

**Networking/Partnership Covenant**  
**between**  
**The Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua**  
**and**  
**The First Unitarian Church of Rochester**

As adopted

**Preamble (Canandaigua UU)**

*The UUCC has much to offer those in the area who are seeking a liberal faith community. The UUCC began its life in 1993 as an independent congregation within the UUA and is proud of its history of supporting itself through the years. It has offered a part time ministerial position and has been fortunate to attract quality ministerial support, willing to serve the UUCC as well as other congregations in the area.*

*Like many other small congregations, it struggles to pay for the staff, programs, and building which would increase its attractiveness and visibility. Over the last three years the UUCC has entered a ministerial and staff sharing arrangement with the First Unitarian Church of Rochester. A partnership with First Unitarian provides economic efficiencies, allowing the UUCC to remain an independent entity, yet part of a larger faith community.*

*As the UUCC must make a decision this year about this church's ministerial leadership, we propose this sharing agreement as a possible option.*

**Preamble (First Unitarian)**

*Peter Morales, president of the UUA said, "Growth and sharing our faith is a moral obligation." The ministries and programming at First Unitarian are welcoming and very attractive to people hungering for liberal religion, and have led to continuing growth in membership. This growth has created unique challenges for our congregation and ministries. Growth requires additional staff to maintain excellent programming. Yet, economic challenges make it harder for our congregation to afford the level of staffing needed to support dynamic and dependable programming. The cost of fair pay for staff, rising health insurance costs, and rising energy and building maintenance costs make it more difficult for our church to devote funds needed for staff and programming.*

*So, our challenge is to find creative and economical strategies to staff for growth. We can do this by sharing some of our staff services with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua. This means reusing materials that have already been created, such as having our ministers deliver their sermons once at one church and then again at the other. The same can be done with our small group curriculum. Rather than pay two ministers to develop similar programs and material for two congregations, one minister can develop programs and material, and then use them at both congregations.*

*Partnerships between churches are thriving in a variety of ways in many denominations, including our own. A multisite church is proposed by First Church in Houston, and First Church in Albuquerque has satellite churches. A partnership between First Unitarian and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua would be yet another model for cooperation and sharing within our denomination-- a model that could be used by other congregations in our denomination to help share Unitarian Universalism with others*

*Thus, we propose a five year trial of a partnership between First Unitarian and the Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua as outlined in the Vision Statements and Operational Understandings detailed below.*

## **Vision**

1. We believe our congregations are called to **share our message of liberal religion** to the Rochester and Finger Lakes region. We believe that staff and resource sharing will enable us to fulfill this mission.
2. We believe that staff and resource sharing is **good stewardship**. It allows us to take advantage of economies of scale and use our members' financial contributions more effectively.
3. We believe that staff and resource sharing will increase our congregations' ability to **attract and retain high quality ministry**. By combining resources, our congregations can offer positions that are closer to full-time than either would be able to offer alone.
4. We believe that staff and resource sharing can be done in a way that **preserves each congregation's unique identity**. We believe that shared programming, organizational strategy and staff can be creatively adapted to each congregation's particular character, history and circumstances.

## **Operational Understandings**

1. Our congregations will retain **independent boards and budgets**. While we will look for "targeted" fundraising opportunities to support outside groups, we will maintain separate internal finances, including but not limited to operating budgets, endowments & capital budgets.
2. Our congregations will commit to **a 5 year relationship, beginning with the 2013-14 church year**. We do this recognizing that relationships and organizational systems take time to develop. Our congregations **may terminate** this 5 year relationship prior to the end of 5 years by a 3/4 vote of either congregation at an officially called congregational meeting, with the understanding that it is the intent of First Unitarian Church to reach the 75% threshold, even though our current bylaws require a majority vote.
3. Our boards will **annually assess the sharing relationship**. Church members will be given regular opportunity to share their feelings about the partnership and to know how other members are feeling about the partnership. The boards of both congregations will work with the Executive/Lead minister to address and act on this feedback. **During year four** of our relationship, our boards will hold Congregational meetings to **decide whether or not the partnership will continue** beyond the 5th year. These congregational votes will take place by February of that 4th year, so that each congregation has plenty of time and can use their annual budget drives to transition staff and organizational structures into a new way of being if the partnership is discontinued. If the congregations decide to continue the relationship, they will work together to determine the nature of that partnership at that time.
4. Our congregations will **commit to "policy governance"** during our 5 year partnership. This entails delegating managerial authority and oversight of all the "means" of all program ministries (worship, religious education, social justice, membership, adult spiritual development & pastoral care) to the partnership's single "Executive/Lead Minister." The Executive/Lead Minister will have the authority to **hire, supervise and fire any and all staff** that is employed to support the program ministries of each congregation. It is understood that the Executive/Lead Minister needs this authority to ensure and build a staff team that "straddles" and efficiently serves both congregations. The policy governance rule of **"reasonable interpretation"** will be applied to the staffing and programmatic decisions made by the Executive/Lead Minister. It is also understood that the

existing ministry mission statements of each congregation is will not be significantly altered during this 5-year partnership.

5. The Reverend Scott Tayler will be hired as the Executive/Lead Minister of this partnership.
  - a. Reverend Tayler will commit to **at least 1/4 time service at UUCC** during the five-year partnership period. He must give at least 6 months notice if he decides to terminate his employment prior to the end of the 5 year period. If Rev. Scott Tayler resigns, both congregations will have the **option of terminating this partnership covenant** with a simple majority vote of either congregation. At the end of 5-years, Rev. Tayler's employment will automatically end at UUCC, unless both congregations decide to continue the partnership. Rev. Tayler will continue his call indefinitely at 1st Unitarian.
  - b. UUCC will commit to at least a **1/4 time senior minister compensation package** for Rev. Tayler during the five-year partnership period. This compensation package will include salary and benefits and meet the "median" standards of existing UUA compensation guidelines.
  - c. In addition, UUCC will commit to **at least \$15,000 of funding for additional UUCC program staff** salary and benefits. This additional funding can be used by Rev. Tayler in a variety of ways over the five-year relationship, including a portion of it going to increase Rev. Tayler's time or all of it being used for staff to supplement Rev. Tayler's time. Rev. Tayler will not have the authority to terminate or alter the employment of UUCC Music Director, Bill Mehls.
  - d. Rev. Tayler may delegate any ministerial roles to supplemental staff at UUCC with the exception of **at least once a month preaching responsibilities**. This delegation of responsibility may involve another minister serving alongside Rev. Tayler as Senior Co-Minister of UUCC. Unlike other staffing configurations, this staffing configuration will require approval of the UUCC Board of Trustees.
  - e. First Unitarian will commit to at least a **3/4 time senior minister compensation package** for Rev. Tayler during the five-year partnership period. This compensation package will include salary and benefits and meet the "median" standards of existing UUA compensation guidelines.
  - f. In addition, 1st Unitarian will commit to **at least \$550,000 of funding for 1st Unitarian staff** (salary and benefits included) to be overseen by Rev. Tayler and Senior Co-Minister Kaaren Anderson.
  - g. During this five-year partnership, Rev. Tayler will be granted at least 6 months of sabbatical leave at 1st Unitarian. During that sabbatical leave, **UUCC will agree to relieve Rev. Tayler of all ministerial duties unpaid for at least 3 months** of that 1st Unitarian sabbatical leave. Rev. Tayler will **not be granted sabbatical benefits by UUCC** during this five-year partnership.
6. If they are able to financially support it, both congregations will be **open (although not committed) to expanding this partnership/network to a third congregation**, whether that be through the development of a 'satellite' congregation or the incorporation of a third existing congregation into the partnership.
7. Rev. Tayler will **maintain the historic UUCC worship practices** of joys & sorrows, once-a-month lay speakers during the "regular year," and lay speakers during the summer.
8. Our congregations will explore **using 1st Unitarian's payroll and benefits systems** to more efficiently carry out compensation obligations for all shared staff. In such cases, UUCC will contribute proportionally based on the staff that serve UUCC.
9. The existing social justice structure and teams of our congregations will remain distinct and intact, however we will strive to find opportunities for **joint social justice initiatives and projects**.
10. The existing pastoral care structure and teams of our congregations will remain distinct and intact, however we will strive to find opportunities for **mutual learning and support between our lay pastoral care teams**.

11. The existing adult spiritual development structure and offerings of our congregations will remain distinct and intact, however we will strive to invite each other's members to participate in each other's ASD activities. We will strive to develop **regular opportunities for joint small groups, classes and retreats.**
12. Unless altered by Rev. Tayler, our congregations will commit to following the **same worship themes each year and using the Soul Matters** small-group program.
13. The existing children and youth religious education program of 1st Unitarian will remain distinct and intact, and serve as **inspiration and a program resource** for UUCC's children and youth religious education program.
14. The **boards of our congregations will meet at least once a year** to build relationships and mutually evaluate the health of the partnership.
15. Communication mechanisms (websites, newsletters, Facebook pages, etc) of both congregations will remain distinct and independent, however each congregation will commit to **creating a mechanism to advertise "activities of mutual interest"** in each other's communication devices.

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**We sign the following in agreement of the above understandings:**

**Church President, The Unitarian Universalist Church of Canandaigua:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

**Church President, The First Unitarian Church of Rochester:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)

**Executive/Lead Minister:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_  
(signature)