

# Conflict Management and Disruptive Behavior, UUSO Policy

Revised January 17, 2019

## Conflict Management

1. It is the policy of the Committee on Ministry (COM) that, in accordance with the UUSO Congregational Covenant and the Guiding Principles of Conflict Management, members of the congregation in conflict first attempt to come to a resolution directly with each other.
2. If the issue remains unresolved, either party or a third person may take this issue to any member of the COM. The Committee's responsibility is to assist the parties in addressing the conflict. At this point the process becomes formalized:
  - a. The COM serves as a whole; any member hearing the complaint will bring it to the entire Committee for discussion.
  - b. Acting with the advice of the entire Committee, a Committee member or appropriate third party may mediate with the parties to seek informal resolution. If a consensus cannot be reached by the parties in conflict, only then should a meeting of all concerned be held with the COM.
  - c. The Committee may seek information from other persons who have knowledge of the conflict, emphasizing confidentiality in all its deliberations and with those with whom the Committee interacts. The Committee will invite other parties involved in the conflict to present their perspectives.
  - d. The Committee is empowered to make recommendations, behavioral agreements and judgments. They are not limited to achieving compromises; when they believe that a situation exists in which behaviors are harmful to UUSO or are not expressive of our collective values, they can recommend counseling, limits to participation in Congregational life, or other behavior changing strategies.
  - e. The Committee will work with the parties to assist in conflict resolution. However, sometimes the best that can be achieved in resolving a conflict is for the parties to define parameters of behavior that will minimize the impact of the conflict in the UUSO community. For example, parties might agree to cease written or verbal communication, refrain from discussion of the matter with others and voluntarily suspend participation for a time in activities that have given rise to the conflict in order for tensions to subside. The emphasis at this point of resolution is for all parties to be involved in setting the boundaries that allow each person room for their struggle to be authentic, yet within the context of and with an emphasis upon the greater welfare of UUSO.
  - f. In some instances, the Committee may determine that the level of mediation needed is beyond their level of expertise, and they may ask whether all parties

would agree to seek guidance from the minister, Board or, if necessary, the UUA regional staff.

- g. Following mediation, the parties are expected to abide by the terms of their agreement and to fulfill the terms on their own initiative.
  - h. Should disagreements arise over implementation, the parties may again seek the assistance of the COM.
3. Should one or more of the parties:
- a. refuse to participate in the resolution process
  - b. refuse to implement the conflict resolution agreement, or
  - c. not change their behavior and/or the belief of the Committee is that the behavior is a threat to UUSO

the matter will go to the Board for consideration. If a Board member is involved in the conflict and recommendations are moved to the Board, the Board member must recuse themselves. In this case, the Board member must not discuss the issue, except in session.

4. The Committee will write a report to the Board with recommendations that may include but are not limited to:
- a. a behavioral contract
  - b. restricted attendance
  - c. supervised attendance
  - d. other recommendations.
  - e. When the Board receives a report from the Committee relating to an individual or group in default of an agreement, the Board will review the situation, giving all parties one additional opportunity to present their perspective.
    - i. The parties involved may bring one advocate with them to the meeting.
    - ii. The Board may seek information from other persons who have knowledge of the conflict, emphasizing confidentiality in all its activities.
5. The Board may endorse the Committee's recommendations or set its own recommendation and recommended behaviors.
6. Following the review, the Board will render a final decision in the matter. The primary concern guiding decision shall be the overall welfare of UUSO. The Board is authorized by the Congregation to take action as they deem in the best interests of UUSO. Such action could include, but not be limited to:
- a. asking one or more or all parties to leave UUSO until such a time that they can participate without harming the social fabric of the community. Within 90 days and upon written notice to the Board of Trustees by any party, this action is subject to review.
  - b. In addition, given just cause, the Board, by two-thirds vote, can exclude a person from UUSO and its building and grounds or sponsored activities, and may remove their name from congregation membership per the Bylaws. The Board may specify conditions for returning as a welcomed member of the community

and set criteria for evaluation of compliance. Assent of the Board by a two-thirds majority will be required for return to the community.

## **Disruptive Behavior**

1. The Board considers behavior that is dangerous, disruptive, or offensive to be a threat to the well-being of the congregation. Whenever anyone's physical safety or freedom to express beliefs or opinions is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed. Anyone who is subject or witness to such behavior on UUSO property or at a UUSO sponsored event should report it to a member of the Committee on Ministry (COM), the Board of Trustees and/or the Minister.

The Religious Education program has a separate policy related to classroom behavior. Outside the classroom, the Disruptive Behavior Policy covers all ages. In the case of a minor, the parent(s) or guardian(s) will be informed and involved in all steps of the policy.

2. Disruptive behavior includes:
  - a. Behavior that is perceived to be a threat to the safety of any person.
  - b. Behavior that disrupts UUSO activities.
  - c. Behavior that is likely to drive away existing or prospective members.
3. Any person who believes that they have witnessed or experienced disruptive behavior or who becomes aware of disruptive behavior should report it to any of the following
  - a. The Minister
  - b. A member of the Board
  - c. A member of the COM If deemed appropriate, the Minister, a Board member or COM member will report the incident to local law enforcement authorities.
4. The Minister and/or facilitator of the group will respond to disruptive or threatening behavior. If disruptive behavior is occurring, a facilitator will initially use a gentle approach to redirect the behavior, recalling appropriate points from the UUSO Congregational Covenant as needed. If disruptive behavior continues, the facilitator may request a pause in the event and invite the person(s) being disruptive to step out of the room to discuss their concerns, cause of disruption, etc. The person(s) will be informed that their behavior is disruptive and will be asked to cease such behavior. If the disruptive behavior continues:
  - a. The person(s) being disruptive may be asked to leave.
  - b. The meeting or activity may be suspended until it can safely be resumed.
  - c. The police department may be called if further assistance is required.
5. All situations requiring an immediate response will also be reported to the COM or the minister by the group leader involved in the initial incident, the victim, perpetrator or any third party witnessing the incident. The COM will determine whether any or what

additional response may be needed as described above in the Conflict Resolution section. In considering possible responses, the COM will give individual safety the highest consideration. The COM may also consider situational circumstances, known medical conditions, cultural differences, and/or behavioral history.

6. Any time any of the above actions are taken by the COM, the Minister, the President and the Vice President of the Board must be apprised of the details of the incident. The Congregation will be informed that an incident occurred and is being addressed according to the Conflict Management Policy and the COM's Guiding Principles for Conflict Management.