

# Eno River Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Congregational Policies

## **C.III Conflict Mediation Policy**

### **CM1 PREAMBLE**

Conflict is present in all communities. It is not the presence or absence of conflict that demonstrates the health of the community, but the way that conflict is managed. In healthy communities, conflict leads to new ideas, creative solutions, and increased vitality. As Unitarian-Universalists, we embrace and celebrate cultural diversity and diversity of ideas and opinions. We therefore have a special obligation to address and engage in conflict in ways that allow for the deep truths of our individual experience, hold us accountable for our words and actions, demonstrate respect for one another, and ultimately strengthen our community and our relationships with each other.

As a Fellowship, we explicitly value both the individual and the community, knowing that individuals thrive in healthy, supportive communities and that healthy communities are supported by the loving and just behavior of individuals. Since no one person has hold of the whole Truth, we aspire to address conflict directly by listening openly to the ideas and experiences of others, attending to the meaning and feelings within others' words so we can better understand their message. Since no one person has hold of the whole Truth, we aspire to speak honestly and clearly, from our own experiences, and with kindness and respect. And since not all conflicts can or should be resolved, we seek not only solutions but a process of respect, reconciliation, and understanding, especially in those cases in which we cannot come to agreement.

### **CM2 CONFLICT MEDIATION POLICY**

Most conflict in our congregation can and should be addressed by direct conversation between the parties involved. However, differences or misunderstandings that go unresolved and descend into prolonged conflict can threaten the social fabric of our church. The guidelines developed by the Healthy Congregation Committee and taught throughout the Fellowship can be used to help make conflictual conversations thoughtful, caring, and productive. When more assistance is needed, the HCC is available to support conflict mediation throughout the Fellowship as described below.

### **CM3 CONFLICT MEDIATION PROCEDURES**

1. If conflict escalates or becomes divisive or harmful, any member/friend or group in the congregation can request the conflict mediation services of the Healthy Congregation Committee, whose members are selected for their mediation skills and knowledge of various aspects of church functioning. A single member, the entire HCC, or any combination thereof can be employed in conflict mediation. The HCC will work directly

with the members/groups in conflict, assisting them in a process of deepening understanding and reaching resolution and/or compromise.

- a) The HCC will report to the board on the nature and outcomes of all conflicts for which they are called into service.
  - b) The team will determine a record-keeping format that provides an abstract of events while allowing for privacy considerations.
  - c) Members will excuse themselves from any conflict for which they have an inherent bias based on the individuals or topics involved.
2. When possible, conflict mediation will work towards mutually beneficial solutions that take into account the perspectives of the different parties. However, the HCC is not limited to achieving compromise. They are empowered to make recommendations, negotiate behavioral agreements, and proactively work to support the health of the Fellowship
- a) When they believe that a situation exists in which behaviors are dangerous or disruptive, they can invoke the disruptive behavior policy as needed.
  - b) The HCC is also empowered to solicit assistance as needed, drawing on the expertise and wisdom available in our congregation, requesting assistance from the UUA, or requesting the involvement of other community resource
  - c) In general, privacy considerations will be honored, but the team must also be able to call on resources needed to address any level of conflict productive

*Change history:*

*Conflict Mediation Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees on 1/19/2010*