



SUUSI Covenant and Accountability: or, What's a CAT and Why

This document is meant to help you understand the SUUSI Covenant and the Covenant Accountability Team (CAT), and how it helps us live into our promises as a community – remembering that our documents, policies, processes for how best to become Beloved Community grow along with us, and change as our understanding deepens.

What's a Covenant?

A covenant is a promise made within our community about how we want to treat each other. If we find ourselves breaking these promises, a covenant serves as a reference and a reminder of our agreements, and, crucially, helps us come back together to resolve conflict and restore well-being.

What's our SUUSI Covenant, and how'd we get it?

In 2018 the SUUSI Board recognized the value of a covenant for the SUUSI community and charged the Rev. Jan Taddeo to gather a team to create a SUUSI Covenant of Accountability to explore agreements that could help develop SUUSI as the intentional community of mutual care it aims to be. After a three-year process of deep listening across the community, the resulting SUUSI Covenant was affirmed by the Board in November 2020, and given to SUUSI community at SUUSI 2021 -- at which time the CAT (Covenant and Accountability Team) was established, charged with supporting SUUSI participants to live into these promises.

SUUSI's Covenant

Here are the primary promises; for further points on how we live into these promises, see our full SUUSI Covenant at - <https://www.suusi.org/covenant>.

- **Safety:** *We are all responsible for creating an emotionally, physically and spiritually safe space for all participants.*
- **Trust:** *We offer our authentic selves, allowing ourselves to be vulnerable and holding the vulnerability of others with the greatest care.*
- **Validation:** *We see, hear, and value each other for who we are with all the expressions of our identities.*
- **Affirmation:** *We show appreciation for the gifts each person brings to the community.*
- **Accountability:** *We strive to act as if everything we do matters for the well-being of our SUUSI community.*
- **Reconciliation:** *We agree to enter into truth and reconciliation processes when conflicts or disagreements arise.*

What's Accountability and Reconciliation: SUUSI's CAT?

CAT, or our Covenant and Accountability Team, is a group of both lay persons and ministry professionals trained in conflict resolution and reconciliation processes to engage conflicts that may arise, that SUUSI may grow as a community of mutual care and responsibility.

SUUSI's CAT Charter, or, How's it Work?

The SUUSI Covenant and Accountability Team Charter, affirmed by the SUUSI Board on November 21, 2020, puts forth CAT's charge to guide our living into our best SUUSI selves. You can also find this document here: https://www.suusi.org/accountability_charter

SUUSI Covenant and Accountability Team Charter

- **General Purpose:** *The purpose of the Covenant Accountability Team is to support SUUSI participants in living into the SUUSI mission to live into our best selves and our Unitarian Universalist principle to affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of all people.*

Recognizing that systems of power, privilege, and oppression have traditionally created barriers for persons and groups with particular identities, ages, abilities, and histories, the Covenant Accountability Team will serve the SUUSI community by listening and engaging with people who have experienced problems of oppression while at SUUSI.

• **Reporting and Chain of Command:** The Covenant Accountability Team volunteers are recruited and hired through a collaborative process between the SUUSI Board President, SUUSI Director, and the Nurture Staff Director initiated by the Nurture Staff Director.

The Covenant Accountability Team will report to the SUUSI Board President, SUUSI Director, and Nurture Staff Director the generalities of the issues and engagements in which they have been involved, and will make recommendations as to any actions that may need to be taken by the SUUSI leadership teams. The Team will consult with the Leadership Team with regard to issues that may need to be formally reported as a grievance or incident.

• **Staffing:** The Covenant Accountability Team shall consist of five volunteers. Each will receive half credit for serving as SUUSI staff. They will be asked to serve on the Team for three (3) years. The first year the Team is in place, three members will serve for three years and two members will serve for two years. Every effort will be made to staff the team with people who hold a variety of identities related to age, gender, sexuality, race and ethnicity. Members of the Covenant Accountability Team may not serve on the SUUSI Board or Core Staff while serving on the Team. Schedules for being on-call will be developed in collaboration with the Nurture Staff Director.

• **Leadership:** Each year, the Team will select one person from among their team to serve as the primary point of contact for that year. This person will be the primary contact for the Board President, SUUSI Director, and Nurture Staff Director.

• **Function and Responsibilities:** The lead member of the Team will arrive at SUUSI on Friday so they can meet with the Board President, SUUSI Director, and Nurture Staff Director, to be briefed on any issues or concerns that may have arisen or may be of concern; and, to develop their schedule for the week and determine protocols for their work together. The remaining members of the Team will arrive on Saturday.

• **Accountability:** The Covenant Accountability Team is accountable to the SUUSI Community, and will report regularly to the Community regarding the general aspects of issues that are emerging.

• **Communication:** The Team will speak with one voice regarding any recommended actions for grievances that are brought to them. The Team will communicate regularly with the Nurture Staff Director during SUUSI and will have at least one meeting with the Board President, SUUSI Director, and Nurture Staff Director during the week of SUUSI. They will provide a report to the SUUSI Board, SUUSI Director and Nurture Staff Director within two weeks of the end of SUUSI that summarizes the issues within the Community and recommendations for the following SUUSI.

The Team will communicate with the SUUSI Community via the daily NUUS, reports during worship services and other venues and events to increase awareness and educate the community the ways in which we can more fully support people in our community who are part of traditionally oppressed populations.

• **Authority:** The Covenant Accountability Team has no authority to remove SUUSI participants from the Community; however, they may make recommendations to the Board President and SUUSI Director regarding issues that may warrant a participants' removal.

Should an incident come before the Covenant Accountability Team that involves either the Board President, SUUSI Director, the Nurture Staff Director, or with any member of the Board of Trustees or Core Staff, they will have the authority to engage them in a process of mediation and will not be subjected to intimidation.

Should an incident come before the Board of Trustees, SUUSI Director, or Nurture Staff Director in which a member of the Covenant Accountability Team has engaged in behaviors that have caused emotional, spiritual, or physical harm to someone in the community, the Board President, SUUSI Director and Nurture Staff Director will listen to and engage with the people involved to seek reconciliation and determine the best course of action with regard to that person's status on the Team.

What if I experience conflict or harm at SUUSI? -- Fortunately, most conflicts at SUUSI can be resolved quickly with the support of our Pastoral Care Team. People are only referred to the CAT if other attempts fall short to support all parties involved toward full reconciliation.

NEED SUPPORT?

To get support from SUUSI Pastoral Care or the CAT (Covenant and Accountability Team)
Call 66-ASK-SUUSI, and press 2