

Covenants of First Parish, Unitarian Universalist and preceding forms of the church.

Assembled by Jan Hardenbergh, 2024-10-25

The 1640 covenant was used when the church first gathers in the Puritan Village.

The 1724 covenant was used when the West Side Precinct began meeting

The 1817 covenant was used by Rufus Hurlburt.

The 1965 covenant was used by Carl Scoville

The 2001 covenant was created with the restatement of the mission statement.

The church was gathered in 1640, two years after the Puritans arrived in Sudbury.

The Sudbury Church Covenant, 1640

We whose names are subscribed, though the least of all Saints, and most unworthy of Sacred fellowship as persons apart or as a body joyned together for our weakness in the faith deserving the Lord, upbraiding for our shortness yea unfaithfulness unto him, which we desire here to Lament and bewail with Sighs and groans unexpressible, yet upon Consideration of our God's command to us to gather into a church estate and of the Love of the Lord Christ in provision of his fatlings killed and wine mingled for the repast of his lost gathered and lastly of our great need of those gracious administrations, do here being by providence and consent coadjoined together into a body in all humility and faith unfeigned covenant and oblige to give up our selves a body to walk honestly as in the day, in all the way, of the Lord Jesus that either now are shall be revealed unto us out of his Sacred Canon in rule, more especially we do here take the Lord Jesus Christ to be our king, Priest and Prophet, as to us apart so to us united, our Priests to present our king to rule and our prophet to teach us in our service of Church Communion and Christianity a [] to and before God. And lastly because the Lord Christ had made us kings and Priests yea Prophets unto God we further covenant during the Lord's good pleasure held forth in his word to improve these our offices in all humility and Love, for the Edification and help of the whole and every part and member that now are or hereafter shall be added unto us, that is to say, our Priesthood in praying together and apart. Secondly, in a merciful doing for the relief of the whole and every member, our Prophetical office in finding out of sin by Christian watchfulness, and improving faithfully, meekly, prudently and tenderly all sin whether in the church [or] in any member. Secondly in searching into and holding forth the whole truth of Christ revealed for our direction universal or special, in admission of other saints in finding out fit men amongst us for office or administrations. Lastly our kingship in suppressing of sin found out by due executed censure. Secondly in supporting of all purity and holiness in administration and conversation. Thirdly in careful electing and ordaining of able officers for doctrine and rule. Fourthly, for setting up of all services for public and private communion. Lastly in a just and free communicating of our worldly wealth according to the rule of Christ to officers and fellow members, all which we seriously resolve to perform in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

West Precinct Covenant 1724

A Holy Covenant,
Entered into, and Renewed with GOD, by the Church of CHRIST in the West Precinct in
Sudbury, March 18th, 1724/5,

WE, who thro' the exceeding Riches of the Grace & Patience of GOD, do Continue to be a Church of Christ, being now assembled in the holy Presence of GOD, in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, after humbly Confession of our manifold Breaches of the Covenant, before the Lord our GOD earnest Supplication of Pardoning Mercy, thro' the blood of Christ, and Deep acknowledgement of our great Unworthiness to be own'd to be the Lord's Covenant-People ; also acknowledging our own inability to keep Covenant with GOD, or to perform any Spiritual duty, unless the Lord Jesus do enable us thereto by His Spirit Dwelling in us; And being awfully sensible that it is a Dreadful thing for sinful dust & ashes personally to transact with the infinitely glorious Majesty of Heaven & Earth; We do in humble Confidence of His gracious alliance @ acceptance thro Christ, each one of us for our selves, & joyntly as a Church, Solemnly enter into Covenant with GOD, and one with another according to GOD, in manner following, i. e.

WE do give up our Selves to that GOD, whose Name alone is JEHOVAH, FATHER, SON, and HOLL GHOST, the only true & living GOD, and to our blessed Lord JESUS CHRIST, as our only blessed Saviour, Prophet, Priest, and King over our Souls, and only Mediator of the Covenant of Grace, Promising (by the help of His Spirit & Grace) to cleave unto GOD, as our Chief Good, and to the Lord JESUS CHRIST, by Faith & Gospel-Obedience, as becometh His Covenant People for ever. We do also give up our Off-spring unto GOD in JESUS CHRIST, avouching the Lord to be our GOD, and the GOD of our Children, and our Selves with our Children to be His People ; humbly adoring the Grace of GOD, that We and our Offspring with us may be looked upon to be the LORD's.

WE do, also, give up our Selves One to anther in the LORD, and according to the will of GOD, freely Covenanting and binding our Selves to walk together as a right ordered Congregation & Church of CHRIST, in all the ways of His Worship, to the holy Rules of the Word of GOD; Promising in Brotherly Love to Watch over one anothers Souls faithfully, and to submit our Selves unto the Discipline and Government of CHRIST in His Church Obeying them that Rule over us in the LORD, and Duly to attend all those Ordinances, which CHRIST hath Instituted in His Church, and Commanded to be attended by His People, as to give Reverent Attention unto the Word of GOD, to Pray unto Him, to Sing His Praises, and to hold Communion each with other in both the Seals of the Covenant of Grace, Namely, Baptism, and the Lords-Supper.

AND whereas the Times in which we live are Times of sad Degeneracy & Apostasy, wherein the Love of many waxes cold, and sin & Iniquity abounds; as an Expedient to Reformation, we do freely engage and promise, as in the presence of GOD;

First, THAT we will (CHRIST-helping) endeavour every One of us to Reform our Heart & Life, by seeking to Mortifie all our Sins, and Labouring to walk more closely with GOD, than ever yet we have done; and will continue to Worship GOD in Public, Private, Secret, and this without Formality & Hypocrisy: and more fully & faithfully than heretofore. to discharge all Covenant-duties, one to another in Church-Communion.

Secondly, TO Walk before GOD in our Houses with a perfect-heart, and that we will Uphold the Worship of GOD therein Continually, according as He in His Word doth require; both in respect of Prayer and Reading the Scriptures, that of the Word of GOD may Dwell richly in us: and we will do what in us lies to bring up our Children for CHRIST, that they (having the LORD's Name

put upon 'em by a solemn Dedication to GOD in CHRIST) may be such as they ought to be and will therefore (as need fall be) Catechise, Exhort, and Charge them to Fear the LORD, and endeavour to set an holy Example before them, and be much in Prayer for their Conversion and Salvation.

Thirdly, TO Endeavour to be pure from the Sins of the Times, and in our Places to Endeavour the Suppression thereof, and to be Careful so to walk, as that we may not give occasion to others to Sin, or speak evil of our holy Profession.

NOW that we may observe & keep the Sacred Covenant and all the Branches of it inviolable for ever, we desire to deny our Selves and to depend wholly upon the Power of the Eternal SPIRIT of Grace, and on the free Mercy of GOD, and Merit of CHRIST JESUS: and where we shall fail, there to wait upon the LORD JESUS for Pardon, Acceptance, and Healing for His Name's sake.

Dear Friends,

Such, as are not great Strangers at home, can't but be sensible of the Treachery & Slipperiness of our Hearts, how apt they are to start aside from GOD like a deceitful bow, and to lose the sense of those things which ought continually to influence & govern us: Wherefore what you have so lately transacted, is in this way put into your Hands, to keep you under a standing, lively sense of your solemn & renewed Obligations to be the LORD's, and to lead a holy and divine Life before Him; to fortifie you against Temptations; to be a constant Fence, and Spur, and Monitor to you. May GOD build you up, and give you an Inheritance among all them that are Sanctified.

THE COVENANT (ca. 1817)

Which the present Pastor infuse at his Ordination, and which he has continued to use, is as follows:

You do, each of you, in an everlasting covenant give up yourselves to God in Jesus Christ. You humbly and penitently ask of God the pardon of all your sins; solemnly promising that by the assistance of the Divine Spirit, you will forsake the vanities of this evil world, and will henceforth study to approve yourselves the true disciples of Jesus Christ. And in particular you promise that you will walk in communion with the church of Christ in this place so long as you shall dwell among us, and that you will conduct towards your fellow members here, according to the rules of the gospel; and that you will strive to behave in all respects agreeably to what you do or shall know to be your duty.

Do you heartily consent to, and promise this?

I then, in the name of the Church, declare you to be members in full communion with the church of Christ in this place; and, in the name of the church, promise that by the help of the Holy Spirit, we will conduct towards you as members of the same body with ourselves; watching over you at all times for your good, with the spirit of meekness and love; earnestly praying that the Lord would delight to dwell among us, that his blessing may rest upon us, and that his glorious kingdom may be advanced by us. Amen,

Covenant ca. 1965

As members of a free church, we join together to worship God in unity and in the light of our own consciences, to seek a deeper meaning for our lives, to test our thoughts and actions by the example of Jesus, and in his spirit to serve our fellow man.

2001 Covenant

We, the people of First Parish of Sudbury, pledge that we will come together with open minds and open hearts, always seeking to learn, to share, to respect and forgive, and to help each other grow towards our best selves.

One community, first and foremost, compassionate, respectful, and generous, we pledge to listen to each other, express our views openly, handle disagreement with honesty, humility, and humor, and nurture our sense of belonging together.

We pledge to participate in the work of the congregation to the best of our abilities, to practice and encourage leadership, and to support our ministry materially, emotionally, and spiritually.
