**The Behavioral/Relational Covenant- Process Guide**

**Purpose:**

To create and implement a process for developing a behavioral covenant.

**Key verses:**

John 15:12-13, Ephesians 4:14-16

**Bible Study:**

Study Colossians 3:12-17 and I Thessalonians 5:12-26; other texts

What behaviors emerge from these passages?

Which of these apply most to our setting?

**Key Question:**

Do we have a way to walk hand in hand when we cannot see eye to eye?

**Rationale:**

The behavioral covenant is the conversation before the conversation. It communicates a shared understanding about how to have conversations that are civil, compassionate and Christ-honoring. Gil Rendle describes behavioral covenants as ―holy manners for a faith community. The journey of congregational health and vitality is both adventurous and treacherous. It is during the treacherous parts of the journey that the behavioral covenant really comes into play. It is important to realize that the behavioral covenant is not something to live up to, but something to live *in* to. It is a lifestyle, not a law. It is an invitation to relate to others in a way that pleases God and edifies and strengthens the church. The way we relate to each other in Christian love is also a powerful witness for those who are far from God.

**Ministry Description:**

The *process* of creating a behavioral covenant is actually more important than the *product.* What do you notice about yourselves and your church as you work on this process? Record these observations and present them to the elected leadership of your church. What does this say about the underlying culture of your church…about how things are done around here and our automatic responses?

Ensure that multiple people/teams have an opportunity to give input. Who should those people/teams be?

What resistance do you anticipate to the concept of behavioral covenants?

Beyond the presented example, what are other components that you believe ought to be part of a Behavioral Covenant?

Obtain sample behavioral covenants from other ECC churches. Review them.

Using input from your own congregation and samples from other churches, write the first draft of a behavioral covenant as team. You may want to include an overarching scripture and/or a scripture for each point. Keep it simple and to one page. Do not go over seven or eight statements. Less is more. While you are writing the first draft, guard against perfection in word-smithing.

Bring the first draft to a second meeting for presentation and discussion.

Revise the behavioral covenant based on the whole team discussion.

Present the behavioral covenant to the elected leadership and make revisions.

Work with leadership regarding presentation, form and unveiling. Present the behavioral covenant to the congregation.

The pastor may want to do an eight week series on the behavioral covenant.

Embed the behavioral covenant into the normal and natural life of the church.

* Put the behavioral covenant on the wall in the office.
* Read it before most congregational business meetings, leadership team meetings, staff meetings, etc.
* Include it in the new member‘s packet and questions for membership.
* Ask small groups to read it from time to time.
* Do a bulletin insert each quarter.
* What other ways can you think of?
* Live it!

Tweak the behavioral covenant every six months to a year. This is a dynamic, ongoing process!

Some churches use the term ―**Relational Covenant**. Determine the word usage that works best in your setting.