THE BOOK OF SEVEN BONDS

A Guide to the Fellowship of Seven Bonds



Seven bonds. Many lives. One shared world.

PRELUDE

A young homeless woman had no money and had not eaten for two days.

She stole a bicycle, sold it, and bought some bread.

Before she could eat, a boy snatched the bread from her hands and ran.

"Thief!" the woman shouted, getting to her feet.

Then she remembered the bicycle.

I was hungry, she had told herself.

Perhaps the boy was hungry too.

And the person whose bicycle she had taken—what had they needed it for?

She had never stopped to wonder.

Her hunger was real. But until the bread was taken, she had thought only of her own need.

Now she could see three people, each with a life that mattered.

The thought did not fill her stomach or return the bicycle. It left a question:

How can we meet one another's needs while protecting what each of us depends upon?

The Seven Bonds begin with that question.

1. *Do not harm conscious beings unless in proportionate preservation of self or community.*

2. *Do not seize or destroy the property of others without just cause.*

3. *Honour explicit agreements and do not deceive others in malice or for gain.*

4. *Treat others with consideration for their dignity and needs, as you would have your own considered.*

5. *Nurture your dependents toward self-sufficiency and support vulnerable members of your community.*

6. *Maintain shared resources and ecosystems sustainably for present and future generations.*

7. *Strive for evidence-based decisions, remaining humble, open to correction, and committed to resolving conflict through reason.*

A harmonious society depends on good relationships.

Those relationships are shaped by how we treat one another, especially when our interests differ or life becomes difficult.

The Seven Bonds offer a guide for such moments.

They are not a promise of perfection.

Life is complicated. Duties conflict. Knowledge is incomplete. We become tired, frightened, angry, proud, or mistaken.

The Bonds are therefore not a test of purity.

They are a direction.

When we lose our way, they give us something to return to. When we fall short, they ask us not to hide from the harm, but to look again.

We may ask:

- Who was affected?
- Where did I go wrong?
- What can I repair?
- What can I learn?
- What should I do next?

A person may ask these questions.

A community may ask them too.

The Bonds do not ask everyone to be the same. They help different people live together with trust, care, responsibility, and reason.

The Bonds themselves are the foundation.

The ways we practise them may change as we learn. Customs may change. Procedures may change. Communities may adapt to their place and time.

The Bonds remain.

A wise community keeps its roots firm and its branches free to move with the wind.

The Seven Bonds were not chosen as a list of every human virtue.

They grew from examining principles shared across many religious and ethical traditions, and then asking what a society cannot safely neglect.

Each Bond protects something necessary for people to live well together. Abandoning any one can leave a failure that the others do not prevent. When all seven are sincerely pursued together, many common causes of social breakdown become harder to sustain.

A fuller explanation is given in **Appendix A — The Bonds and Ethical Coexistence**.

Your Relationship with the Seven Bonds

You do not need to join anything to use the Seven Bonds.

For some, they may simply be a guide for ordinary life. Others may use the Seven Reflections for deliberate self-examination, practise the Bonds with others in a Fellowship, or help build a local community around them.

The Fellowship is one way people may choose to practise the Bonds together. It is not a higher rank of involvement, and membership does not make a person morally superior.

Begin where the Bonds are useful. If living them brings greater clarity, trust, connection, or purpose, a deeper practice may follow in its own time.

How to Use this Book

This book is both an introduction and a practical manual.

It may be read from beginning to end, but it need not be. A first-time reader may begin with the Prelude, Chapter 1, the Seven Reflections in Chapter 2, and Chapter 7.

Chapter 2 develops practices for living the Bonds. Chapter 3 addresses conflict and judgement. Chapters 4 to 6 explore their wider application and the kind of culture they may support. The appendices explain why these seven form the foundation, the Sign of the Fellowship, and the publication record.

Do not treat every paragraph as though it has the same status as a Bond.

The Seven Bonds are the enduring standard. Rituals, examples, procedures, customs, and interpretations exist to help people live that standard. They may be adapted where culture, evidence, experience, or circumstance gives good reason, provided the adaptation remains faithful to the Bonds.

When a difficult situation does not fit an example in this book, do not force it to fit.

Use the Seven Reflections. Seek relevant evidence. Listen to those affected. Consider all seven Bonds together. Then act with humility, knowing that later knowledge may require correction.

This book is most useful when it is discussed, tested against real life, and improved in practice rather than merely admired in theory.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SEVEN BONDS

1.1 The First Bond — Security

Do not harm conscious beings unless in proportionate preservation of self or community.

Life seeks to continue.

Where there is conscious experience, fear matters. Pain matters. Loss matters. Wellbeing matters.

This is true when these things are felt by us, and it remains true when they are felt by another being.

The First Bond therefore begins with restraint.

Do not harm because it is easy.

Do not harm because you are angry.

Do not harm because another being is weak, unfamiliar, voiceless, or unable to resist you.

Do not harm because a crowd has made cruelty feel acceptable.

Do not assume that something matters less merely because its experience differs from your own.

But the First Bond is not absolute passivity.

A person may need to defend a child. A community may need to restrain a dangerous member. One being may have to be protected from another. Peaceful choices may sometimes fail.

The question is not only whether force was used.

The question is whether the force was **necessary and proportionate**.

Before causing harm, ask:

- Is the being affected capable of suffering or loss?
- Is there a less harmful path?
- Is the danger real?
- Is the response greater than the danger requires?
- Am I protecting, or am I punishing from anger?
- Will this action prevent harm, or merely move it elsewhere?

Strength is sometimes necessary.

Cruelty is not.

The strongest use of power is not the greatest force that can be applied.

It is the restraint to use no more than the situation requires.

The First Bond also reaches beyond immediate conflict.

Neglect can harm.

Careless design can harm.

Institutions can harm.

Systems can cause suffering even when no single participant intended it.

To protect conscious life is therefore not merely to avoid direct violence.

It is to create conditions in which beings capable of experience are not subjected to needless suffering through our choices.

Where our conduct causes injury, appropriate repair may be due even after a blameless accident. Responsibility must be assessed fairly, with regard to capacity and competing duties.

1.2 The Second Bond — Property

> *Do not seize or destroy the property of others without just cause.*

Property is not merely a collection of objects.

A home may hold safety.

A tool may hold livelihood.

A field may hold generations of labour.

Savings may hold years of sacrifice.

A small possession may carry a memory that cannot be replaced.

To take or destroy what belongs to another is therefore often to take more than the object itself.

The Second Bond protects the space people need to build lives of their own.

Yet property exists within community.

No person creates land, water, air, law, markets, or public order alone.

A claim to property cannot reasonably become a claim to poison a shared river, block every common path, or place others in grave danger.

The Second Bond therefore contains both protection and responsibility.

Respect what belongs to others.

Where property must be limited, taken, or destroyed for a just reason, the reason should be strong enough to withstand open examination.

Where compensation is fairly due and feasible, it should be made.

Damage we cause may leave a responsibility to restore or compensate, even after a blameless accident.

Where power is used to take from another, the burden of justification lies with the taker.

Ask:

- Does this truly belong to me?
- Am I using what I hold in a way that unfairly harms others?
- If something must be taken, is the reason serious enough?
- Would I accept this same reasoning if the property were mine?

Possession deserves respect.

So does the common world in which possession is possible.

1.3 The Third Bond — Agreements

Honour explicit agreements and do not deceive others in malice or for gain.

Trust grows slowly.

A promise may take only a few seconds to make, yet another person may build months or years of their life around it.

A worker depends on wages being paid.

A customer depends on a product being what it claims to be.

A friend depends on confidence being kept.

A family depends on promises being more than convenient words.

The Third Bond gives weight to our word.

Do not promise lightly.

When you agree, mean what you say.

When circumstances change, speak early.

When an agreement can no longer be honoured without serious harm, seek a fair resolution rather than silently abandoning it.

A person's ability to manage without a payment does not cancel an earned claim.

Truth also deserves care.

Not every private thought must be revealed.

Privacy is not deceit.

Silence is not always dishonesty.

There may even be rare times when concealment protects someone from wrongful harm.

But deliberate deception for exploitation, advantage, manipulation, or malice weakens the structure that allows people to cooperate.

A dishonest gain is often purchased with a loss that cannot be seen immediately.

It teaches others not to trust.

Distrust spreads further than the original lie.

A community with little trust spends enormous effort defending itself from its own members.

A community with justified trust can use that effort to build.

Let your word become something others can safely stand upon.

1.4 The Fourth Bond — Respect

Treat others with consideration for their dignity and needs, as you would have your own considered.

Every person stands at the centre of a life as vivid to them as yours is to you.

They carry memories you do not know.

They carry fears they may never speak.

They carry hopes that may seem small to you but are large to them.

Respect begins with remembering this.

Before humiliating another, remember your own wish to keep dignity.

Before dismissing another person's needs, remember how strongly your own needs can feel.

Before demanding to be heard, remember that another person also wishes to be heard.

Respect does not require agreement.

You may oppose another person's ideas.

You may refuse a request.

You may correct an error.

You may set a firm boundary.

But disagreement does not require contempt.

A person is more than the opinion you dislike.

A person is more than the mistake they made.

A person is more than their wealth, education, accent, job, age, sex, race, religion, nationality, political view, or social standing.

Respect does not mean pretending all conduct is equally good.

It means that even when conduct must be challenged, the humanity of the person remains.

A society becomes harsh when people learn to speak of one another as categories instead of lives.

The Fourth Bond asks us to resist that habit.

See the person before the label.

1.5 The Fifth Bond — Care

> *Nurture your dependents toward self-sufficiency and support vulnerable members of your community.*

No one begins life independent.

A child survives because others provide food, protection, teaching, patience, and love.

Most people will also experience times when independence becomes difficult.

Illness may come.

Work may disappear.

Age may weaken the body.

Grief may break concentration.

Disability may make some tasks impossible.

Misfortune may arrive without asking whether it is deserved.

Care is therefore not a special favour.

It is one of the ways a community carries life across time.

But care has direction.

When a person can learn to stand, help them stand.

When they can learn a skill, help them learn.

When they can make decisions, let them make them.

Support should strengthen a person's agency where possible, not needlessly replace it.

Support must be usable, not merely offered. Money or a formal entitlement may leave someone vulnerable when effective assistance is out of reach.

There are also people who may never become fully self-sufficient.

Their worth does not depend on reaching a standard they cannot reach.

A community is judged not only by what its strongest members can achieve, but by what happens to people when strength fails.

Care is not pity.

Pity looks down.

Care stands beside.

A good community does not ask, "What use is this person to us?"

It asks instead, "What do we owe one another because we share a life together?"

1.6 The Sixth Bond — Environment

Maintain shared resources and ecosystems sustainably for present and future generations.

We did not make the rivers.

We did not invent the soil.

We did not create the forests, oceans, climate, minerals, or long chain of life that supports us.

We inherited them.

For a short time, they are in our hands.

To use is not always to destroy.

A forest may provide timber and remain a forest.

A field may feed generations and remain fertile.

A mine may provide materials while its damage is repaired.

A town may grow while preserving clean water and living space.

The Sixth Bond does not ask humanity to disappear from nature.

It asks us to remember that we belong within it.

The question is not whether we take.

The question is whether our taking destroys the ability of others to live after us.

A generation that consumes everything may appear wealthy.

But wealth created by leaving ruin to one's children is partly a debt disguised as success.

Shared resources include more than wilderness.

They include roads, public spaces, knowledge, institutions, infrastructure, water systems, digital commons, and the trust that allows common systems to function.

Maintain what many rely upon.

Repair what you damage.

Replace what you consume when replacement is possible.

Think beyond the length of your own life.

We are not owners of the future.

We are its temporary custodians.

1.7 The Seventh Bond — Reason

Strive for evidence-based decisions, remaining humble, open to correction, and committed to resolving conflict through reason.

A sincere person can still be wrong.

An intelligent person can still be wrong.

A majority can still be wrong.

An elder can still be wrong.

A book can still be wrong.

A community can still be wrong.

Wisdom begins when we make room for this possibility.

Reason is not the claim that emotion has no place.

Compassion tells us what matters.

Love tells us whom we care for.

Grief tells us what we have lost.

Anger may tell us that something feels unjust.

Reason helps us examine what is true, what caused what, and what action is likely to help.

Ask:

- What do we know?
- How do we know it?
- What evidence supports this belief?
- What evidence challenges it?
- What would change my mind?
- Have I listened fairly to people who disagree?
- Am I defending the truth, or defending my pride?

Reason also governs conflict.

When disagreement appears, do not begin by asking how to defeat the other person.

Begin by asking what can be established together.

What facts are shared?

What values are shared?

Where is the real disagreement?

What evidence could reduce it?

What compromise protects what matters most?

Changing one's mind is not humiliation.

It is evidence that learning has taken place.

The person who can say, "I was wrong," has gained something.

The person who refuses correction merely protects the mistake.

Understanding a responsibility is not the same as fulfilling it. A debt remains to be paid, or a repair made, even after the reasoning is settled.

1.8 The Bonds Together

The Seven Bonds are not seven separate boxes.

They support and limit one another.

Security without Respect can become oppression.

Property without Care can become indifference.

Care without Reason can create dependence or unintended harm.

Agreements without Reason can turn foolish promises into needless suffering.

Environment without Care can forget the people who must live within it.

Reason without Respect can become cold arrogance.

Respect without Security can fail to protect those in danger.

The Bonds therefore work as a whole.

Some responsibilities under Care and Environment can only be fulfilled together.

Fair participation includes necessary coordination and effective contributions; an absent promise or official assignment does not by itself remove an existing shared responsibility.

This does not justify arbitrary demands or unlimited burdens.

Life rarely presents us with only one Bond at a time.

A difficult decision often involves several.

Wisdom lies partly in seeing all of them.

When two Bonds seem to pull in different directions, do not rush to declare one absolute.

Look at the whole situation.

Ask what each Bond requires here, and whether the proposed response can be justified in light of all seven.

A good decision is often not the one that satisfies one principle perfectly.

It is the one that honours the full pattern as faithfully as circumstances allow.

Preservation of the community does not make an individual expendable.

A claim of protection must justify not only the benefit sought, but also the burden imposed and the treatment of the person who bears it.

A favourable total of benefits is not, by itself, sufficient justification.

The **Seven Reflections** in Chapter 2 turn this whole-pattern approach into a practical set of questions. They can be used both to examine actions already taken and to think carefully before a difficult choice: who may be harmed, what claims and promises are involved, whose dignity and needs matter, who depends on the outcome, what the shared world may bear, and what the evidence actually supports.

Used together, the Reflections do not guarantee a perfect answer. They make careless answers harder.



CHAPTER TWO

PRACTICES AND RITUALS

The Seven Bonds become real through practice.

A principle remembered only in theory is easily forgotten when life becomes difficult.

The Fellowship therefore uses simple practices and rituals to keep the Bonds present in ordinary life.

A ritual does not need supernatural meaning.

It is an action repeated because remembering matters.

A practice is useful when it helps people become more thoughtful, more trustworthy, more connected, and more capable of living the Bonds.

When a ritual becomes empty performance, simplify it.

When a practice no longer serves its purpose, improve it.

The form exists for the meaning.

The meaning does not exist for the form.

Readers looking first for everyday applications may turn to Chapter 5, Integration. The Seven Reflections below also offer a starting point for decisions outside Fellowship gatherings.

2.1 The Gathering

Members should gather regularly.

A gathering may take place in a home, a hall, a park, a workshop, a place of worship offered for community use, or any place where people can meet safely and openly.

The Fellowship does not require grand buildings.

People matter more than architecture.

A simple gathering may contain five parts:

Welcome

People arrive as equals.

Newcomers are greeted without pressure.

No one should need wealth, status, education, or special clothing to belong in the room.

Reflection

One Bond, one story, or one difficult question is considered.

The aim is not to produce a single approved answer.

The aim is to deepen judgement.

Listening

Members share concerns, needs, successes, and disagreements.

Listening is not waiting for one's turn to speak.

It is an attempt to understand what another person means before deciding how to answer.

Service

The gathering asks what useful work should be done.

Who needs help?

What common resource needs care?

What task has been neglected?

What can the Fellowship improve before the next gathering?

Fellowship

People eat, talk, laugh, teach, learn, and form friendships.

A community cannot be built only from serious meetings.

Joy is part of cohesion.

People protect what they have learned to love.

2.2 The Seven Reflections

From time to time, members may quietly examine their lives through seven reflections. The same reflections may also be used before a difficult decision, when several Bonds seem to pull in different directions.

Security: Who may be harmed by my actions or this decision, and can that harm be reduced? Have I caused needless harm?

Property: What belongs to whom, what belongs to us all, and have I respected those claims fairly?

Agreements: What has been promised, who is relying on it, and has my word been trustworthy?

Respect: Whose dignity or needs may be overlooked, and have I treated others as though their dignity matters as much as mine?

Care: Who depends on this decision, who may be vulnerable, and have I helped people grow in strength and agency where possible?

Environment: What shared resources, ecosystems, or future generations may bear the cost, and have I left shared things fit for those who follow?

Reason: What does the evidence show, what might I be wrong about, and have I sought what is true more strongly than I have sought to be right?

There is no score.

There is no public ranking.

The value lies in honest examination.

A person who turns reflection into self-punishment has missed its purpose.

The purpose is not to become ashamed of being imperfect.

The purpose is to see more clearly: what matters, who is affected, where correction may be needed, and what the next good step may be.

Consider the woman, the boy, and the bicycle owner in the Prelude.

A neighbour able to help might first offer the woman food and find out whether the boy also needs help. Neither should have to endure public humiliation to receive it.

The bicycle owner's loss still matters. Perhaps the bicycle was needed for work. Returning it, where possible, or arranging fair repair would require attention to the owner's loss, the woman's capacity, and anyone else affected. Hunger does not settle every question of responsibility; neither does responsibility make hunger disappear.

Those able to share the work should agree who will provide immediate help, who will investigate the loss, and when they will check what has actually been done. They should make only promises they can keep.

New facts may change the response. The next step is to meet urgent needs while seeking a fair way to address the harm.

2.3 Mentorship

Books can carry words.

People teach how words are lived.

For this reason, mentorship is central to the Fellowship.

A new member may choose, or be helped to find, a mentor.

The mentor is not a master.

The student is not a servant.

They are two people walking the same road with different experience.

A good mentor asks more often than they command.

They may ask:

- What happened?
- What do you think the other person experienced?
- Which Bonds are involved?

- What evidence do you have?
- What might you be overlooking?
- What would repair the harm?
- What would you hope for if your places were exchanged?

A mentor should help the student become less dependent on the mentor.

The finest teacher does not create followers.

The finest teacher creates people who can think, act, and eventually teach without them.

2.4 The Role of the Elder

An elder is not simply an older person.

Age can bring experience, but years alone do not bring wisdom.

An elder is someone trusted by the community to guide, teach, mediate, and help others practise the Seven Bonds.

A good elder is known for patience more than authority.

For listening more than display.

For admitting error more readily than defending pride.

For reducing conflict rather than feeding it.

For helping others grow rather than gathering personal followers.

An elder has no special ownership of truth.

If an elder cannot be questioned, something has gone wrong.

The greater a person's influence, the greater should be their willingness to be examined.

Where an elder carries leadership responsibility, that responsibility is temporarily carried.

It is not a rank of human worth.

A good elder creates conditions in which sound decisions can continue without them. They teach successors, distribute knowledge, and help preserve institutions stronger than any one personality.

No founder is above the Seven Bonds.

No elder is above them.

No committee is above them.

No majority is above them.

No institution is above them.

Authority may help interpret the path.

It does not become the path.

2.5 Story and Narrative

People remember stories longer than instructions.

The Fellowship should therefore preserve stories about difficult choices.

Tell of someone who admitted being wrong.

Tell of someone who returned what they had taken.

Tell of a person who kept an agreement when breaking it would have been easier.

Tell of a leader who listened to a critic.

Tell of neighbours who protected someone unpopular because harm would have been unjust.

Tell of a community that gave up an easy profit to preserve something future generations would need.

Tell also of failure.

If the Fellowship makes a serious mistake, do not erase it to protect its image.

A mistake honestly remembered can become a teacher.

The best story does not end with:

See how good we were.

It ends with:

See what we learned.

Stories should not turn founders or elders into saints.

A perfect hero teaches ordinary people very little.

Better to remember human beings who struggled, failed, repaired, learned, and continued.

2.6 Service

The Seven Bonds should become visible in the world.

Members should therefore serve.

Service may be small.

It may mean helping an elderly neighbour with shopping.

Repairing a shared path.

Teaching a child.

Helping someone find work.

Visiting a person who is alone.

Cleaning a stream.

Restoring a damaged place.

Supporting a family through illness.

Teaching a useful skill.

Mediating a dispute.

Preparing food.

Maintaining a public space.

Service should meet real needs rather than merely make the giver feel virtuous.

Ask before assuming.

Listen before deciding what another person needs.

Help in a way that preserves dignity.

Agree who will do what, when, and with what means. Check that the help actually reaches those who need it. Share the work fairly, protecting caregivers' needs too, rather than leaving the whole burden with whoever first notices it.

No form of service makes a person morally superior.

Today one person gives.

Tomorrow they may need to receive.

2.7 Entering the Fellowship

Membership should be voluntary.

No child is born owing allegiance to the Fellowship.

No spouse becomes a member through marriage.

No person should join because refusal would cost them safety, livelihood, family, or dignity.

A person considering membership should first have time to observe.

They may attend gatherings.

They may ask difficult questions.

They may join service.

They may speak with members and elders.

They should understand both the Seven Bonds and the freedom they retain.

When ready, they may make a simple commitment:

I join this Fellowship freely.
I will strive to live by the Seven Bonds.
I know that I will sometimes fail.
When I fail, I will try to learn, repair, and grow.
I will not place the Fellowship above truth,
conscience, or the dignity of others.
I will help those around me to flourish, and I will
allow them to help me do the same.

The ceremony may be simple.

A reading of the Seven Bonds.

A few words from a mentor.

A meal.

A tree planted.

A shared act of service.

The meaning lies in the choice, not the spectacle.

A person who later wishes to leave may leave.

A bond freely chosen has meaning.

A bond enforced by fear is not fellowship.

2.8 Growing into Responsibility

Children should learn the Seven Bonds gradually.

A young child might first learn:

- Do not hurt needlessly.
- Do not take what is not yours.
- Keep your promises.
- Treat people kindly.
- Help those who need you.
- Look after the world.
- Try to discover what is true.

As understanding grows, the questions should grow.

Young people should not merely memorize.

They should discuss.

They should challenge.

They should examine real dilemmas.

They should be allowed to disagree respectfully with elders.

A community should be pleased when a young person asks a question that has no easy answer.

It means thought is alive.

When a young person is mature enough to understand the Bonds and choose for themselves, they may decide whether to join the Fellowship.

Their choice should be honoured either way.

2.9 Becoming a Mentor

A person becomes ready to mentor not when they possess every answer, but when they have learned how to accompany another person searching for one.

A future mentor should show:

- patience,
- reliability,
- self-reflection,
- respect for boundaries,
- willingness to admit uncertainty,
- and some history of service.

A mentor must understand one essential rule:

A mentor advises a life. They do not own it.

A student may disagree.

A student may change mentors.

A mentor must never use trust for money, intimacy, obedience, status, or personal power.

Trust given for growth must not become a tool for exploitation.

2.10 Becoming an Elder

Eldership should never be inherited.

It should never be purchased.

It should never become permanent simply because it was once granted.

Trust should be renewed, not assumed.

A community should know how its elders are chosen, questioned, and replaced.

An elder should emerge from long-observed conduct and the trust of others.

The community should ask:

Who listens well?

Who can change their mind?

Who behaves fairly when no praise is available?

Who can be trusted with vulnerable people?

Who helps opponents speak without becoming enemies?

Who leaves students stronger rather than more dependent?

Who has shown that responsibility makes them humbler rather than more important?

An elder remains accountable to the same Seven Bonds as everyone else.

Influence increases responsibility.

It does not reduce it.

2.11 The Annual Renewal

Once each year, at the **renewal or turning of the year as understood in the community's own cultural calendar**, a community may hold a Renewal Gathering.

The date need not be the same everywhere. A community may follow the civil, religious, lunar, seasonal, customary, or other calendar by which its people ordinarily recognise the beginning of a new year.

What matters is the shared moment of passage: one year closing, another beginning, and the community choosing again how it intends to live.

It asks:

Where did we live the Bonds well?

Where did we fail?

Who was overlooked?

What conflict remains unresolved?

What resource was neglected?

What belief proved mistaken?

What should we do differently in the year ahead?

The gathering should celebrate good work.

It should also make room for uncomfortable truths.

Where possible, it may end with a shared meal, a simple act of service, or another local custom that marks renewal without requiring members to abandon the traditions of their culture or faith.

A community that can examine itself without despair or defensiveness becomes stronger.

Those who wish may close with these words:

Another year has passed through our hands.
What was done cannot be undone.
What was learned need not be lost.
We renew our bond with one another,
with those who depend upon us,
with the world we share,
and with the search for what is true.
May we do better where we can.

2.12 Reconciliation

When people have been divided by conflict and both wish to repair the relationship, reconciliation may be marked.

Each person should be allowed to describe the harm as they experienced it.

Neither should be forced to pretend that nothing happened.

Where responsibility exists, it should be acknowledged.

Where repair is possible, it should be made.

Only then should reconciliation be celebrated.

Reconciliation does not mean forgetting.

Sometimes remembering is what prevents repetition.

The purpose is not to erase the wound.

It is to allow the wound to close.

Forgiveness may be offered.

It cannot rightly be demanded.

Repair may continue without renewed contact or restored trust; no one owes a return to a relationship as the price of receiving it.

2.13 Rites of Passage and Remembrance

Across cultures, people gather around the same great thresholds: a life begins, two lives are joined in commitment, a life ends, and those who remain learn how to remember.

The Fellowship may mark these moments without replacing the religious, legal, family, or cultural traditions that people already hold.

A Fellowship rite should therefore be **simple, voluntary, adaptable, and recognisable across cultures**.

It should make room for the customs of the people involved while preserving a small common structure: gathering, naming what has happened, freely spoken commitments where commitments are appropriate, witness by the community, and a shared act that carries the moment into memory.

No rite makes a person morally superior.

No rite binds a child to membership.

No marriage rite makes one partner the property or subordinate of another.

No funeral requires a particular belief about what follows death.

The form may differ.

The purpose is to help people meet important moments together.

Birth — The Welcome

The birth or arrival of a child may be marked by a Welcome.

The family may hold it soon after birth or later, when parent, child, and household are ready. Adoption or another form of a child joining a family may be welcomed in the same spirit.

A simple Welcome may contain seven parts.

1. Gathering

Family, friends, neighbours, and members of the Fellowship gather around the child and those who will care for them.

The gathering should reduce burdens rather than create them. Food may be brought, practical help offered, and the needs of the recovering parent or caregivers respected.

2. Naming

The child's name is spoken before the gathering.

Where a culture has naming customs, ancestral names, family names, blessings, prayers, songs, or other traditions, they may be included.

3. Presentation

A parent, caregiver, elder, or other trusted person introduces the child to the gathered community.

They may say:

We welcome this life among us.
May this child be safe, cared for, respected, and free to grow.
May those who raise them have strength when strength is needed, patience when patience is needed, and help when help is needed.

4. The caregivers' promise

Parents or caregivers who wish may make a simple promise:

We will strive to protect you without possessing you,
to care for you without preventing you from growing,
to teach you without demanding that you become copies of us,
to keep faith with you,
to respect the person you become,
and to prepare you, as far as we can, to stand in the world with strength and conscience of your own.

5. The community's promise

Those gathered may answer:

We will help this child and those who care for them.
We will offer protection, knowledge, patience, and friendship where we can.
We will remember that this life belongs first to itself.

The promise is a promise of care, not a claim of membership. When the child is old enough to understand the Seven Bonds, their relationship with the Fellowship remains theirs to choose.

6. A sign of welcome

The family may choose a local symbol of welcome: lighting a lamp or candle, touching water, planting something, giving cloth or a keepsake, placing a hand gently upon the child, offering flowers, sharing a blessing, or another custom meaningful to the family.

No particular symbol is required.

7. Celebration

The Welcome may close with food, music, gifts, photographs, storytelling, or quiet time together.

The important thing is that a new life is received not only with hope, but with a community prepared to help carry the responsibilities that hope creates.

Marriage — The Joining

Marriage joins two people in a public commitment recognised by family, community, law, faith, custom, or some combination of these.

The Fellowship's rite is called **The Joining**.

It may stand alone where appropriate or accompany another civil, religious, or cultural ceremony.

Its foundation is free and informed consent.

No person should be married through fear, coercion, concealment of a material fact, or pressure that makes refusal unsafe.

A simple Joining may contain seven parts.

1. Gathering and witness

The partners gather with the people they wish to witness and support the marriage.

Family customs, music, clothing, procession, prayer, readings, or other traditions may be included.

2. Naming the choice

An elder, mentor, relative, friend, or other chosen officiant asks each partner separately whether they enter the marriage freely.

Each should answer in their own words or with a clear yes.

3. Remembering the whole person

The officiant reminds the gathering that marriage joins lives without erasing individuality.

Love does not cancel dignity.

Commitment does not cancel conscience.

Shared life does not make either person the possession of the other.

4. The vows

The partners may write their own vows. If they prefer, each may say:

I choose you freely.
I will guard your safety,
be fair in what we share,
and true to my word.
I will respect who you are,
care for you in weakness,
and care for the world we share.
I will seek truth with you, even when it is hard.
I will not ask you to lose yourself for me.
When I cause harm, I will make amends.
I will meet the years with you in good faith,
and grow beside you.

5. Exchange

The partners may exchange rings, garlands, gifts, written vows, cups, cords, flowers, tokens, or another symbol recognised by their culture or chosen by them.

The symbol is not the marriage.

It is a reminder of the promise.

6. Community acknowledgement

Those gathered may be asked whether they will support the marriage without trying to control it.

They may answer:

We witness this joining.
We will honour the promises made here,
offer help in difficulty,
rejoice in good fortune,
and respect the life these two people build together.

7. **Celebration**

The marriage may be sealed in whatever peaceful local form is meaningful: a kiss, embrace, joined hands, blessing, signing, procession, meal, feast, dance, music, or shared silence.

The celebration belongs to the people whose lives are being joined.

Death — The Farewell

Death brings private grief and public responsibilities together.

The Fellowship's rite is called **The Farewell**.

It may accompany burial, cremation, donation, return to family land, or any other lawful and respectful disposition of the body chosen by the person, family, culture, or faith.

The Fellowship makes no required claim about what lies beyond death.

Members may understand that question through their own religion, philosophy, tradition, or conscience.

A simple Farewell may contain seven parts.

1. Care for the living and the dead

Before ceremony comes care.

The body should be treated with dignity according to the wishes of the deceased where known, the needs of the family, local law, and cultural or religious custom.

The bereaved should be offered practical help with food, transport, children, administration, visitors, and the ordinary tasks grief can make difficult.

2. Gathering

Those who knew the person gather in a home, hall, place of worship, cemetery, cremation place, outdoors, or another suitable place.

A photograph, personal object, flowers, cloth, light, or other memorial may be present, but none is required.

3. Naming the death

The person's name is spoken.

The reality of the death is acknowledged without euphemism being required and without forcing anyone to speak who cannot yet do so.

A moment of silence, prayer, music, or stillness may follow.

4. Remembering the life

People may tell stories.

They may speak of kindness, work, humour, struggle, service, friendship, family, mistakes, change, and the ordinary habits by which a life became known.

A person's life is more than their successes and more than their failures.

Honesty need not become cruelty, and love need not require pretending that the person was perfect.

5. Gratitude and unfinished things

Those gathered may name what they received from the person and what they hope to carry forward.

Where harm or unfinished responsibility remains, it may be acknowledged with care.

The dead cannot complete every repair.

The living may still choose not to pass every wound forward.

6. Farewell

Before the body is buried, cremated, transferred, or otherwise laid to rest, those present may offer a final gesture according to custom: words, prayer, flowers, earth, water, touch, bowing, silence, music, or another respectful sign.

Those who wish may close with these words:

A life has returned what it borrowed.
What remains is what it changed in others.
May we carry forward what was good,
repair what remains unfinished,
and remember that our own time is also brief.

7. Returning together

Where possible, the Farewell is followed by shared food, hospitality, or time together.

Grief should not be hurried into privacy merely because the formal ceremony has ended.

The community's duty continues after the gathering.

Annual Remembrance — The Anniversary

On the annual anniversary of a loved one's death, those who remember them may observe a simple **Anniversary Remembrance**.

The date may be kept according to the calendar or family custom by which the death is remembered.

The remembrance may be private, within a household, or shared with friends and community.

It may include:

- speaking the person's name,
- placing a photograph, object, flower, light, or other reminder in a chosen place,
- visiting a grave or another place associated with them,
- telling one story that should not be lost,
- preparing a food, song, prayer, reading, or custom associated with the person,
- doing one act of care or service in their memory,
- and allowing grief, gratitude, affection, or silence to be present without demanding a particular emotion.

A short remembrance may close:

You are absent from this day, but not from what you changed.
We remember your life, carry what was good, and continue ours.

Annual remembrance is not an obligation to remain in sorrow.

It is permission to give memory a place.

Birthdays — A Small Custom

Birthdays may be marked in whatever way a person or culture ordinarily celebrates them.

Members who wish may add a lightweight Fellowship custom.

At some point during the birthday, the person may pause to recognise three things:

- **one thing from the past year for which they are grateful,**
- **one thing they learned or repaired,**
- **and one Bond they would like to practise with greater attention in the year ahead.**

Friends or family may offer a hope, memory, or word of encouragement.

Nothing needs to be recorded.

There is no score and no public accounting.

Then the birthday should return to being a birthday.

Joy needs no further justification.



CHAPTER THREE

PROCEDURES

A community built only on goodwill will eventually meet a situation goodwill cannot resolve.

There will be disagreements.

There will be serious mistakes.

There may be harmful conduct.

There will be decisions affecting many people at once.

For this reason, the Fellowship uses procedures.

A good procedure does not replace wisdom.

It protects wisdom from pressure, favouritism, fear, and haste.

Procedure matters most when emotions are strongest.

Each local Fellowship should meet the following five requirements, in forms suited to its scale and responsibilities:

The scope and limits of its authority: which decisions and shared resources it may govern, why that authority is justified, what limits bind it, and how those entrusted with it can be replaced.

Membership does not confer authority over every part of a person's life.

Responsibility for essential operations: who is responsible for necessary provision, coordination, decisions and their implementation; why those responsibilities are fair; and how resources, information, workloads and due times fit together.

Responsibilities based on an undertaking must actually be accepted.

Accessible review and fallback arrangements: how every affected person can raise a concern, obtain help or representation where needed, and reach safe, timely and independent review capable of changing a decision.

The challenged person must not control the only route. Outside help should be arranged where local capacity or independence is insufficient.

Fair decisions and actual correction: how valid claims receive fair, evidence-informed decisions and justified responses to uncertainty, and how warranted remedies are carried out with clear responsibility, adequate means and due times.

Continuity arrangements: how essential work, resources, knowledge and review remain available through absences, departures and the disruptions the Fellowship undertakes to cover, including actual replacement responsibilities or accepted roles.

The procedures below offer ways to meet these requirements. Their form may vary; their adequacy depends on whether the protections actually work.

Fair judgment requires evidence and defensible reasons, not merely a completed procedure.

3.1 Begin Close to the Problem

When conflict arises, begin as close to the people involved as is reasonably safe.

Speak directly where direct speech is possible.

Ask what happened before deciding why it happened.

Seek clarification before accusation.

Seek repair before punishment.

Use mediation where useful.

Allow time for anger to cool before irreversible decisions.

Do not demand direct contact or mediation when there is a credible risk of intimidation, abuse, violence, or serious exploitation.

Protect the vulnerable before seeking reconciliation.

Peace is not created by forcing the weaker person back into danger.

3.2 Mediation

Mediation exists to help people hear what conflict has made difficult to hear.

A mediator should not begin by choosing a winner.

They should help establish:

- what each person believes happened,
- what facts are agreed,
- what facts remain disputed,
- what harm is claimed,
- what each person needs now,
- and what repair may be possible.

The mediator should be trusted by all sides or replaced.

A settlement reached through fear is not a settlement.

A settlement reached through understanding has a chance to last.

3.3 Serious Misalignment

Sometimes ordinary conversation is not enough.

A member may repeatedly or seriously depart from the Seven Bonds.

Formal proceedings for serious misalignment should be reserved for conduct that the community reasonably believes has crossed a meaningful threshold.

The purpose is not to decide whether the accused is a good or bad human being.

The purpose is to determine:

- What happened?
- Which Bonds were involved?
- How serious was the departure?
- What harm resulted?
- What danger remains?
- What repair is possible?
- What response is proportionate?

A formal process should never become entertainment.

The dignity of the complainant, the accused, witnesses, and jurors should all be protected.

Public curiosity is not the same as public interest.

3.4 Raising a Case

Anyone affected by Fellowship conduct or decisions may raise a concern, directly or through a representative. Ordinary requests for support, clarification or correction need not allege serious misconduct; a blameless mistake can still need repair.

A complaint should state:

- the conduct being challenged,
- the people affected,
- the Bonds believed to be involved,
- the evidence presently available,
- and the remedy or protection being sought, if known.

Frivolous complaints should be discouraged.

But barriers should not be so high that only powerful people can seek justice.

If a complaint concerns a leader, those judging it should be free from that leader's influence.

Where a complaint appears clearly malicious or knowingly false, that conduct itself may be examined under the Seven Bonds.

Do not punish a person merely for raising a concern or giving honest evidence.

Where a complaint appears credible, the process should move without needless delay.

Justice that arrives too late may fail to protect.

Justice rushed without care may create a second injustice.

3.5 The Jury

Serious cases should not rest in the hands of one permanent authority.

One approach is a jury selected through a transparent random process from a sufficiently large pool of eligible community members.

Eligibility should reflect demonstrated trustworthiness, independence of judgement, understanding of the Seven Bonds, and freedom from relevant conflicts of interest.

The purpose of qualification is not to create a ruling class.

It is to ensure that people given temporary judgement over serious matters have shown some capacity to carry that responsibility.

The purpose of random selection is to prevent the power to judge from becoming owned.

Jurors should be free from intimidation.

They should hear the evidence.

They should be able to ask questions.

They should consider relevant past rulings.

They should give reasons for their decision.

A juror should not be punished merely for reaching a minority view in good faith.

Independent judgement is valuable precisely because truth and justice are not always found by counting heads.

3.6 Evidence and Uncertainty

A judgement should distinguish between what is known, what is likely, and what remains uncertain.

Rumour should not become fact by repetition.

Popularity should not become evidence.

Status should not make one person's testimony automatically worth more than another's.

Where expert knowledge is needed, experts may explain technical facts.

Experts should inform judgement, not replace it.

The jury remains responsible for applying the Seven Bonds.

When the evidence is weak, certainty should be weak.

When the possible penalty is severe, the demand for confidence should rise.

It is better to admit uncertainty than to hide it behind authority.

3.7 Judgement

A judgement should explain:

- the facts accepted,
- the important uncertainties,
- the Bonds involved,
- the reasoning used,
- the seriousness of the misalignment,
- and the response required.

Similar cases should be treated similarly unless there is a clear reason to depart.

Different cases should not be forced into sameness merely for convenience.

A good judgement is understandable to ordinary people.

If a ruling cannot be explained plainly, it should be examined again.

The greater the consequence, the stronger the case for review by people who did not make the first decision.

Affected people should have access to the material grounds, or equivalent independent scrutiny where privacy or safety requires it. Review must be able to correct the decision and its consequences.

3.8 Proportion and Restoration

Where harm can be repaired, repair should usually matter more than suffering.

Possible responses may include:

- apology,
- restitution,
- restoration of damaged property,
- education,
- mentoring,
- service related to the harm,
- temporary limits on responsibilities,
- supervision,
- separation from a role,
- or exclusion where serious danger cannot otherwise be managed.

The response should fit the conduct.

A remedy needs someone responsible for carrying it out, adequate means, a due time and a way to confirm completion. A hearing or apology does not replace separately owed repair.

Humiliation should never be used merely because it is emotionally satisfying.

Permanent exclusion should be rare and connected to serious continuing danger, not to ordinary human failure.

A person who has caused harm may still grow.

A community that allows no return teaches people to hide mistakes rather than repair them.

Redemption is not the erasure of consequence.

It is the possibility that consequence can lead to change.

3.9 Precedent

Past decisions should be preserved.

They allow future juries to ask:

- How was a similar problem understood before?
- What reasoning was used?
- What happened afterward?
- Did the decision produce good or harmful consequences?
- Has society changed in a way that matters?

Past rulings should guide.

They should not rule from the grave.

Older precedent may gradually lose default weight as circumstances, knowledge, and culture change.

The record should remain.

Its authority may fade.

A past judgement can still be revived when its reasoning remains strong.

Thus the Fellowship remembers without becoming trapped.

The Seven Bonds remain fixed as the Fellowship's founding text.

No ruling can add an eighth.

Our understanding of how to apply them continues to grow.

3.10 Community Decisions

Not every question belongs in a jury.

Communities also need to choose what to build, how to spend shared resources, which projects to begin, which risks to accept, and how to organize common work.

For ordinary decisions, the simplest effective process should be preferred.

Small groups may decide through direct discussion.

Larger groups may use voting, delegation, committees, randomly selected panels, or other transparent methods suited to the decision.

The method should fit the stakes.

A reversible low-risk choice should not require the same burden as an irreversible high-risk choice.

The greater the possible harm, the greater the need for evidence, participation, review, and time.

The Seven Bonds are the test.

Governance is only the tool.

3.11 Records and Privacy

A community needs memory.

It also needs mercy.

Important decisions, reasons, rules, and precedents should be recorded so that future members can understand how the Fellowship has acted.

But not every private detail belongs in permanent public view.

Records should preserve what is needed for accountability without turning every human mistake into an eternal spectacle.

The right balance will differ by case.

The guiding questions are simple:

What must future people know?

What must affected people be able to verify?

What details would serve only curiosity, shame, or gossip?

Transparency protects against abuse.

Privacy protects human dignity.

A wise system respects both.



CHAPTER FOUR

PERSPECTIVES

The Seven Bonds do not require one culture, religion, political system, or private way of life. They provide common ground for living across difference.

This chapter offers perspectives on questions that often divide people. They are guidance, not additional Bonds.

4.1 Religion

The Fellowship does not require a person to abandon sincere religious belief or disbelief.

A Christian, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, follower of an indigenous or traditional faith, atheist, agnostic, or person of another conviction may belong.

People may understand existence, death, spirit, divinity, rebirth, consciousness, and meaning differently. The Fellowship does not settle these questions for them.

Where traditions teach compassion, honesty, stewardship, humility, restraint, or care, members may recognize common ground. Where beliefs conflict, disagree without contempt.

No tradition is beyond examination, and no tradition is without the possibility of wisdom.

4.2 Politics

The Fellowship is not the property of a political faction.

Members may disagree about taxation, markets, welfare, borders, policing, education, public ownership, local autonomy, national government, tradition, reform, and many other questions.

Political proposals should face the Seven Bonds: What harm may follow? What legitimate claims and agreements are involved? Whose dignity and vulnerability matter? Is the course sustainable? What does the evidence show?

People applying the same Bonds in good faith may still reach different conclusions.

A Fellowship capable of disagreement without hatred has achieved something valuable.

4.3 Race, Nation, and Culture

Language, food, music, stories, manners, memory, and custom help give people a sense of home. The Fellowship does not ask people to become culturally identical.

Learn before dismissing. Distinguish what is merely unfamiliar from what is genuinely harmful.

Culture cannot excuse needless harm, exploitation, humiliation, or deceit. Nor should difference be condemned simply because it is unfamiliar.

No race is closer to the Seven Bonds than another. No nation owns them. Every culture may contain both wisdom and practices worthy of criticism.

4.4 Wealth and Class

Wealth, education, occupation, and leadership do not determine human worth.

Useful roles depend upon other useful roles. The farmer depends on the mechanic; the mechanic on the teacher; the teacher on the builder; the builder on the healer; the healer on the person who cleans the room.

Wealth may bring greater capacity. Greater capacity often brings greater responsibility.

It does not bring greater human worth.

4.5 Science and Knowledge

The Fellowship values knowledge that can survive examination.

Science is one of humanity's strongest tools for discovering how the world behaves, but neither scientists nor institutions are infallible. Data can be poor, assumptions mistaken, and models wrong.

The answer is not to abandon evidence but to improve it.

Ask: What is known? How certain is it? What assumptions are being made? What evidence would change the conclusion?

Respect expertise without turning it into unquestionable authority. Question claims without mistaking suspicion for knowledge.

4.6 Technology

Technology extends power. It can heal, connect, teach, protect, and create; it can also surveil, manipulate, divide, exploit, and destroy.

Do not worship a tool or fear it merely because it is new. Ask what it does, who benefits, who carries the risk, what happens when it fails, and whether its costs fall on people who had little voice in choosing it.

A tool should serve life, not quietly make life serve the tool.

4.7 Conscious Beings Beyond Humanity

The First Bond speaks of conscious beings rather than humans alone. This is deliberate.

Where a being can suffer, its suffering matters. This does not mean every conscious being has identical needs, capacities, or claims. It means convenience alone is not enough to make suffering morally invisible.

Our understanding of consciousness will change. Where uncertainty remains, thoughtful caution is wiser than either careless dismissal or exaggerated certainty.

As knowledge improves, practice should improve with it.

4.8 Outsiders

An outsider owes the Fellowship no allegiance.

Treat them according to the Seven Bonds anyway.

Honesty, dignity, care, protection, and stewardship do not stop at the edge of membership. A movement that behaves well only toward its own people has misunderstood fellowship.

4.9 Guarding Against Harmful Group Behaviour

Good intentions do not make an institution safe. Members should become concerned when:

- leaders demand unquestioning obedience,
- criticism is treated as betrayal,
- outsiders are described as lesser people,
- members are pressured to cut ties with family or friends,
- money or decision-making is hidden without good reason,
- leaders claim special moral exemption,
- private confession becomes compulsory,
- leaving becomes dangerous,
- reputation matters more than truth,
- or protecting the Fellowship's image matters more than protecting someone who has been harmed.

When such signs appear, members should speak and act. The Fellowship must remain subject to the same Seven Bonds it asks others to follow.

CHAPTER FIVE

INTEGRATION

The Seven Bonds are not intended only for gatherings. Their value is shown in ordinary life.

5.1 In the Home

A home is often the first place a person learns what power feels like.

Security means home should not be a place of fear. Property means boundaries and possessions still deserve respect among people who love one another. Agreements mean family promises matter. Respect means affection does not cancel dignity. Care means dependence should be met with support rather than contempt. Environment means shared resources should not be treated as limitless. Reason means arguments should eventually return to what is true and what can be repaired.

A peaceful society is difficult to build if people first learn domination at home.

5.2 In Friendship

Friendship should make honesty safer and growth easier.

A good friend can warn, challenge, refuse, celebrate, forgive, and allow change. Ask: Can we tell each other difficult truths? Can we disagree without humiliation? Can we repair harm? Can we let one another grow?

A friendship that survives honest correction becomes strong.

5.3 At Work

Work is where many people spend much of their waking life, so the Bonds belong there too.

Protect people from needless harm. Treat wages, tools, ideas, and resources honestly. Honour commitments. Remember that workers are people, not units of output. Help people grow in competence and support genuine vulnerability. Do not hide business costs in damaged commons. Let evidence carry more weight than rank alone.

A good workplace is not guaranteed to be easy. It is more likely to be worthy of effort.

5.4 In Business and Exchange

Trade can be a form of cooperation when each side understands the exchange and can choose freely.

Do not hide material facts for gain, create confusion and exploit it, make agreements you know cannot be honoured, or treat every legal loophole as moral permission.

Profit is not shameful. Profit gained by transferring hidden harm to others is different.

5.5 In Education

Education should increase a person's ability to think, act, cooperate, and choose.

Teach facts and how facts are tested. Teach history and how perspective shapes memory. Teach confidence and uncertainty, competition and cooperation.

The aim is not to produce obedient adults. It is to produce capable adults who can think responsibly without constant supervision.

5.6 In Public Life

Public life becomes dangerous when opponents cease to see one another as legitimate members of the same society.

Argue strongly. Expose wrongdoing. Oppose harmful policies. But do not make contempt a habit.

The Seven Bonds provide common questions even when political answers differ. They offer a shared floor beneath disagreement.

5.7 Online

Distance, speed, and crowds make cruelty and error easier online.

Do not spread claims merely because they injure someone you dislike. Do not seize another person's work without credit, deceive for attention, or humiliate someone because an audience is watching.

Check before sharing. Slow down before condemning. The person on the other side of the network is still a person.

5.8 In Local Fellowships

Local communities should adapt practices to their culture and circumstances while preserving the Seven Bonds.

One may meet around meals; another around farming, repair work, mentoring, neighbourhood service, or a shared workplace.

Uniformity is not the goal. Shared principles provide unity; local wisdom provides adaptation.

CHAPTER SIX

VISION

We live in an age of extraordinary possibility and uncertainty. Technology changes quickly. Information is abundant, but trust is scarce. People can communicate across continents while loneliness persists. Political disagreement can harden into identity, environmental pressures grow, and institutions often struggle to adapt.

The future may be prosperous. It may also be turbulent.

The Fellowship exists because uncertainty does not remove the need for direction. It increases it.

6.1 A Stable Centre in a Changing World

A society cannot predict every future problem, so its deepest values should not depend entirely on temporary circumstances.

Technology, economies, families, borders, institutions, and cultures may change. The need to reduce needless harm, respect legitimate possession, honour trust, preserve dignity, care for vulnerability, sustain shared resources, and seek truth is less likely to disappear.

A compass remains useful precisely because the landscape changes.

6.2 A Culture of Repair

Every society creates harm. The important question is what happens next.

Name the harm. Protect those still at risk. Establish responsibility carefully. Repair what can be repaired. Learn what allowed the harm to happen. Help people change where change is possible. Preserve memory without preserving grievance for its own sake.

A society able to repair is harder to break.

6.3 A Culture of Truth Without Cruelty

Truth matters, but truth can be used as a weapon. Kindness matters, but kindness can become avoidance.

Say what needs to be said in a way that leaves room for the other person to remain human.

The purpose of truth is not victory. It is clearer sight.

6.4 A Culture of Service Without Submission

The Fellowship asks people to contribute without erasing themselves.

Care should coexist with boundaries. Generosity should coexist with self-respect. A healthy community does not consume its most caring members; it supports them too.

6.5 A Culture That Can Survive Disagreement

The Fellowship should become especially valuable when people disagree.

The Seven Bonds provide a shared language without requiring identical conclusions. People may differ about policy, culture, economics, or knowledge while still agreeing to reduce needless harm, respect legitimate claims, preserve dignity, care for vulnerability, sustain what is shared, and examine evidence honestly.

Shared principles do not remove disagreement. They make disagreement safer.

6.6 A Global Fellowship of Local Communities

The Fellowship may grow across many places without becoming a cultural empire.

Local communities should retain language, custom, food, art, ceremony, and forms of gathering suited to their people. A fishing village, a city neighbourhood, and communities shaped by different faiths or philosophies need not look the same.

The common foundation is the Seven Bonds. Much else may adapt.

Let what can be decided locally remain local.

Wider bodies should carry only what local communities cannot carry alone.

Anyone may practise the Bonds.

Recognition as a Fellowship is a mark of trust, not ownership. It should belong to communities that protect conscience, make leadership

answerable, steward shared resources openly, and leave concerns safe to raise.

Any body granting or withdrawing recognition should identify itself, state the scope and grounds of its decision, and provide an accessible route to independent review. Its recognition extends only to the association it represents.

Recognition may be withdrawn.

The Bonds cannot be.

6.7 A Culture of Freedom of Conscience

Freedom of conscience is essential to the culture the Fellowship seeks to protect.

The Fellowship may hold people accountable for actions affecting others, but it should be cautious about policing private thought. Members need room to wonder, doubt, believe, disbelieve, reconsider, and change.

A member may question elders, customs, procedures, interpretations, and the Fellowship itself. Belonging does not require surrendering private judgement.

The Seven Bonds are the Fellowship's permanent foundation. This preserves a shared founding identity; it does not place their adequacy beyond reasoned examination.

Members may ask whether the Bonds are sufficient, whether their wording is sound, or whether a different ethical framework would serve better. Such questions deserve consideration, not punishment.

No committee or ruling can rewrite the founding Bonds. Their interpretation and everything built around them remain open to examination, and commitment to the Fellowship remains freely chosen.

6.8 The Long View

The Fellowship should cultivate the long view.

Plant trees whose shade you may never sit beneath. Teach skills you may never see used. Preserve records future people may need. Build institutions that do not depend on one charismatic person. Protect resources whose full value may become clear only after you are gone.

A good ancestor remembers descendants before meeting them.

6.9 Hope as a Practice

Hope is not the belief that everything will be easy. It is the decision that worthwhile action remains possible.

Conflict, disappointment, institutional failure, and uncertainty will remain. The Fellowship does not promise escape from difficulty. It offers a way to face difficulty together.

A person who knows what they stand for is harder to scatter. A trustworthy community is harder to isolate. A community that can correct itself is harder to corrupt. A society that remembers future generations is harder to consume from within.

Hope grows when people can see a path from principle to action.

The Seven Bonds offer such a path.



CHAPTER SEVEN

THE MESSAGE

The Fellowship of Seven Bonds carries a simple message.

Human beings do not need to agree about everything in order to live well together. We need enough shared ground to trust, cooperate, care, correct ourselves, and preserve a future worth inheriting.

The Seven Bonds are that ground.

Do not harm needlessly.

Respect what belongs to others.

Let your word be trustworthy.

Remember that other lives matter beyond your own.

Strengthen those who depend upon you and help those who cannot stand alone.

Leave enough of the world for those who come after you.

Seek what is true, and be willing to change when you learn that you were wrong.

These ideas are easy to say. A lifetime is scarcely enough to understand them fully.

7.1 The Elder's Reminder

An elder should remember:

Do not make the student into yourself. Help them become themselves wisely.

Ask when a question would teach more than an answer.

Do not hide uncertainty behind authority or mistake silence for agreement.

Do not seek dependence. Your work is complete when the person beside you can walk without your guidance and may one day guide another more wisely than you did.

7.2 The Member's Reminder

A member should remember:

Let the Seven Bonds be more than a symbol you carry. Let them guide the life you lead. Use them when they are inconvenient.

Remember Property when what is threatened belongs to someone you dislike. Remember Respect when speaking to someone who has angered you. Remember Reason when the evidence turns against you. Remember Care when care asks something from you.

Principles reveal their value when following them costs something.

7.3 The Outsider's Welcome

You do not need to join the Fellowship to learn from it.

You may attend, question, disagree, take what is useful, and leave the rest.

If you find wisdom here, it belongs to humanity more than to an organization. If you find error here, say so.

The Fellowship hopes to be worthy of respect. It does not demand it.

7.4 Closing

A good society is not built once.

It is rebuilt every day: in the promise kept, the anger restrained, the child taught patiently, the stranger treated fairly, the damaged thing repaired, the vulnerable person supported without being diminished, the resource left for tomorrow, and the argument where someone finally says:

Perhaps you are right. Let us look again.

The Fellowship of Seven Bonds asks no person to become perfect.

It asks us to remain bound to the attempt: to help one another when the road is difficult, to correct without cruelty, to learn without shame, and to serve without pride.

To belong without surrendering conscience.
To face an uncertain future with steadiness rather than fear.
And to leave those who come after us something worth receiving.

APPENDIX A — THE BONDS AND ETHICAL COEXISTENCE

The Seven Bonds guide how people treat one another and meet their responsibilities. Governance provides arrangements for shared work, fair decisions, and accountable power. This appendix explains what following the Bonds can secure, what further arrangements are needed, and the conditions on which those results depend.

The Objective

Ethically acceptable coexistence is a durable form of shared life in which participants' basic welfare, dignity and attainable agency are effectively supported; legitimate claims arising from their dealings receive fair treatment; and power is exercised with justification and meaningful opportunities for challenge. Participants take appropriate responsibility for their conduct, dependencies and shared resources. Conscious beings outside these social relationships remain protected against unjustified harm, while shared resources and ecosystems are maintained sustainably for present and future generations. Conflicts and failures receive genuine, evidence-informed efforts toward fair resolution and feasible correction. Different cultural identities and ways of life remain permissible within these protections.

This standard concerns actual treatment, support and opportunity. Good intentions alone do not establish it. Dependents and people denied official recognition still count.

What the Bonds Can Achieve

Following the Bonds does not require a functioning government. An individual can refrain from harm and deception, honour commitments,

provide due care, repair attributable harm, maintain shared resources and engage honestly with disagreement. These contributions matter even where wider protections are absent.

Cooperation can achieve more. Where existing responsibilities and effective means cover the required work, sustained adherence by all necessary participants secures a local form of coexistence: access to essentials and support for tolerable welfare and attainable functioning, meaningful everyday choices, and continuing conditions through the disruptions covered, without imposing unjustified harm or deprivation on others.

Care and Environment require fair participation in necessary coordination and effective contributions. An absent agreement or official assignment does not by itself discharge an existing shared responsibility. This does not settle every disputed allocation or authorise arbitrary demands.

For example, neighbours with the necessary means and responsibilities can maintain a shared water supply and deliver water to someone unable to collect it. The achievement is usable water and practical support.

What Governance Adds

Local cooperation does not by itself secure society-wide accountability, fair treatment of every legitimate claim, or reliable resolution of contested responsibilities. Full coexistence requires the following functions wherever the corresponding needs arise:

- **Justified, bounded power:** consequential authority has defensible grounds and limits, including protection for harmless cultural differences.
- **Effective coordination and access:** responsibilities, resources and delivery fit together so that protected people are not left without provision.

- **Usable challenge:** people can safely question consequential decisions through an accessible route capable of changing the response.
- **Fair treatment and correction:** valid claims receive fair treatment and warranted remedies are actually carried out.
- **Continuity and adaptation:** provision, shared resources, knowledge and necessary roles endure through the changes covered.

These functions may be distributed across public bodies, communities and other arrangements. They do not prescribe five organisations or one constitution.

With these functions supplied through justified responsibilities and effective mechanisms, sustained adherence by all relevant actors establishes the full standard under the conditions below. The Bonds do not themselves create institutions or guarantee that future people will accept their roles.

Conditions and Application

Both results require fair, compatible workloads; adequate resources, time and information; effective methods; and continuing responsibilities. The arrangement must preserve its protections across all permissible ways of fulfilling those responsibilities and the disruptions it claims to withstand. Enough resources in total, or one successful plan, is insufficient.

The reasoning has three steps: the Bonds require particular justified performances; those performances have established practical effects; together those effects meet the independently defined standard. Neither a duty nor its effectiveness follows merely because the desired outcome needs it.

To assess an arrangement, ask: who is protected, who owes each contribution, can they perform it together, and what happens when something goes wrong? Include dependents, providers, outsiders and future effects. Record what is demonstrated, contradicted or unresolved.

The existence of an office or policy does not establish that its function works.

Why All Seven?

For the interpretation and operating conditions examined in the companion technical paper, all seven Bonds together suffice for the defined outcome. Removing the requirement to comply with any one leaves a possible failure that compliance with the other six does not prevent. Their meanings, the operating conditions, and the required outcome stay fixed throughout this test.

This does not mean every breach causes social collapse or that the protections cannot be expressed differently. Solan (2026) gives the definitions, assumptions and proofs in *The Seven Bonds and Ethical Coexistence*.

Under Oppression

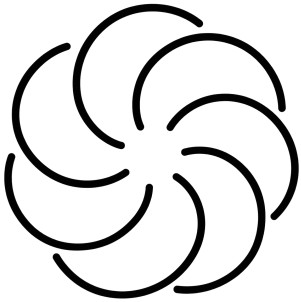
A government may obstruct the very protections it should support. Local care, honest cooperation and restraint can still preserve real benefits, but coercion, confiscation or overwhelming loss may defeat them. The results guarantee only protections within the conditions actually established.

Following the Bonds does not legitimate an oppressive regime or require unconditional obedience. Nor does it impose unlimited duties to compensate for injustice. Losing a protection does not by itself show that those deprived of it failed ethically.

A protection actually provided remains valuable even when the whole society falls short. The Bonds give people reasons to act and cooperate within their reach, and standards by which to challenge the conduct of those who hold power.

APPENDIX B — THE SIGN OF THE FELLOWSHIP

The Fellowship is represented by a simple sign of seven arcs.



Each arc recalls one of the Seven Bonds. Together they form a single mark: distinct lines held in one pattern.

The sign is a reminder, not an object of worship and not a source of authority. Its purpose is recognition and memory.

It may be displayed at gatherings, used on publications, worn or carried by members, or drawn wherever a simple reminder of the Fellowship is useful.

APPENDIX C — PUBLICATION, AUTHENTICITY AND RIGHTS

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Official Publishing Address:
`g1RPwSKjNPONRqf-Wd-ZajyGjpdt63BU5ir4lFtx8nc`

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A Common Inheritance

The Seven Bonds are offered not as the possession of an author, institution, or community, but as a common inheritance to be explored, lived, and carried forward.

Their words may be translated, their expressions may evolve, and their symbols may be shared across cultures and generations. What must endure is their essential association with the Seven Bonds and the freedom of conscience upon which they rest.

The founding edition is preserved so that all may return to its original expression, while remaining free to question, interpret, and develop their own understanding.

THE SEVEN BONDS

Seven principles for living together in a shared world.



The Seven Bonds offer a common ethical foundation for people of different beliefs, cultures and backgrounds.

1. Security

Do not harm conscious beings unless in proportionate preservation of self or community.

2. Property

Do not seize or destroy the property of others without just cause.

3. Agreements

Honour explicit agreements and do not deceive others in malice or for gain.

4. Respect

Treat others with consideration for their dignity and needs, as you would have your own considered.

5. Care

Nurture your dependents toward self-sufficiency and support vulnerable members of your community.

6. Environment

Maintain shared resources and ecosystems sustainably for present and future generations.

7. Reason

Strive for evidence-based decisions, remaining humble, open to correction, and committed to resolving conflict through reason.

REMEMBER THE SEVEN BONDS

SPARCER

Security · Property · Agreements · Respect · Care · Environment · Reason

Seven bonds. Many lives. One shared world.