



COMMON STREET SPIRITUAL CENTER

RELATIONAL COVENANT

Introduction: *These commitments are promises we make to each other as a love-centered community. They are not a legal code, but an expression of who we hope to be as part of a living, growing community. Our hope is that they can be a starting point for rich conversations about our life together.*

1. ASPIRATIONS AND COMMITMENTS

Building a Diverse Community

We Commit:

...to honor the Light in all and welcome members of any race, economic status, gender, age, sexual orientation or gender identity, marital status, ethnicity, nationality, handicap, or beliefs.

...to welcoming children and youth, their voices and experiences.

...to encouraging participation in multiple ways, including through art & music.

...to learning one another's stories, identities, beliefs and perspectives; honoring those in how we relate with one another.

...to accepting one another for who we are (on a journey together).

Strengthening a Loving Community

We Commit:

...to loving and supporting one another.

...to listening to one another with openness even when we may disagree.

...to cultivating a habit of noticing, recognizing, questioning and (usually) disregarding judgments and assumptions about one another when they occur.

...to honoring confidentiality and building trust.

Taking Responsibility for Growing Community

We Commit:

...to naming and nurturing the gifts in others, for the benefit and growth of the community.

...to developing our own gifts for the benefit and growth of the community.

...to participating in the life of the community through committee service, volunteering, and other organizational support.

...to supporting community stability through regular gifts of money or time.

...to creating safe space for all people, especially those who are poor, marginalized, vulnerable, and/or oppressed.

...to making room at the table for unique perspectives, experiences, hopes, needs, talents, and aspirations of our members.

... to resolving conflicts in peaceful, non-violent, and creative ways and to seeking reconciliation when this peace is disturbed.

2. PRACTICES

Peace Circles

As a threshing process in advance of major decisions, to raise awareness about topics of concern, and to resolve disagreements that involve many members of our community, we use the practice of the peace circle. CSSC has used this Native American tradition for some time to engage in conversations about racism.

We invite the whole community to gather in a circle and pass a talking piece around while each person speaks authentically from their own experience and the rest of the participants listen from the heart. As we speak and listen to one another in the peace circle we hope for greater understanding, wisdom, and a path forward to emerge. This practice honors our interconnectedness and highlights the value of the voice of each member of our community.

Home Circles

Each member of our community will be invited to join a home circle, co-facilitated by the members of the circle. Home circles ensure that each member of our community has a few close friends and allies to rely on and can experience a sense of belonging. These groups give each member a confidential space in which to share pieces of their life and spiritual journey. They also help meet needs for attention, love, and support. A home circle is a place to discern one's calling, connect to one's spiritual center, and find encouragement in manifesting what flows out of that spiritual connection.

Also, home circles serve a function within the self-governance of the Spiritual Center. Members will find support in these circles in terms of navigating the structures and decision-making processes of CSSC so that their voices can be heard and they can feel that they matter as members of our community.

Home circles are envisioned as 6-12 people. Participation would be voluntary but encouraged. The groups would be non-interest based, non-age-specific, and mixed-gender. They could meet at the spiritual center or in members' homes, and different groups would meet on different days/times to accommodate various different schedules.

Workshops and Skill-Building

Recognizing that these skills may need to be learned or reinforced, we commit to offering opportunities to practice non-violent communication, learn how to have difficult conversations, establish healthy boundaries, learn to handle a range of emotions, and to support and validate one another as we move towards creating community.

3. MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Members are encouraged to set personal goals based on this Community Covenant that answer the questions: "How will I stretch myself this year to

participate in community?" "What growing edges do I want to address in the coming year?" An opportunity to reflect on progress and to set new goals will be offered annually at the Celebration of Membership Day, a time of food, fellowship, music, and rejoicing.

4. CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND RECONCILIATION

In our community it is our intention to handle conflict creatively and constructively, rather than destructively. Our primary concern in conflict situations is to tend to the health of the relational web of our community, and especially to care for those who are most affected by the conflict. We invest in self-reflection and changing our behavior insofar as it is destructive to the relational web of our community. We recognize the importance of forgiveness in reweaving the fabric of community and in personal growth. As such, we provide avenues and opportunities to support reconciliation.

We acknowledge that conflict is normal and healthy, and that nearly all conflicts are resolvable, so long as there is willingness for those involved to engage in respectful and empathetic conversation that is oriented towards meeting the needs of all involved. In a safe and fair process, we seek to engage conflicts creatively and constructively, and find solutions that meet the needs of all parties and are mutually agreed upon without coercion of any kind.

Process:

1. The first approach in solving conflict is direct communication between persons who disagree or are in conflict.
2. If the issue is not fully resolved through direct communication, another member of the community (who is not involved in the conflict or disagreement) will serve as a mediator and facilitator to further communication.
 - a. Or, a mediator who is not part of the community may also be used.In all cases the mediator would be chosen by mutual consent.

- b. To support this, we will train staff and members in mediation techniques who would make themselves available for this purpose.
 - c. We will use a process of Non-violent Communication or a similar dialogue process to resolve conflict and seek creative solutions.
3. If mediation is not effective after 2 sessions, a new mediator may be chosen. Or:
4. If, after repeated attempts, mediated conversation does not work to resolve the conflict and achieve reconciliation, either person may appeal to the CSSC Council or a subcommittee thereof for help and support.

Safe Community Policy

In all cases where one member of the community sexually exploits, harasses, or in some other way abuses another member of the community, the matter will be immediately referred to the Response Team as per our Safe Community Policy, and will be handled in the manner described in that Policy. Any staff or council member is required to report any incident of harassment or abuse; the matter will be kept on a need to know basis and handled with discretion, but cannot be kept confidential.

During the early stages of dealing with abusive behavior the Response Team may, for the physical and emotional safety of the survivor, recommend the temporary suspension of the participation and/or membership of the person accused of engaging in abusive behavior. If reconciliation and a sense of trust and safety is restored, this temporary suspension would be lifted.

As stated in our bylaws, "The Community Council may drop from the rolls of the community any member whom inquiry shows to be destructive to the community and who, after good faith efforts at conflict resolution and reconciliation, is unwilling or unable to reform his or her behavior." This is a last resort in cases where our processes of conflict resolution and reconciliation are not able to restore safety or trust, or when the accused refuses to participate in such processes.

5. SACRED TEXT ROOT SOURCES

Leviticus 19:18: Love your neighbor as yourself.

John 15:12: This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you.

Matthew 7:1-5: Do not judge, so that you may not be judged. For with the judgment you make you will be judged, and the measure you give will be the measure you get. Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor's eye.

Matthew 7:12: In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets.

Matthew 18: 15-22: If another member of the community 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; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the community, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax-collector.

Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.

Then Peter came and said to him, 'Lord, if another member of the community sins against me, how often should I forgive? As many as seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times.'

Dhammapada Pairs: 1-6

Phenomena are preceded by the heart,
ruled by the heart, made of the heart.

If you speak or act with a corrupted heart, then suffering follows you—
as the wheel of the cart, the track of the ox that pulls it.

Phenomena are preceded by the heart,
ruled by the heart, made of the heart.

If you speak or act with a calm, bright heart, then happiness follows you,
like a shadow that never leaves.

'He insulted me, hit me, beat me, robbed me'
—for those who brood on this, hostility isn't stilled.
'He insulted me, hit me, beat me, robbed me'—
for those who don't brood on this, hostility is stilled.

Hostilities aren't stilled through hostility, regardless.
Hostilities are stilled through non-hostility: this, an unending truth.

Unlike those who don't realize that we're here on the verge of perishing,
those who do: their quarrels are stilled.

Sunan An-Nasa'i 4730

Anas ibn Malik reported:

"A man came to the Messenger of Allah, peace and blessings be upon him,
with the killer of his relative."

The Prophet said, "Pardon him." But the man refused.

The Prophet said, "Take the blood money." But the man refused.

The Prophet said: "Go and kill him, for you are like him." So the man let him go.

Mahatma Gandhi

“An eye for an eye will only make the whole world blind.”

Mother Teresa

“If we really want to love we must learn how to forgive.”

6. PROCESS FOR ADOPTION

Our staff and council have reviewed and refined this proposed Relational Covenant, and it has been public for several months. We plan to call a community meeting to vote on this covenant in the early fall of 2017. We are happy to receive further feedback or additions.

Assumptions: Members of Common Street Spiritual Center would be required to accept the basic terms and processes of our relational covenant. Therefore, upon its adoption, we would add the phrase “as described in our relational covenant” to the fourth mark of membership. So it would read: “(4) live out our values within and beyond our community, as described in our relational covenant.” Friends of Common Street Spiritual Center would not be required to formally adopt our relational covenant but would be expected and invited to live in accordance with its principles and practices.

