



Lunenburg Aikikai Association

[www.lunenburgaikikai.org](http://www.lunenburgaikikai.org) \* [lunenburgaikikai@gmail.com](mailto:lunenburgaikikai@gmail.com) \* 902-277-0862

## **Statement of intent**

Lunenburg Aikikai has a zero tolerance for any form of harassment or bullying and works diligently to create a safe space for all members. We advocate mutual respect for everyone and do not support or tolerate any form of discrimination, exploitation, or harassment of anyone for any reason whether based on ethnicity, age, ability, gender identity, sexual preference, religion, socio-economic status.

There are no competitions in Aikido, all practice is undertaken with the understanding that all members are working to help one another progress and transform. Our aim is to practice and pass on traditional Aikido in a way that is both dynamic and still safe

Aikido is fun but not always easy. The practice will challenge you physically and emotionally, but if you put in the time, it can also change your life. The best way to know if Lunenburg Aikikai is right for you is to come watch a class, collect information, and ask questions. The more informed potential students are about the dojo, the practice, and the membership the better the fit will be.



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## About Aikido

Aikido is a traditional Japanese martial art created by Morihei Ueshiba (O-Sensei) in the early 20th century. Aikido strives for the ultimate goal of peaceful resolution rather than defeat. O-Sensei created a martial art in which the preservation of one's attacker is equally important as one's own self defense.

Aikido is more than the study of physical techniques; proper etiquette, attitude and behavior are also stressed. The basic movements of Aikido are circular in nature. The Aikidoist trains to harmonize with, rather than confront an aggressive line of force and converts it into a circular motion that renders attackers helpless. The Aikidoist trains to apply various wristlocks, arm pins or unbalancing throws to subdue and neutralize attackers without serious injury. Practiced slowly it can look like a dance, practiced at speed and it becomes obvious that it is also an effective martial art.

Aikido is not a sport and there are no competitions and thus no winning or losing. Cooperative practice with the ultimate goal of helping your peers advance lie at the heart of how we practice. As individuals we train our minds and our bodies so that as we improve ourselves we improve the group. All lessons learned on the mat are then able to be carried off the mat and into everyday life.

This information was taken from the United States Aikido Federation web site.  
[www.usaikifed.com](http://www.usaikifed.com)



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## **About Lunenburg Aikikai**

At Lunenburg Aikikai we teach traditional Aikido as handed down by the founder. Each class is a mixture of warm up exercises, open hand aikido practice and basic weapons work. We are registered members of the Aikikai Foundation in Tokyo, Japan as well as the United States Aikido Federation under the direction of Yoshimitsu Yamada Shihan in NY,NY.

Please call if you would like to come watch a class or if you are a visitor and would like to come train. Currently we are located in the Central United Church Hall at 283 Lincoln Street. Everyone is welcome.

## **About James Constable**

James Constable has been studying aikido for over 30 years and currently holds the rank of Rokudan (6th degree black belt). He is a certified instructor registered with the United States Aikido Federation as well as the Aikikai Foundation in Tokyo Japan.

James has been fortunate enough to study under several Shihans (master teachers) as well as many high ranking instructors in the US and Europe. The majority of his training, however, has been under Shihan Collins Smith (7th dan) of Bermuda Aikikai with whom James continues to study and maintains close contact.



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## Lunenburg Aikikai Lineage

Go back to the mid 1960's when several of O'Sensei's post war Uchi Deshi (live-in students) were sent out into the world to spread Aikido. Yamada Sensei went to New York, Chiba Sensei went first to the UK and then to San Diego, Sugano Sensei first to Australia and then to New York, Tamura Sensei to France, Kanai Sensei to Boston etc etc etc. I am happy to say that at one time or another I have taken direct instruction from each of those teachers; they all have passed away so I feel very privileged. Eventually the United States Aikido Federation was established with Yamada Sensei as it's over all head, but with Senseis Yamada, Kanai and Sugano representing the east coast, Tohei representing the mid west and Chiba Sensei representing the west. Today even this has evolved, but the USAF, the organization to which we belong, is still going strong.

One of Yamada Sensei's early students was Sensei Rick Stickles (7th dan, Shihan, deceased). One of Sensei Stickles' early students was Sensei Collins Smith (7<sup>th</sup> dan, Shihan) who in turn is my Sensei. This makes the simple lineage: O'Sensei, Yamada Sensei, Stickles Sensei, Smith Sensei, myself.

Obviously, life is not that simple. While Collins Smith Sensei started Aikido with Stickles Sensei he had lots of exposure to many different teachers and spent a great deal of time training directly with Yamada Sensei and some of the early instructors at New York Aikikai. In addition to this he also spent over a year as Uchi Deshi (live-in student) to Chiba Sensei in San Diego. All of our weapons practice at Lunenburg Aikikai comes from Chiba Sensei's lineage. While Sensei Smith has always remained loyal to Yamada Sensei and his direct lineage through Stickles Sensei he also maintained a good relationship, perhaps even a friendship, with Chiba Sensei. This relationship brought Chiba Sensei to Bermuda for extended periods of time and is why I also was able to study with him directly.

While I have been fortunate enough to study directly under some of the great Japanese teachers, I have also been able to learn from the next generation of great North American and European teachers. That said, for the past 30 years my primary teacher has been, and will continue to be, Sensei Collins Smith of Bermuda Aikikai.

James Constable  
6<sup>th</sup> Dan, Lunenburg Aikikai



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## Dojo etiquette and other thoughts

Although Aikido has and will continue to evolve with each new generation there are certain traditions and systems of etiquette within the *dojo* (school) that should carry on in order to protect the students and practitioners and maintain the integrity of the dojo.

What follows here is a list of *dojo* etiquette and some explanations about a few of the traditions. Most of these are obvious and essentially common sense or good manners. Others are more specifically Japanese in their origins, but even in the west remain an important part of the systems of conduct in any traditional aikido school.

1 – Upon entering and leaving the *dojo* and stepping on and off the mat make a standing bow to the room and the people in it.

2 – Always leave your shoes outside the *dojo* or in the appropriate space provided. NEVER wear shoes on the mat.

3 – Please be on time for class. This means being early enough to help put the mats down if needed and be changed and ready to line up a few minutes before class is scheduled to begin. If you are late please stand at the edge of the mat until *Sensei* invites you on. At this point you should bow in and join the class.

4 – While in the dojo the chief instructor (or any visiting instructor) should be addressed as “*Sensei*” which is the Japanese word for teacher.

5 – Please do not leave the mat without permission. The reasons for leaving should only be for illness or injury. If you are tired you may sit on the edge of the mat out of the way and watch class until you are ready to train again.

6 – The proper way to sit is in *seiza*, which is a formal sitting position with your legs tucked under you. If you are unable to sit in *seiza* for any length of time (it takes getting used to) please sit cross-legged. Never slouch or sit with your legs outstretched and never sit with your back to the *kamiza*.

7 – During class when *Sensei* is demonstrating a technique please sit quietly and watch. When the demonstration is finished please bow to *Sensei* and then to a partner to begin practice. With each new technique you should try to practice with a new partner. To choose a partner bow to them and say “*O-negai-shimasu*” which is Japanese for please practice with



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me. When the end of the technique is signaled please bow to your partner and sit down to await the next demonstrated technique

9 – Aikido is a physical practice and though we try to minimize the risks there is always the possibility of injury. It is each student's responsibility to bring to the attention of the instructor any injuries or illnesses that they should be aware of.

10 – Aikido is learned by doing, not talking. *Sensei* will demonstrate a technique and partners will practice it. Repetition and focus are the keys. Talking and questions should be kept to an absolute minimum. The process of working through a technique that you do not fully understand is a lot more valuable than having it explained to you. If you must ask a question of your instructor please go to them, never call them over to you.

11 – If you are a senior student (*sempai*) training with a junior student (*kohai*) try to avoid giving verbal instruction. If you have some insight into the technique try to teach by example or speak very quietly. Remember that no matter how long you have been training (four months or forty years) you will never have all the answers.

12 – Please keep your *Gi* (practice uniform) and yourself clean. It is always appreciated if you take the time to wash hands, feet and teeth before training. Please turn off all cell phones before class.

13 – Opening and closing ceremony: At the beginning of each class students line up facing the *kamiza* with *Sensei* in front. First everyone bows together to *O Sensei* and then students bow to the instructor while saying "*O-negai-shimasu*" which means please practice with me. At the end of class the process is reversed. Everyone lines up, students bow to *Sensei* saying "*Domo-arigato-gozaimashita*" which means thank you very much. Then everyone faces the *kamiza* and bows to *O Sensei*. Students should remain on the line until *sensei* has left the mat and indicated that class is over, at this point all students should thank their training partners for the evening and begin clean up.

14 – Membership fees: please pay your membership fees on time. Membership payment is as much a part of training as cleaning or showing up on time; it is not about buying instruction, but rather about supporting the dojo so that we all can benefit. Note: if any student needs financial assistance please speak to the chief instructor or a senior student; we have policies in place to help when help is needed.

15 – Bowing: Within the *dojo* there is much bowing. We bow when we enter the *dojo*, to step onto the mat, to begin class and to end class. We bow to *Sensei* when a technique is demonstrated and to our partners when we practice. There is nothing religious or subservient



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about the bow. Aikido is a Japanese martial art and bowing is the Japanese way to show respect to *O Sensei*, your teachers and your fellow students.

16 – Practice: In Aikido we practice in pairs. *Sensei* will demonstrate a technique, and students will pair off and practice. Each person will do the technique four times alternating between the left and right sides. After four times the roles will reverse and practice will continue in this pattern of four and four until a new technique is demonstrated and you start all over again with a new partner. The person doing the technique at any given time is called "*Nage*" and the person receiving the technique or taking the fall is called "*Uke*". The act of taking a fall or receiving a technique is called "*Ukemi*" and this will be 50% of your practice.

17 – Aikido is a physical and personal discipline. All of the teachings and philosophical tenants are hidden within the techniques, therefore technique and movement are the first line of focus in any traditional dojo. Aikido is not easy to learn, but like everything the process can be enjoyable if each practitioner brings enthusiasm, humility, focus and a sense of humor onto the mat. There is no magic involved, only practice and more practice.

Final note:

This student handbook is a work in progress. For more detailed information about the history and philosophy of Aikido as well as a glossary of terms please also read the USAF Student Handbook and of course if you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the chief instructor or any members you feel comfortable with.