

<i>NORTHWOODS UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH</i>	TITLE: CONFLICT RESOLUTION FACILITATION PROCESS		
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1. POLICY:

The well-being and reputation of our church depend on a sense of fellowship among the members, friends, and staff, and thrive in an atmosphere of trust, respect, and cooperation. Within such an atmosphere, differences of opinion and their resolution through compromise or consensus can enhance a sense of community. Something as important to a person as their faith will engender strong feelings, and lead to disagreements. This is natural, and can even be healthy.

Unresolved differences or misunderstandings can descend into prolonged conflicts; this can threaten the social fabric of the church. Responsible members of this community have an obligation to address concerns that threaten its health and welfare. Recognizing that conflict may arise from time to time, its management and resolution are paramount. Such conflict may occur between members, members and staff, members and minister, or staff and minister.

As a Unitarian Universalist congregation, we anticipate that all who participate in the process will use the UU Principles and Purposes (Appendix 1) to guide their own actions, reminding ourselves to treat everyone with compassion and dignity.

In order for conflict resolution to be successful, the parties involved must be willing to explore their own version of the truth about the issue, be willing to hear and understand the other person's truth about the issue, and be open to agreeing to change the way they will relate to the other person in the future. As well as to remember the well-being, openness, safety and stability of the congregation as a whole shall be given shared priority and concern.

The hope is that most conflicts can and will be resolved by an effort on the part of the individuals to live by our Unitarian Universalist Principles. By approaching the individual with whom one is having a conflict directly, having an open and honest exchange, and reaching a mutually agreed upon solution, the bonds that are so essential to our spiritual community can be strengthened and much can be learned.

SPECIAL NOTES:

- This CRF process is used for member to member conflict only.
- Conflict issues with the staff are addressed with their supervisor (Minister), if not resolved the HR committee mediates staff conflict. In the absence of a Minister, the Board President is considered the staff supervisor.
- Conflict issues with the Minister are addressed with the Committee on Ministry (COM)
- A designee will be appointed by the minister in advance or his/her vacancy, or by the Board of Trustees President, if there is no minister, to fulfil the roles of the minister in this policy.

2. REFERENCED DOCUMENTS (where you can find the documents):

- Appendix 1 - UU Seven Principles and Purposes - UUA Publication, and on the back of all Order of Services.
- Appendix 2 - F002 - Conflict Resolution Request Form

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3. DEFINITIONS:

- **BOT:** The term "BOT" refers exclusively to the elected Board of Trustees of Northwoods UUC
- **COM:** Committee on Ministry is responsible for the CRF process and if a conflict is unresolvable after several attempts to resolve the conflict the COM will escalate the issue to the BOT.
- **CRF: Conflict Resolution Facilitator(s)**
 1. The CRF is a member who is chosen due to their mediation skills and knowledge of various aspects of church functioning, who serves on an “as needed” basis. It is preferred that members are DBLE graduates, but no member of the COM or BOT may be a CRF.
 2. The Leadership Development Committee, with input from the minister, shall nominate members as they are needed with final approval from the BOT.
 3. Each CRF shall serve on an as needed basis and there is no limit to their term.
 4. The training required for CRF members may be an expense identified in the annual budget.
 5. Any CRF will excuse themselves from any conflict for which they have an inherent bias based on the individuals or the topics involved. (Additional CRFs may be recruited, if necessary.)
 6. At least two CRFs will be deployed in all conflict resolution situations.
 7. The CRFs will **maintain the confidentiality** of the parties involved in the conflict, and will report on the nature of the conflict to the COM. Part of the resolution will involve the conflicting parties coming to an agreement about what information from the resolution the COM should share with the church.
 8. The CRFs will maintain a written record of events while allowing for privacy considerations.
 9. The CRFs sealed report will be given to the Minister and placed in a locked file only accessible to the CRF or Minister.
- **CR Facilitator (process):**
 1. In a facilitation process, two or more people come together to try to work out a solution to their problem. A neutral third person, called the facilitator, is there to help them along. Most facilitators have some training in conflict resolution, although the extent of their training varies greatly.
 2. The facilitator does not take sides or make decisions. The facilitator's job is to help the disputants evaluate their goals and options and find their own mutually satisfactory solution.
 3. Facilitation is forward-looking; the goal is for all parties to work out a solution they can live with and trust. It focuses on solving problems, not uncovering the truth or imposing legal rules. Because the facilitator has no authority to impose a decision, nothing will be decided unless both parties agree to it. Knowing that no result can be imposed from above greatly reduces the tension of all parties -- and it also reduces the likelihood that someone will cling to an extreme position. This process looks for a win-win solution with both parties. Also, if

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mediation does not produce an agreement, either side is free to walk away. At this point another CRF may be assigned to continue the process or the COM may refer the issue to the BOT.

- Many people think that mediation is an informal process, in which a friendly facilitator chats with the disputants until they suddenly drop their hostilities and work together for the common good. In fact, mediation is a multi-stage process designed to get results. It is less formal than a trial or arbitration, but there are distinct stages to the mediation process. (See Activity 2)

- Member:** Church member who has a conflict with another member or committee

4. PROCEDURE STEPS:

Step	Activity 1 MEMBER - Identifying the Conflict	Responsibility
A	<p>Reflect on Your Role in the Conflict - Ask yourself: Why is this matter important to me? What is my intent in having it addressed? In the context of what's best for the church community and keeping in mind the UU Principles and Purposes, how would I like to see this matter resolved?</p>	Member
B	<p>Discuss with a Neutral Third Party - Check your perceptions with someone you trust to see all sides of the issues. Based on your telling of events, would a neutral person feel/see/hear it the same as you do?</p>	Member
C	<p>Address the Concern Directly - If the situation allows, talk directly with the person (fellow member, committee chair, minister, etc.) with whom you have the issue. Agree on a mutually acceptable time and place to talk one on one as soon as possible after the incident.</p> <p><i>Use "I" statements in your discussion ("I feel..." not "You did...").</i></p> <p><i>Address the issues and not the person.</i></p> <p><i>Use active listening and reflect back what you've heard.</i></p> <p><i>Attempt to create a win-win situation and learning environment.</i></p> <p><i>If the conflict is less with a person than the role they</i></p>	Member

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Step	Activity 1 MEMBER - Identifying the Conflict	Responsibility
	<p style="text-align: center;"><i>are filling address the concern to the proper committee. If you feel that personal safety during the discussion is an issue, use an appropriate third party or committee to provide a safe environment.</i></p>	
D	<p>Talk to the Minister or COM Member - The minister or COM member may help you address the issue on your own or with the other parties present in an attempt to reach a satisfactory outcome.</p> <p>Special Situation:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>If the conflict involves the minister, first attempt a resolution with the minister directly, then go to the, Committee on Ministry, which will follow UUMA guidelines.</i></p>	Member, Minister, COM
E	<p>Fill out the Conflict Resolution Request Form – F002 (See Appendix 2) - If the issues have not been successfully resolved via any of the steps above, obtain a copy of the Conflict Resolution Form (see the last page of this document).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The form which is sealed is given to the Congregational Administrator to forward to the COM Chair • Upon receipt of the completed form, the COM will assign two CRFs to meet and respond to the request. 	Member, COM

Step	Activity 2 CRFs Responsibility	Responsibility
A	<p>The Assigned CRFs will review the conflict and plan the Conflict Resolution meeting (using mediation techniques-see Activity 3).</p> <p>The two roles for the CRFs are Facilitator and Recorder/Time Keeper.</p> <p>The CRFs will decide between them, who will perform which role before the mediation meeting.</p>	CRFs /Members
B	<p>The CRFs will meet with the parties at a mutually agreed upon time and place (individually or jointly), to help mediate a mutually acceptable resolution to the conflict.</p> <p>If, after 3 attempts to set a meeting due to a member's refusal</p>	CRFs /Members

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Step	Activity 2 CRFs Responsibility	Responsibility
	to meet, the CRFs will report to the COM a non-resolution to the conflict. The COM will take Action as they deem appropriate.	
C	<p>At the end of the mediation meeting, the CRF will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Document the results of the conflict resolution meeting and attach it to the original CR form and any other documentation (emails, letters, committee notes etc.) that may have been sent and & collected by either party in the conflict. • Give the sealed report to the Minister to reside in a locked file. • Report verbally to the COM Chair that the resolution was either resolved or unresolved. 	CRFs
D	<p>When no Resolution is Reached – The CRF will refer the matter to the COM along with its recommendations. The COM may take several actions to resolve the conflict:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assign another CRF team if that is warranted • Assign a COM member to meet with one or both of the members in conflict to understand why the conflict cannot be resolved • If the conflict is with a COM member, the escalation would go directly to the BOT • Refer the issue to the BOT with recommendations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Removal of membership, b. Removal of a member from a committee c. Removal as chair of a committee d. Removal of the member as a RE teacher • The BOT will take action as they deem appropriate 	CRF/COM

Step	Activity 3 MEDIATION PROCESS	Responsibility
A	<p>Internal Mediation Process–</p> <p>Although mediation is informal, the process is fairly well defined. Here is a brief discussion of a typical mediation process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CRF begins by welcoming the parties and 	CRFs /Members

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Step	Activity 3 MEDIATION PROCESS	Responsibility
	<p>introducing himself/herself. The facilitator then outlines the process and the roles of the facilitators and the parties. The facilitator ends the introduction by explaining the ground rules for the process.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The facilitator then asks for statements from each party. Both parties have an opportunity to tell the story from their viewpoint. Often, these stories are emotional. The facilitator may ask clarifying questions, but typically the parties do not question each other. • After both parties have spoken, the facilitator may ask more questions, both to clarify the issues and to provide the other party with greater understanding. • At this point, the facilitator may ask the parties to <u>caucus</u> (separate for the purpose of discussion). The facilitator talks with each party, proposing solutions, trying out scenarios, trying to get commitment to a settlement by both parties. The facilitator goes back and forth between the parties during this time, clearing up misunderstandings, and carrying information, proposals, and points of agreement. • The facilitator works to find points of agreement between the parties, in an effort to reach an agreement. At some point, the facilitator may pose a final agreement for the parties and urge them to accept. 	
B	<p>Optional Action: Request Outside Mediation - At any time, upon agreement of both parties, an outside mediation facility may be used. Unless otherwise agreed, both parties shall split the cost of any fees charged.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Information on private facilitators is available in the church office. One recommended low cost mediation service is the Dispute Resolution Service of Montgomery County.</i></p>	COM/ Members

5. OTHER INFORMATION – (Attachments, records, other comments as needed):

- Appendix 1: UUA Seven Principles and Purposes

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- Appendix 2: Sample Form F002 - CRF Request

Appendix 1: UUA Seven Principles and Purposes – taken from UUA Publication

Purposes:

The UUA shall devote its resources to and exercise its corporate powers for religious, education and humanitarian purposes. The primary purpose of the Association is to serve the needs pf its member congregations, organize new congregations, extend and strengthen UU institutions and implement its principals.

Seven Principles:

We the member of congregations of the Unitarian Universalist Association, covenant to affirm and promote:

1. The inherent worth and dignity of every person
2. Justice, equity and compassion in human relations
3. Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregations
4. A free and responsible search for truth and meaning
5. The right of conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregations and in society at large
6. The goal of world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all
7. Respect for the independent web of all existence of which we are a part

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APPENDIX 2 – SAMPLE of F002 Form – This form is available from the church office, the church website or from the COM Chair



**Northwoods Unitarian Universalist Church
1370 North Millbend Drive
The Woodlands, Texas 77380
E-mail: northwoodsuu@sbcglobal.net**

Conflict Resolution Request

(To be filled out in conjunction with the Conflict Resolution Procedures)

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

Phone number: _____ **Email:** _____

Please write the details of your concern. Give specific information concerning dates, issues and parties involved (additional sheets may be attached as needed).

What have you tried to do to resolve the conflict? Specify what occurred during the steps of the Conflict Resolution Procedure (additional sheets may be attached as needed).

Please leave form in a sealed envelope with the Congregational Administrator in care of the CRF or give to a COM member.

Date Received: _____ **Copied & Sent Out:** _____