

Our Life Together

The Northern Illinois Conference of The United Methodist Church

"Therefore, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort in love, any sharing in the Spirit, any sympathy, complete my joy by thinking the same way, having the same love, being united, and agreeing with each other. Don't do anything for selfish purposes, but with humility think of others as better than yourselves. Instead of each person watching out for their own good, watch out for what is better for others. Adopt the attitude that was in Christ Jesus. . . " *Philippians 2: 1-5 CDB*

We recognize and affirm the covenantal relationship we have with each other as ministers in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference and the obligations we have to God, the people we serve, to the world at large and to each other to exemplify and maintain the highest standards of Christian conduct. Within that covenant, we agree that each of us shall:

- Maintain spiritual intellectual, physical and emotional fitness through holy, healthy habits
- Diligently care for our souls and minds through Biblical study and educational opportunities
- Care for our physical wellbeing through a balance of work and time off; including vacation, and renewal
- Maintain the highest moral stand in speech and conduct
- Keep faith with loved ones, giving to them the time and attention needed for healthy relationships
- Take care that manners, attire and grooming do not detract from ministry effectiveness
- Stand beyond reproach in personal business and the stewardship of the resources of the Charge
- Imitate Christ in attitude and conduct toward all people – not setting aside convictions to win popular favor; impartially considering the needs of all people
- Set and maintain appropriate boundaries with all congregants and colleagues so that issues of impropriety, favoritism and sexual misconduct are not called into question
- Maintain a healthy emotional and social balance and maintain boundaries between pastoral identity and self-identity, private and community life, self and others
- Separate our ministerial role from our personal lives by not dating those directly served by our ministry
- Maintain a lifestyle that assures the parsonage is kept in presentable condition
- Preach and teach with integrity – give credit for the ideas and words of others
- Maintain the highest standards regarding the use of technology, strictly avoiding even the perception of inappropriate use of the internet at work or at home, and understanding that email messages are not private and should not be treated as such.

And a MINISTER under appointment to a *parish* will:

- Perform the "Responsibilities and Duties of Elders and Licensed Pastors" as described in ¶340 or "the Ministry of a Deacon" as described in ¶328 in **The 2012 United Methodist Book of Discipline**
- honor the confidentiality of all persons, unless otherwise required by law to reveal information
- advise and refer persons to other clergy or other professionals (lawyers, doctors, counselors, etc.) when appropriate; be aware that our judgment can be impaired by prior dealings, by becoming personally involved, or by becoming an advocate for one party against another
- adequately share the ministry with other professional or lay persons assigned or employed to do so, seeking just compensation for lay persons, including vacation time and continuing education

- nurture loyalty and trust among paid staff and volunteers
- seek no gifts, bequests or material benefits for self or family members from any organization or individual
- affirm that “Full-Time Service” means the pastor is not substantially supported through non-pastoral work
- be open to pastoral service in the community of the charge as opportunity provides in ways that grow the presence and spirit of Jesus Christ
- upon leaving an appointment, have the parsonage clean and presentable for the following pastor and family, accepting financial responsibility for damage to the parsonage beyond normal wear and tear
- upon leaving an appointment, have all records and membership lists current and well organized
- upon leaving an appointment, including retirement, sever pastoral relationships with the parish, recognizing that all future weddings, baptisms, communions, counseling, visitation and funerals should be performed by the newly appointed pastor. With special attention to electronic relationships and the need to disengage.
- welcome a regular evaluation of your effectiveness, being responsive to constructive feedback and humbly committed to improvements

And, in relationship with other *ministers and churches*, will:

- live within the covenant community of the United Methodist Church and the Annual Conference in ways that respect, encourage and strengthen polity, mission and program fairly and appropriately guiding its members toward holiness of heart and life
- Endorse programs, agencies, and persons that perform duties compatible with the UM Book of Discipline and within the United Methodist “Social Creed”
- Promote United Methodist curriculum as basic to the educational program of the church
- Make no disparaging remarks about previous pastors, new pastors or colleagues, including demonstrating respect for our differing theological perspectives
- Upon retirement, provide loyal support to pastors
- Treat with high regard and respect clergy and religious leaders of other churches, denominations and faiths

(The term “minister” in this document shall include all those who maintain status of Full Member (Elder and Deacon), Provisional member, Associate Member, Local Pastor, Diaconal, Ministerial Candidate, and others who are accountable to the Bishop and the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry.)

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(Adapted from the Louisiana, West Ohio and Iowa Conference covenants as well as Bishop Sally Dyck’s reflections at the Clergy Session, 2013.)