

Core Right Relations Team Annual Report for 2024-2025

Submitted by Core Team Members: Amy Hance-Brancati, Jade Wilde, Shannon Day, Riley Anderson, Storey Squires, Tracy Burrows, Rev. Carter Smith

Right relations is the aspirational work of fostering a healthy community by living our values, holding conflict with care, and finding pathways back to reconnection and to repair when there are ruptures in relationships within the community. This work is held by the entire community, and it is facilitated by our Core Team. This work also intersects with our commitment to racial justice, disability justice, and all other systems of oppression that create the experience of marginalization and inequity.

About the Core Right Relations Team

Our current Core Team structure was formed in January 2023 when our congregation began working with Pam Orbach from A Center for Restorative Solutions. We invited Pam to help facilitate our learning and healing as a congregation, with a focus on the valuable tools of Nonviolent Communication (NVC), Restorative Justice, and circle practices. This work is part of multiple phases of study and implementation of effective right relations practices, led by our Board of Trustees over the past five years.

The Core Team is composed of six to eight volunteers who are committing to a deep dive in learning NVC, Restorative Justice and circle holding skills, and to facilitating the learning, practice and implementation of these skills throughout our beloved community. Through the first year, the Core Team was guided by our consultant, Pam Orbach. Three months into our kick-off of that work, Rev. Carter joined the congregation, and began engaging with the Core Team. Through the past church year, the Core Team has operated more independently, with support from Pam, increased engagement of Rev. Carter, a stronger collaboration with the Board, and with the input and support of our broader congregational community.

Focus Areas in this Year

Beginning in January 2024, the Core Team facilitated opportunities for whole community engagement in the development of a new community covenant, which is the written expression of our values relating to how we want to be together. In January 2025 at a mid-year congregational meeting our community adopted a new, living covenant that represents our best collaborative thinking at this time and that will be open for changes over time that represent our collective learning. During the 2024-2025 church year the Core Team also facilitated whole community engagement in the development of a Pathways to Reconnection and Repair document. The pathways represent our best collaborative thinking in offering processes to hold conflict in more skillful and healthy

ways that can help us to repair ruptures, recognize harms, and bring us back into healthy reconnection. This document is up for adoption in this annual meeting.

In addition to shepherding these two core elements that foster the health of our community, the Core Team's focus this year was to learn how to support our Board of Trustees and our staff in living the values of our covenantal agreement, and in doing the work of reconnection and repair. In recent years our board leaders and our staff have experienced tension and fatigue in trying to complete the work they are charged with to keep our community functioning in vital ways, as they have also held the primary responsibility for facilitating right relations in our community and for addressing rupture and repair. The Core Team is learning to hold the delicate threads of our community's right relations work with increased skill and care, in a way that frees our board and staff to focus on their responsibilities while engaging in community right relations in healthy ways that are appropriate for their roles.

The Core Team has continued to offer monthly opportunities for community connection, and for learning and practice of right relations skills, through our first Sunday whole community gatherings named "Spark Sundays" this year.

Focus Areas for Next Year

A primary focus area for the coming year will be facilitating how we live our covenant and Pathways to Reconnection and Repair as a whole community. This will include continued opportunities for learning, skill building and practice; new ways of integrating our covenant and pathways into congregational rituals and activities; bringing greater awareness and action to intersections with our justice work and dismantling systems of oppression; and continuing to learn how to best support our board leaders and our staff.

A second focus area will be to develop the structure and processes that will support and sustain the Core Team as a part of our congregation's ongoing right relations work, including how we will hold evolving membership and the role of a Wellbeing Team.

[WSUU Community Covenant](#)

[Final Version of Pathways to Reconnection and Repair May 2025](#)

Core Team Membership

2024-2025 Church Year:

Amy Hance-Brancati, Jade Wilde, Shannon Day, Riley Anderson, Storey Squires, Tracy Burrows, Rev. Carter Smith

2023-2024 Church Year:

Aimee Schiefelbein, Amy Hance-Brancati, Henry Bennett, Jade Wilde, Paula vanHaagen, Riley Anderson, Shannon Day, and Tracy Burrows, Rev. Carter Smith, Pam Orbach

2022-2023 Church Year:

Don Wahl, Henry Bennett, Jade Wilde, Kristina Darnell, Shannon Day, and Tracy Burrows, Pam Orbach

Wellbeing Team Membership

Amy Youngblood, Cindy Jackson, Chris Hollinger, Cynthia Townsend, Dennis Jackson, Ginger Brewer, Kate Kirkwood, Kathy Leota, Kerry Lusignan, Kristina Darnell (plus Core Team members)

Summary of Right Relations Activities from 2020 to Present

October 2020: The WSUU Board Named the Right Relations Phase I Team

- Cindy Jackson, Jade Wilde, and Liz Berggren, with Fred Matthews
- This team was charged by the board with conducting research to inform our way forward with right relations in our community. The team conducted interviews with other congregations; conducted research through UUA resources and Pacific Western Region leadership; and conducted focus groups, meetings, a survey, and interviews in the WSUU congregation.

May 2021: The Right Relations Team Submitted a Phase I Report ([Link to report and Summary here](#))

- The report recommended a process to renew our covenant and to learn to live our covenant actively, that would address community healing from past ruptures and harms while also offering new learning and opportunities for forward engagement.

2022—2023 Church Year

October 2022: Beloved Community Café

- Those interested in right relations work self-selected into a group that participated in bringing Pam Orbach ([A Center for Restorative Solutions](#)) in to work with our community as a consultant in Nonviolent Communication (NVC), Restorative Justice, and circle practices.
- From that group, volunteers stepped up to be on a “core team” to learn and shepherd this work with Pam in our community.
- Additionally, volunteers from the community self-selected into a “wellbeing team” committed to learning and practicing right relations skills.

January 2023: Pam Orbach ([A Center for Restorative Solutions](#)) Began her Consultation Role

- Pam Orbach began her work with the congregation, meeting with the Core Team weekly and teaching NVC, Restorative Justice, conflict resolution, and circle practices to the Core Team, the Wellbeing Team (bimonthly meetings), and the broader congregation (through workshops and class offerings).
- The Core team also agreed to build skills to coordinate community engagement with this right relations work at Westside.

Spring 2023: Pam Orbach and the Core Team Begin Offering Whole Congregation Events

- First Sunday Community Circles started in February, open to the congregation, and addressing topics such as trust, mourning, allyship, and fun and connection.
- The Core Team, some Wellbeing Team members, and other WSUU community members participated in an NVC class weekly through the spring.
- In March, Pam and the Core Team began offering healing circles in the congregation to address past ruptures and harms.

2023---2024 Church Year

Fall 2023: The Core Team Began to Take the Lead with Community Right Relations Events, with Pam Orbach’s Support

- The Core Team continued to meet weekly and the Wellbeing Team met biweekly.
- In September a whole community Conflict Resolution Workshop was offered by Pam.
- The Core Team, some Wellbeing Team members, and other WSUU community members participated in an NVC Deepening class weekly through the fall.
- The Core Team began taking the lead in offering the monthly Whole Community Circles on first Sundays.
- Healing Circles continued to be offered by Pam and the Core Team, as needed.

- The Core Team engaged with the board and congregation in planning for the development of a new community covenant.

Spring 2024: The Core Team Led the Community in Covenant-Building

- Whole community discussion and input was facilitated through 1st Sunday circles, community cafes, surveys, and email.

2024---2025 Church Year

Fall 2024: The First Draft of a Covenant was Developed and Reviewed

- The Core Team began meeting once a month, and working together informally between meetings.
- Spark Sundays were held every 1st Sunday from October 2024-May 2025.
- The Wellbeing Team did not officially meet through most of this year, though members participated in Spark Sundays, development of the covenant and pathways, and in workshops and training.
- The Core Team developed a first draft of the covenant using all the community input gathered.
- Congregational input was gathered through open meetings, opportunities for individuals to comment and contribute edits, and through affinity group meetings for BIPOC and disability groups.
- Core Team and Wellbeing Team members developed a second draft of the covenant, incorporating input.
- Core Team and Wellbeing Team members worked on pathways ideas based on whole community inputs.

Spring 2025: A New Community Covenant was Adopted and A Pathways to Reconnection and Repair Document was Created

- Input was gathered on the second draft of the covenant, and a final draft was created.
- Q and A sessions were offered to the community, and the covenant was adopted at the mid-year meeting in January.
- A Restorative Justice workshop was offered to the whole community by Pam Orbach and the Core Team.
- A Pathways to Reconnection and Repair document was drafted and input gathered via email, in-person and online meetings. This will be voted on for adoption at the congregational Annual Meeting in June.
- The Core Team hosted Restorative Justice practice sessions once a month (January-May 2025). Sessions were facilitated by staff from *A Center for Restorative Solutions*.