

Being a Member of the United Church of Santa Fe

We are glad you are interested in the United Church of Santa Fe (UCSF), and we hope your journey with us will help you grow in your faith, even as we welcome the gifts you bring to this community. UCSF is an active and progressive church community that offers joy, blessings and opportunities for those who join as a member, as well as for those who visit and those who attend regularly as “friends.”

Our purpose as the United Church of Santa Fe is to “gather as Christians to experience and share the transforming power of God’s love in our lives, our life together and in this world.”

There are a variety of ways to grow in your faith and learn about the United Church. We learn by doing as people of faith, so participation in worship, education, and service are all ways to experience the life and ministry of this community of faith and develop in your own discipleship.

We encourage you to attend a newcomers’ orientation session to help you become better acquainted with the United Church of Christ in general and this local congregation. We also offer a “short course” to explore the beliefs and history of the United Church, as well as your own faith journey, on a regular basis.

We understand that people come to UCSF at different points in their faith journeys and at different times in their lives, with different capacities and different constraints due to family, job and resources. As you continue in your own journey of faith, we invite you to consider "owning the covenant" of the UCSF and becoming a member. We receive new members regularly throughout the year. Please let one of the Pastors – Talitha Arnold or Brandon Johnson – or members of the Membership Development Ministry Team know of your interest.

If you become a member, you will be entering into a covenant with all the other members of UCSF, and adopting UCSF’s covenants as your own. A covenant is a promise based on Biblical understandings. It is more than a contractual agreement in which one might expect to receive something in exchange for membership dues. Members covenant with God and one another to grow in faith together, to participate in the community of faith together, to become active disciples in the world, and to support one another in our lives. The covenant is a promise and a commitment to the *relationship* with God and among the members, as those relationships grow and change over time.

As part of its original covenant to “minister in love to all persons,” UCSF adopted an open and affirming covenant in 1994. This covenant statement makes it clear that UCSF is a community that welcomes and invites all persons to worship and grow in this faith community together, regardless of age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or disability.

Also, as an extension of its original covenant to “endeavor to live in harmony with all creation as stewards of the earth,” the UCSF adopted a Whole Earth Covenant on August 30, 2009. This covenant acknowledges our place in all of creation, and accepts the responsibility to help protect our environment and all creatures through our church and our individual actions.

The adopted covenants of the United Church of Santa Fe are attached to this document for your review.

Expectations that we have of our members are also described for you to consider as you decide whether you believe God is calling you into covenant with this faith community.

Whether you become a member or not, we look forward to you becoming an active part of our church community!

COVENANTS OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF SANTA FE

Founding Covenant – Adopted 1980

The covenant of the United Church of Santa Fe is as follows:

In the Lord's name, we gather together here in Santa Fe

- To worship and grow in the Christian tradition,
- To minister in love to all persons,
- To strive for justice and peace,
- To respond to God's Word.

We celebrate the heritage of Santa Fe and give ourselves to its challenges and opportunities. We endeavor to live in harmony with all creation as stewards of the earth. We share in the life and mission of the United Church of Christ and of Christians everywhere. To these purposes we unite and covenant with God and one another, watchful for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Open and Affirming Covenant – Adopted 1994

We know that as Christians, we are many individual members, each with different gifts to offer and contributions to make. We know also that we are one body in Christ, members of one another. With Jesus, we affirm that we are called to act as agents of reconciliation and wholeness within the church and within the world.

As an expression of the practice and conviction of this congregation, we declare ourselves to be an "open and affirming church," welcoming people who share a faith journey with Christ, and who share with us the covenant that binds us together regardless of age, gender, race, ethnic background, mental or physical disability, or sexual orientation.

We commit ourselves to caring and concern for our lesbian, gay and bisexual sisters and brothers by affirming that:

- We believe that lesbian, gay and bisexual people share with all others the worth that comes from being unique individuals;
 - We welcome lesbian, gay and bisexual people to our congregation in the same spirit and manner by which we welcome all other members and visitors.
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Whole Earth Covenant – Adopted August 30, 2009

We commit ourselves to the following actions:

As a Congregation:

- Develop through worship, education and our interpretation of Christian traditions, a spirituality that reflects our home in the desert and our respect for all of creation in all its diversity. We learn from the desert and celebrate its life.
- Shape rather than follow our culture by modeling institutional practices that sustain and restore resources. We will be vigilant to emerging needs and challenge ourselves to continually seek deeper and more effective responses.
- Promote justice for humanity and for the rest of creation through education and outreach to the wider community and through support of governmental laws and policies that insure economic and ecological security. Peace and justice to creation, as well as in creation, is the extension of our ongoing commitments as a community of faith.

As Individuals:

- Deepen our spiritual awareness of the sacredness of all creation and of God's call to us to live in harmony with the natural world of which we are a part.
- Change our lifestyle and consumption patterns to become more responsible guardians of God's creation, which sustains us and which we hold in trust for future generations.
- Engage the issues threatening our planet while understanding the limits of our comprehension in the face of the complexities of both the problems and their solutions.
- Recognize that as desert dwellers we have a special responsibility to protect its delicate ecosystems, and not least, to wisely use water which is precious to all life.

**When I join the United Church of Santa Fe,
What am I promising to do?
(Adopted by UCSF Council 11-19-09)**

When you join a local United Church of Christ, you make a sacred covenant with God, with the congregation, and with all of God's people, all God's creation. What are you promising to do?

You covenant to participate in worship regularly.

Worship is the center of our life together. It shapes us individually and as a community of faith. We join in worship to give thanks to God, to grow in our understanding of God, Jesus Christ, and the Spirit; to let God renew our souls and minds; and to offer our prayers for one another and for this world.

You covenant to pursue your own personal growth in faith.

We believe that each of us is responsible for growing as disciples of Jesus Christ, deepening our relationship with God, and being open to the power of the Holy Spirit. Uncertainty, doubts, and struggling with issues of Christian faith are often part of an individual's faith journey. We encourage you to become part of a study or fellowship group, a choir, or one of the "communities of ministry" that are part of United, to explore and practice your faith and support others in their faith journeys.

You covenant to engage in ministry, through the church and also in your daily life.

Each of us is called to live out our faith in the world. When you become a member of this church, you become part of a shared ministry that "strives for justice and peace." Becoming part of our shared ministry includes caring for one another and caring for our religious community as a whole. Becoming part of our shared ministry also includes ministry beyond the walls of the church, be it through your professional work, volunteer service, or other ways God calls you to "do justice and love mercy." While we recognize each individual's circumstances vary, we encourage you to engage in the ministry to which you are called to the extent your time and resources allow, and in your every day life.

You covenant to offer generous financial support to this church.

Financial stewardship is a spiritual discipline. Therefore membership in a faith community carries with it the expectation that all of us will make financial contributions reflecting our own personal circumstances and the church's aspirations toward greater fulfillment of our mission. A number of years ago, United adopted a "shared standard of giving" encouraging members and friend to pledge at least five percent of total household income. Some of us pledge more, such as a Biblical tithe of ten percent. Others, at this time in their lives, pledge a different amount. All gifts are valued! The important thing is the commitment and the prayerful consideration of how you will share the blessings God has given you.

You covenant to nurture your own spiritual health and that of this faith community.

Our commitment as a church is to "grow people of faith." We care about your spiritual health and that of the entire community. To that end, we covenant to be in healthy spiritual relationships with one another. As a community, that means – in the words of the Apostle Paul – "building up the Body of Christ." We seek to engage in open and honest communication, to deal with disagreements or conflict in constructive ways, to take responsibility for our own actions, and to support the elected leadership of the church – both pastoral and lay leaders – as they seek to guide the community faithfully and effectively.