

Upper New York Annual Conference

Our Clergy Covenant

We have a sacred calling as United Methodist clergy. Together we share in a covenant relationship in a community of clergy (active and retired Elders, Deacons, Associate Members, Provisional Members, Local Pastors). This covenant is to be marked by respect, honesty and integrity in all interactions with our colleagues.

As a covenant community we are to be held accountable to one another for our conduct. We constantly seek to move onward toward perfection in our conduct as clergy. In order to help us to that end, we seek the guidance and wisdom of the covenant community of clergy to hold us accountable to the highest ethical standards in all of our ministry settings.

When we fail to uphold one another to the highest ethical standards we damage the relationships among clergy. We lose trust in one another and we damage, sometimes irreparably, the trusting relationship with those we serve. As clergy, the greatest gift we are granted is the trust of those whom we serve. What follows below is a Covenant for all professionals in ministry. This covenant provides a common understanding and agreement of clergy conduct to which clergy hold one another accountable.

United Methodist clergy under appointment:

- Develop through continued education, maintenance of personal growth and competence for ministry.
- Maintain proper physical care and discipline.
- Keep time commitments faithfully and use time responsibly, acknowledging that ministry cannot fit into conventional time slots.
- Follow high moral standards in all forms of communication including social media and conduct, including:
 - keeping confidences
 - communicating honestly and appropriately.
- Are above reproach in all financial transactions. Remain sufficiently free from unnecessary financial debt, accepting financial responsibility as not to burden one's congregation or the Annual Conference. Will not leave a community to accept a new appointment without arranging for payment of local financial obligations.
- Maintain a healthy emotional and social balance and boundaries between pastoral identity and self-identity; private and community life; self and other.
- Provide for the care of family and spouse and, as a parsonage family, addresses their needs and concerns through appropriate lines of communication.
- Will leave church and parsonage in good condition, accepting financial responsibilities for damage done to parsonage beyond normal wear and tear or age.

Each United Methodist clergy person, in performing professional responsibilities:

- Is spiritual leader to all members and constituents of the ministry setting.
- Is open to serve in the community of the charge recognizing that appointment is to the church and the community. Offers pastoral care to those in need in the community who are not under the care of another clergy person.
- Represents the itinerant and connectional process honestly and justly, taking responsibility for personal decisions in appointment changes.
- Is above reproach in pastoral performance of responsibilities and duties outlined in ¶328, 340, 341 - 2012 *Book of Discipline* of The United Methodist church.
- Maintains confidentiality in all situations that require confidences be upheld including:
 - counseling and pastoral care situations,
 - personnel matters within the ministry setting
 - personnel and appointment matters in the Annual Conference
 - a clergy person's responsibilities in the Annual Conference, such as Board of Ministry, budgeting processes, etc.
- As appropriate to one's Order, accepts appointment and is willing to be itinerant, faithfully performing duties.
- Does not accept employment beyond the full-time appointed charge, except with the consent of the cabinet and the local church staff-parish relations committee.
- In writing and preaching, gives appropriate credit for words or ideas drawn from another source.
- Maintains connectional responsibilities which include providing updated records for the next clergy person and seeing that ministry shares are current.
- Prepares the ministry setting for change of clergy.
- Refrains from pastoral contact in previous appointments.
- Respects the ministry setting of another clergy. Provides service only at that clergy's invitation. All inquiries are referred to the resident clergy.
- Seeks to uphold, enhance and support the work of another professional in ministry and in no way undermines his or her efforts to serve.
- Acts with integrity in all matters in reference to one's predecessor and one's successor.
- Does not violate the sacred trust between clergy/parishioner or those in pastoral care by seeking sexual, social or business favors at any time.
- Refrains from all sexual involvement with those who have sought and/or received pastoral or spiritual counseling at any time and their family members.

*Adapted from Code of Ethics of the Iowa Annual Conference. **Adopted by UNYAC Board of Ordained Ministry, January 27, 2014.***