

## Handout 6-B

# BEHAVIORAL COVENANT

John Wesley's general rules were clear and simple:

It is therefore expected of all who continue therein that they should continue to evidence their desire for salvation,

First: By doing no harm, by avoiding evil of every kind...

Secondly: By ... doing good of every possible sort, and, as far as possible, to all...

Thirdly: By attending upon all the ordinances of God.<sup>1</sup>

These three general rules offer a simple approach to formulating a behavioral covenant for a congregation or other group. Members can respond to the statements and formulate lists. Then follow-up conversations about the lists can help the group members reach consensus on the practices and behaviors that all will observe and engage. The resulting covenant can be signed by everyone who contributed. As the covenant practices become the norm, group members will begin to self-regulate when an unacceptable behavior occurs. The strengthened spiritual environment can have impact beyond the group.

### First, Do No Harm

What are the behaviors and actions that “do harm” to healthy relationships? What are the practices and behaviors that we promise *not* to engage in? Items such as gossip and lying are often at the top of this list, and the group should prayerfully consider behaviors that are obstacles to its effectiveness.

### Second, Do All the Good You Can

What are the behaviors and actions that “do good to all”? What are the practices and behaviors that we promise to engage in and support? Consider what actions and behaviors will be of specific help in increasing our grace, joy, and hope in mission and ministry.

### Third, Attend to All the Ordinances of God

What are the spiritual practices (ordinances)—such as prayer, Scripture reading and reflection, singing, fasting, discernment, holy conferencing—that we believe build a stronger sense of community and fellowship? How will we commit to engage these practices together?

---

1. *The United Methodist Book of Discipline*, 2012 (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 52.