

Conflict Management Policy

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Outer Banks

Adopted April 5, 2006

While openness to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our denomination's purposes and principles, we affirm the belief that our congregation must maintain a secure and respectful atmosphere where such openness can exist. When any person's physical and/or emotional well-being or freedom to safely and respectfully express his or her beliefs is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly, even if this ultimately requires the expulsion of the offending person or persons.

There have been times when the disruptive behavior of an individual within the church grounds has led members and/or friends to voice their concerns about one or more of the following:

1. Perceived threats to the safety of an adult or child
2. The disruption of church activities
3. Diminishment of UUCOB's appeal to seekers and membership
4. Disregard for the UU Principles

We do predefine acceptable behaviors within our church grounds. The following documents govern behaviors: UU Principles, UUCOB Behavioral Covenant, UUCOB By-laws, and UUCOB Board Policies.

The Conflict Management Team (CMT) is comprised of the Minister or the Ministerial Committee Chair and two other team members appointed by the Ministerial Committee. The team members will have working facilitation skills and knowledge of and respect for the above listed guiding documents. The CMT will consider each situation on a case-by-case basis given the history, causes and likelihood of resolution. The CMT will remain on-call for any occurrence or situations needing mediation or resolution.

I. If Immediate Action is Not Necessary (in response to unacceptable behavior)

If an immediate response is not necessary, the situation will be brought to the Conflict Management Team for active handling and resolution.

Action shall be taken with the person(s) in the following responsible manner-

1. Document the occurrence and any discussion. Strive to resolve the conflict at this level.
2. If necessary, temporary exclusion from church activities and events, with clearly defined conditions of return.
3. If necessary, expulsion from church activities and properties. CMT must bring the recommendation of expulsion before the Board and the Board must vote on it.

All actions must be properly documented and appropriately filed.

II. If Immediate Action is Necessary (in response to unacceptable behavior)*

If immediate action is necessary, the Minister, the President, or the leader of the participating group must take the action to defuse the situation. If the President or Minister is not involved, they must be notified of the event and action taken.

1. Appropriate action shall be taken as follows
 - a. Ask offender to leave
 - b. Suspend meeting/activity briefly
 - c. Disperse meeting/activity
2. After the occurrence, responsible witnesses must document the occurrence. Responsible witness must then meet with CMT. The offender is then contacted by the CMT detailing the issue and resolution requirements. **All actions, conversations and resolutions must be documented and filed appropriately.**

III. Personal Conflicts

Personal conflicts may be brought to the attention of the CMT for assistance in mediation. Parties involved must be willing to take responsibility for their concerns. No anonymous complaints will be accepted. The CMT will assist concerned parties in the following process:

1. Individual reflection by examining why this matter is important to each party and what each one's role is in the conflict.
2. Discuss the situation with a trusted third party by asking if this neutral person feels the same about the situation.
3. Address the concern directly by agreeing on a mutually acceptable time and place to discuss the situation as soon as possible.
4. When to take the next step? If no resolution can be made consult back with the CMT or the Minister.
5. If a resolution cannot be met with the assistance of the Minister or the CMT, and the CMT believes the situation to be a threat to the church, then the matter can be brought before the Board.
6. The Board can follow the recommendations of the CMT or decide it's own reasonable action.
7. When no resolution is possible, the concern for the well being, openness, safety and stability of the congregation may result in an individual's exclusion from church activities and grounds.

* If a situation poses actual danger to someone, call the police.