

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT POLICY

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT TEAM

The Board of Trustees will appoint three members to the Conflict Management Team (CMT). Each will serve a staggered three-year term upon review by Safe Congregations Task Force. The team will train and maintain a list of facilitators for their work. The number of facilitators will be determined by the team based on estimated need. The team will manage conflict **management** on behalf of the Board of Trustees as outlined in **the Conflict Management this** policy. The team will report to the Board of Trustees as needed or requested by the Board.

Those in need of services may speak confidentially with **the committee CMT members** directly. Matters may be referred by the Board of Trustees or Safe Congregation Task Force as may be appropriate.

POLICY

The UUCGT Conflict Management Team will assist the congregation in conflict management. The CMT's role is conflict management, not conflict resolution. Parties will assume personal responsibility for resolving conflicts, aided by CMT's support.

Guiding Principles

Conflict is viewed as a natural part of human interaction, and managing conflict is seen as an opportunity to express differences and reach deeper understanding. Confronting conflict and supporting parties as they work to resolve issues is a necessary process for congregational and individual growth and awareness.

Conflict management will be conducted in a spirit of mutual respect. The goal of conflict management is to promote deeper engagement of UUCGT members and friends. CMT will endeavor to promote engagement, encourage right relationships between parties, and support healing. CMT's primary purpose is to support the health and wellbeing of the entire congregation.

To be successful, CMT will avoid the position of "middle man," and avoid becoming entrapped in triangulation (see Definitions below). CMT will encourage parties to communicate directly with each other and assume personal responsibility for resolving issues.

The function of the CMT is to recommend a process:

- Define and clarify the issues
- Facilitate communication
- Design a process that provides opportunities for reaching resolution or

redemption. Once the process is designed, follow the procedure or adapt the procedure to best meet the needs of an individual situation

- Make appropriate recommendations to move the process along
- Maintain open communication throughout the process and respond to those involved in a timely manner
- Seek feedback on the process after an issue is resolved
- Continue in a supportive role, as appropriate, as parties heal

Definitions

Confidentiality is a deliberate attempt to maintain open communication while helping people feel safe about bringing their concerns to the CTM in order to 1) honor people's need for privacy, 2) facilitate the wellbeing of all involved, 3) resolve misunderstandings and conflicts without inflaming the issues, 4) avoid harmful misinformation and gossip, 5) prevent conflict escalation ~~through unnecessary involvement and talk~~, 6) facilitate resolution and reconciliation in the healthiest manner possible.

Conflict is a serious and protracted disagreement between members of the congregation and/or staff which interferes with the members' ability and/or opportunity to engage with the mission of UUCGT, or which interferes with the ability or opportunity of members not involved with the conflict to do so.

Non-Violent Communication is a method of communicating based on compassion which allows parties to express their needs and understand others' needs in a non-judgmental manner. Non-Violent Communication removes blame and criticism from exchanges, reduces defensive reactions, and encourages people to assume personal responsibility for their actions *and* their reactions to others.

In Non-Violent Communication, people 1) make a clear, neutral observation of someone's behavior, 2) identify an emotion they feel because of this behavior using non-judgmental language, 3) connect with the other person citing a universal human need and 4) make a specific request to change the behavior.

Secrecy is a deliberate attempt to conceal information in order to 1) advance motivations such as devious control or unwarranted power, 2) allow rumors to proliferate, 3) avoid dealing with information that should be addressed, 4) avoid having people take responsibility for their actions.

Triangulation moves responsibility from the people involved in the conflict onto others. It would result if those involved in the conflict take no responsibility and expect the CMT to solve everything. It would occur if the CMT becomes the mouthpiece or provides the solutions for others. It would result if the CMT, instead

of those involved, were held responsible for the outcomes.

PROCEDURE

I. Process for Initial Contact

The CMT will do the following:

- A. Link the person's name with the issue (assumption of personal responsibility).
 1. Assure person of confidentiality but not secrecy ~~(see Points to Remember #4)~~.
- B. Gain as full an understanding as possible of the issue.
 1. Ask supportive questions.
 2. If appropriate, use Non-Violent Communication to deepen the conversation.
 3. Continue until issue has been fully expressed.
- C. Confirm that the person has been heard (restate what was said).
 1. If appropriate, use Non-Violent Communication so the person feels heard.
 2. If the person just needed to be heard and feels the issue is resolved without further action, just jot a few notes to keep a record of the contact.
 3. If further action is needed, proceed to next steps.

II. Process for Responding to Individuals ~~(Strive to resolve in steps 1-3)~~.

This process is for responding to an individual who is experiencing conflict with another person or with a group. The CMT will do the following **and strive to resolve the matter in Steps A1-3:**

- A. Ask the party for suggestions for possible resolutions (refuse to be triangulated or to be responsible for creating a resolution).
 1. Suggest that the party take the first step by approaching the person/group with whom the conflict occurred to propose resolution or redemption.
 2. If the party feels too intimidated to do that, offer a member of CMT to accompany the party (not to speak for the party, just be present with).
 3. If the party is unwilling, the CMT may try to devise a different process of

appropriate approach in which the party helps reach resolution.

~~4. If the party is still unwilling, the CMT must ask the party to cease pursuing the matter for the sake of the congregation's ministry.~~

B. If a party is unwilling to cease pursuit, the CMT may request Board action to resolve the issue in order to promote the health and wellbeing of the entire congregation's ministry.

C. If a party complies with steps A1 or 2 but the other party is unwilling to reconcile, the CMT must determine what steps to take to protect the ministry of the congregation.

1. There are no formulas for this.

2. Creativity, insight, and determination focus the CMT's actions.

3. Remember that the board has the authority to take necessary action on behalf of the congregation (the CMT has no designated authority).

D. If there has still been no resolution, the CMT must continue to explore process options until a result is achieved that supports the congregation's ministerial well-being.

III. Process for Responding to Issues

This process is for responding when a person brings the CMT a matter that turns out *not* to be a problem with a person or a group, but is a broader issue of general concern. The person may be speaking for him/herself or may be acting as a spokesperson for others. In either case, other people probably share the concern. The CMT will do the following:

A. Follow the Process for Initial Contact with the spokesperson.

B. Ask the spokesperson for suggestions for what might be done next.

C. Develop a process to provide opportunities to resolve the issue.

1. Identify key stakeholders and possibly an additional spokesperson.

2. Ask the stakeholders and spokespeople to identify main components of the issue.

3. Inform board and ask for board participation if policy issues are involved.

D. Schedule and facilitate meeting(s) with stakeholders and spokespeople.

1. Send participants agendas and necessary information in advance.
2. Ask participants to develop and explore potential solutions.
3. CMT may make appropriate recommendations to move the process to resolution.

E. Remember that policy decisions must be handled by the board.

Follow-Through Policy

The CMT guarantees that any issue or suggestion brought to it

- will be addressed,
- will be followed through in its processing,
- will result ~~either~~ in finding a resolution, enacting an implementation, or reaching the limits of the CMT's responsibility.

Appeals Policy

If a person is still pursuing an unresolved issue, an appeal may be made:

- If the person believes the CMT has failed, address the Board of Trustees.
- If the Board has been unable to resolve the issue, the Board may, at ~~their~~ its discretion, develop another plan to pursue or take other appropriate action.

Points to Remember

1. The purpose of conflict management is to facilitate resolution.

- It is designed to be a welcoming opportunity where people feel that their concerns are respectfully heard and issues thoughtfully addressed.
- The goal is to encourage congregants to work together (with CMT facilitation as needed) to reach resolution rather than to withdraw.

2. Conflict management can be very stressful.

- CMT members may have to weigh the value of friendships, inclusion, tolerance, or other values against the value of the wellbeing of the congregation's ministry.
- Members of the CMT will share with each other, support each other, and provide each other with encouragement.

- CMT members are not expected to carry burdens alone.
- CMT will respect confidentiality, but not engage in secrecy and not consent to secrecy when people bring issues to them. People need to understand that if they bring an issue to the CMT, members will rely on each other to support each other and develop a process.

3. The CMT's function is not to process its own conclusions.

- It is to develop processes that lead to resolution and redemption for those who seek help.
- The CMT must be careful not to let its own conclusions affect the design of the process.
- The CMT must maintain objectivity and fairness.
- The CMT *may* present information that leads to an obvious conclusion. In this case, it is the information that leads to the conclusion rather than the CMT.
- The CMT *may* make recommendations based on the CMT's unique knowledge obtained from all sources in order to move the process toward resolution.

4. Secrecy hurts. Confidentiality helps.

Developed by Lucky McKeen, John Hoffmann, Dan Orr, Heather Shumaker, Fleda Brown and Rev. Chip Roush; adapted from *Moving On from Church Folly Lane* by Rev. Robert T. Latham, pp. 259-265.

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