

First Unitarian Healthy Community Team

Conflict Management Procedures and Guidelines

The clash of ideas, feelings, wills, and hopes is inevitable in human relationships and human communities. Although often uncomfortable it is not a bad thing in itself. Good people doing good things get into conflict; it's a fact of life. Sometimes it is a creative and energizing fact of life. If mishandled, conflict can cause hard feelings and misapplied energy. When conflict is managed appropriately, on the other hand, relationships can actually be enhanced and the resulting solutions better for everyone.

The Healthy Community Team Approach

At First Unitarian, the Healthy Community Team has been charged with assisting our church community with appropriately managing conflict when it arises between or among church members or between church staff and church members.

Overview

The Healthy Community Team proposes the following avenues for managing conflict:

- *Self-resolution*: specific, direct communication between the involved parties in an attempt to arrive at a mutual agreement regarding the conflicted issue.
- *Team assisted management*: the judicious use of means to accomplish an end to irreconcilability, especially between conflicting parties, to promote resolution, settlement, or compromise.
- *Facilitation/mediation*: a professionally trained facilitator helps the parties work on a nonadversarial approach to successfully manage their conflict. The facilitator's role is to smooth the progress of direct communication between the parties, assist them in focusing on the valid issues of the dispute, and arrive at options for settlement.

Team Members

- Stephen Phillips, Chair (2010) – nmsleep@unm.edu
- Nancy Carrillo (2010) – nancyeval@yahoo.com
- Randy Biggers (2010) – ubrvb@comcast.net
- Bill Slakey (2010) – billslakey@comcast.net
- Christine Robinson – crobinson@uuabq.org

You may call the church office at 884-1801 to request a team member's phone number.

Team Covenant

The Healthy Community Team holds the process of conflict resolution as sacred to the health and well-being of our community. To these ends, we covenant together to:

- Assume the good intentions of one another
- Acknowledge our human fallibility, biases, and blind spots

- Appreciate that we have our own unique experiences and understandings
- Engage in compassionate connection, sincere appreciation, and mutual trust
- Communicate to solve problems with one another honestly, directly, creatively, and in a timely manner
- Honor the privacy of people in the congregation by keeping personal information confidential
- Cherish and support the health of the congregation above individual agendas

Steps to Consider for Managing Conflict

1. Self-Resolution

Discuss your concern with the person or committee involved. If you do not know who is responsible for your area of concern, check with one of the ministers, the church administrator, or the congregation's president.

The Conflict Communication Guidelines at the end of this document have been found to be helpful when addressing a conflict with others.

2. Getting Help

If your conflict is with one of the church staff, you are urged to attempt step 1, self-resolution. If this does not result in an adequate solution, your next step is to go to that person's supervisor. If that does not produce a satisfactory result, you can go to the head of staff, Christine Robinson.

If you have a conflict with a committee, a fellow church member, or the senior minister, which you can't or don't want to address by direct discussion, your next step is to ask for the Healthy Community Team's assistance. You can call or write any Healthy Community Team member. You will be requested to list your concern or conflict in a narrative or outline describing:

- Your conflict, naming the person/s or situation you are having difficulty with
- What steps you have taken to resolve the conflict

Please use the Conflict Communication Guidelines at the end of this document as you engage in this step.

If the Healthy Community Team believes that a facilitator would be helpful in managing the conflict, the team will contact one who is appropriate to the situation and agreeable to all parties.

3. Meeting with a Facilitator

Several members of the congregation are professionally trained and have agreed to aid in managing conflicts. Each facilitator has their own procedure and will contact all the parties involved. Facilitators will be volunteering their professional and personal wisdom in this service.

Each party may be asked to sign a confidentiality statement. The agreement that the parties arrive at will be filed with the Healthy Community Team.

4. Referral to the Board of Directors

If the conflict can not be successfully managed, and in cases where, in the opinion of the Healthy Community Team, the conflict places persons or the church community and its mission in jeopardy, the Healthy Community Team shall refer the matter to the Board of Directors for formal resolution.

Conflict Communication Guidelines

- Use subjective language (“I” messages). (“This is my experience, my recollection, my point of view, my feeling, my interpretation.”)
- Share your feelings as honestly and completely as you are able. (“I am sad, happy, angry, frustrated, excited, fearful.”)
- Be as specific as you can about whatever situation you are describing; give examples.
- Be respectful of the other person/s. Don’t label them. Speak about the *behavior* you observe, not someone’s character or personality.
- Tell the other person why your relationship with them is important to you; offer suggestions of things *you* might need to change to improve the situation or relationship.
- Ask directly for what you want.