is also based on *The Dispute Resolution Handbook (October 2016) of The United Church of Canada*.

- a) In any conflict situation, all parties involved are encouraged to be open to change and deeper learning.

- b) When long term, unheard and unresolved conflicts are revealed, we will make every effort to deal with them in a timely and loving manner, invoking the conflict resolution protocols outlined in this document, but only if no further harm is done.
- c) We will engage directly with the individuals involved in a conflict situation.
- d) Every effort will be made to resolve concerns, disagreements or conflicts openly and transparently unless confidentiality is required to ensure the safety of the individuals involved.
- e) We acknowledge the potential for hurt and pain when conflict arises and commit to dealing with such situations in a timely and appropriate manner.
- f) We will not hesitate to access conflict resolution resources to deal with a conflict situation that is beyond our ability to resolve.
- g) We recognize that in some situations the nature of the conflict requires the intervention of legal authorities such as the police or courts of justice (e.g. child abuse, inappropriate sexual conduct). We will not hesitate to access these authorities and the wider courts of the United Church of Canada to assist in resolving such conflicts.
- h) We will accept responsibility for the work and decisions undertaken by our faith community at Central. We will support these decisions with grace and will not undermine or find fault with others when we are not in agreement with the outcome.
- i) We will direct our feedback to the appropriate person or decision-making group. We will offer forgiveness to one another when mistakes are made and feelings are hurt, recognizing forgiveness is often a long and difficult journey. We recognize forgiveness is sometimes unattainable and ultimately left in the hands of God.
- j) We will pray for one another and with one another as we seek to resolve conflicts.
- k) We will believe the best in each other and seek to conduct ourselves with humility and grace in all of our interactions with each other.
- l) We will communicate decisions directly, openly and in a timely manner to those most directly impacted by the conflict to ensure accountability and lessen conflict.
- m) When conflict cannot be resolved at the moment or in the situation from which it arises, we will set an agreed upon time to deal with the conflict, thereby lessening the possibility for increased conflict with a prolonged passage of time until resolution.
- n) If paid, accountable staff members are involved in an unresolved conflict situation with each other or the congregation, it may be brought to the M&P Committee who, in turn, have the authority to bring the conflict to the Board or the wider courts of the church, as deemed necessary.
- o) Conflict situations that arise between congregational members that are unresolved may be brought to the Minister(s) of the pastoral charge who has access to wider resources for resolving conflict.



## **EXPRESSIONS OF APPRECIATION**

We recognize that our work as a community of faith is often difficult and demanding. We will, therefore, express our appreciation to one another, in concrete and specific ways. We will speak words of love and thankfulness to one another for our shared life and the work we carry out in the name of Jesus Christ.

## **COMPLIANCE WITH THE BEHAVIOURAL COVENANT**

To ensure compliance with the covenant thus established, we will conclude each meeting or gathering with a “check in” time to review the Behavioural Covenant. We will offer mutual agreement when the covenant has been upheld. We will name those places where we have contravened, whether consciously or with unintended actions, the intentions of this covenant. If persons are non-compliant with the articles of this covenant, we will invite them to make amends. If non-compliance continues, we will use the conflict resolution process outlined above to resolve difficulties.

This document is a living document and can be changed or revised with the approval of the Board.

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## **APPENDIX: HOLY MANNERS**

The phrase “Holy Manners” comes from *Behavioural Covenants in Congregations: A Handbook for Honouring Differences* by Gil Rendle. (An Alban Institute Publication, 1998)

Holy Manners are promises we make to each other that embrace shared expectations of the Christian behaviour we strive to offer each other. Practicing Holy Manners creates safety within the faith community. We are more likely to experience healthy relationships within the faith community and are better able to create or renew meaningful friendships.

As children of God, we strive to make the following Holy Manners a reality as God continues to fill us with love, recognizing as human beings there will be times when we fail to live up to our covenant promises. It is then that learning to forgive one another, even as we ask God to forgive us, is part of our commitment to Holy Manners.

In our shared life as a faith community, we recognize some among us are more vulnerable than others and that there are power differentials within a faith community. We have developed Duty of Care Policy and Procedures to deal with such power differentials.

We promise, to the best of our ability:

- To **love** one another, as God has loved us.
- To **respect** one another. Harassment in any form including but not limited to verbal, physical, emotional, spiritual or sexual abuse will not be tolerated.
- To use “**I Statements**” that share our personal thoughts and discourage anonymous complaints.
- To “**step back**” in the midst of difficult issues to allow an opportunity for prayer and reflection.
- To **value** different ideas and opinions.
- To **manage** conflict in such a manner that there are no winners and losers but respected participants.
- To practise **forgiveness** in our interactions with each other.
- To demonstrate **patience** in every situation.
- To show **compassion** and **kindness** to everyone in need, recognizing that each one of us carries an inner life that is sometimes fragile, requiring care.
- To demonstrate **sensitivity** to another person’s circumstances.

*Ratified by the Board of Central United Church March 25, 2018*

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The Central Community of Faith is also governed by its Duty of Care Policy and Procedures as well as numerous policy documents.

