

First Unitarian Society of Chicago  
Minutes of the April 2020 Board Meeting (Online via Zoom)

Board Members Present: Kristin Faust, Board President  
Amos Biggers  
John Martin-Eatinger  
Cindy Pardo  
Margie Gonwa  
Grace Latibeaudiere-Williams  
Ellen LaRue

Others Present: Rev. Teri Schwartz, Senior Co-Minister  
Rev. David Schwartz, Senior Co-Minister  
Beth Moss, Director of Religious Education  
Monica Kling-Garcia, Ministerial Intern  
Liz Harris, Financial Committee Chair  
Kristina DeGuzman, Secretary

**Opening**

Opening words were offered by Ellen.

**Check-In**

Those present shared their joys and concerns.

**February and March Minutes**

John moved to approve both sets of minutes as amended by corrections; Grace seconded the motion, which carried.

**Church-Wide Covid-19 Check-In**

Rev. Teri requested that the Board and the Pastoral Carer Team divide up the church directory and make outreach calls to friends and members of the church to check-in and inform them of church resources available to care for members and friends during this time. She proposed sending out assignments within the next two days to complete within the week. Monica has been dividing up the directory and Rev. Teri is updating the contact information.

**DRE Report**

Beth's written report was distributed and she provided highlights.

Religious education has fully transitioned to online service; there has been a general upward trend in attendance numbers, with the middle-school group being the most robust. Beth continues to offer programming and allow the families to decide what they feel ready to take on. Easter marked the highest attendance. Going forward, Beth is trying different strategies to see what works. Time for All Ages is going well online, but per copyright law, Beth cannot read children's books online, as the Fair Use doctrine applies to in-person education but not to online delivery of content.

Beth expressed gratitude and pride in her staff team for not missing a beat in getting the RE curriculum online. She has made changes to the curriculum to meet families' needs. In terms of worship and activities, Easter featured the online egg hunt and Sophia Lyon Fahs's Easter story. In terms of program outreach, Beth is holding family night on Wednesdays via Zoom for fellowship. She had the opportunity to meet online with the RE Council, and will be meeting with them again either this Sunday or next Sunday to update and work on strategies for going forward.

OWL has been discontinued; by national directive, OWL classes should not be held online due to privacy and sensitivity concerns. Beth is unsure whether further guidance will come out regarding OWL.

Youth group is now being held every week instead of every other week. The middle school program has focused on coping skills, and will be moving to focus on theology next. The early childhood online curriculum has stuck as close as possible to the classroom curriculum, and families attend together due to the need for small children to have help with the technology. Beth has also been holding Family Night online. She hopes to have a service project for this spring.

Beth has also been in touch with every family that was registered in the past year to touch base and alert them to the online RE resources.

Grace asked Beth about the response to classes going online; Beth has heard that parents were happy that the transition happened quickly.

Board members expressed praise and appreciation for Beth's imaginative approach and for the Easter Egg hunt. Beth noted that 4000 people nationally participated in the online egg hunt.

### **Ministerial Intern Report**

Monica distributed her written report and provided highlights.

Since the last board meeting, Monica's seminary experience has been significantly different, with online Zoom lectures for classes. She has taken classes in biblical narratives, tools for parish and non-profit administration, and ethics. All courses addressed new issues that have come up during

the pandemic. Monica's First U projects have since been focused on community connection. Now that she is finished with her intensive courses, she is taking part in worship. She is working with Rev. David to develop Facebook content and other ways to use social media including YouTube. Monica and Cindy are working on a cloth mask program for people who can make masks and people who need them. Board members were encouraged to share this information widely, including during check-in calls.

Monica continues to work on church committees via Zoom, and is still doing self-reflection and self-evaluation for the ministerial internship development process. Monica expressed gratitude for all the work done last semester in making her a part of the community, with support for Celebrate at First and shadowing committees, and she is thankful to be able to help and support the continuing ministry.

### **Ministers' Report**

The ministers distributed their written report and provided highlights.

WBEZ picked up the story that David officiated for a couple in Hull Chapel who wanted to get married urgently after having to cancel their original wedding plans due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Worship services have moved completely online. After trying out different online platforms, the church has settled on YouTube, which has the advantages of having a single link, seamless video, and the ability to premiere at 10 AM on Sunday so that people can interact in the chat box. Attendance has been in the 80-90 range. The video production and timeline does take a lot of time and technical hurdles, as the team is putting together worship with iPhones, a \$25 tripod, goodwill, and volunteering. All told it takes between 10-20 hours to edit and render videos. The ministry team has started to cross-train the all-remote staff team. Mike Knowles comes into the building once a week, and David and Teri use the building the rest of the week. The team has been using Slack for digital communication and project planning. Monica has been staying abreast of best practices for Zoom and providing training to staff even though that is not a part of her job. The team has been putting out increased online content in addition to weekly services.

Board members expressed appreciation for being able to see church friends from out of town and those who are homebound on online services, and praised the online tours with Pilot the dog.

Rev. David noted that the church Facebook page now has a review about how the church insufficiently believes in Jesus and urged members not to interact with the trolls, but leave a good review instead.

Long-term tenants currently have no staff in the building. The church is giving three months of rent abatement since the tenants have no income coming in. Construction is suspended; even though construction is deemed an essential activity, the construction on our building is not

essential, so even though the letter of the law allows us to go forward, the spirit of the stay-at-home order is to limit movement. The church will evaluate at the end of the April whether to begin construction again.

The ministerial team is so grateful to Mike and Liz who managed to secure funding under the CARES Act, which ran out of money this morning.

Online text-to-give is up and running.

The updated lease for the Hyde Park School of Dance, now including the second floor space, starts September 1; the updated lease was distributed to the Board Members via email.

It is suggested that this month, church members and friends who are financially secure and able take the \$1200 stimulus money and split it among non-profit organizations in need.

The ministers continue to attend the monthly UU ministers' meeting via Zoom. This semester Rev. David taught preaching at Meadville-Lombard. Rev. Teri has continued to serve as chaplain to the students there as she has for 7 years now.

Rev. Teri has received notice that she was accepted to the MA in Pastoral Counseling program at Loyola University with a scholarship. She will start part-time studies in the fall. Completion of the program allows clergy to sit for the licensed clinical professional counselor exam.

The ministers have had an extremely full month, with Rev. Teri averaging about 30 hours per week and Rev. David 39, not including his work at Meadville-Lombard.

Kristin inquired about the current health and wellness of the congregation; the ministers provided an update on congregational health issues.

In response to board members' questions about the sustainability of the ministers' current workload and what the Board can do to offer support, the ministers indicated this was currently unknown due to the novelty of the current challenges, including pivoting quickly to online worship, the need to cross-train staff especially in anticipation of future illness, and the increase in pastoral work due to health issues within the congregation. The constant pace of change in particular has been exhausting for staff. For some time, much of the church's programming has been very staff-driven, and the church would benefit from an increase and broadening in lay leadership, as currently the burden is carried by a few. Increased lay leadership would also lead to more continuity and less disruption from staff changes. Currently, the Program Council coordinates the Thanksgiving Dinner Service and, at times, the Church Auction, although sometimes the auction is handled by different dedicated leadership. Previously, the Program Council served as an oversight body for all programs of the church, a governance structure more suited to a larger church.

The ministers emphasized the importance of keeping an eye toward the long-term, particularly with respect to the culture change work going on in the church.

### **Treasurer's Report**

Liz distributed the income statement and balance sheet, and provided highlights.

The year-to-date balance is off by about \$20,000, and showing a loss of about \$32,000, which is a function of the reduction in revenue and the budget correction due to bookkeeping errors on the ministers' pension and health benefits fund that the Board had discussed previously.

The Finance Committee met Tuesday and reviewed financials and projected financials for Fiscal Year 2020 and looking at revenue losses. The committee anticipates a loss of about \$121,000.

Payroll Protection Insurance was completed on Friday and approved on Monday, and the church will receive about \$46,000 to \$47,000. The program has now run out of money, but the church was able to get its application in during the small window of opportunity, so the money will be received within the next couple of weeks. There is a potential for a deficit of less than \$100,000 assuming that those funds come in by the end of June 2020. The Finance Committee recommends that the Board approve a loan of up to \$100,000 on the General Endowment, with a variable rate of under 5%.

In response to questions from Board Members, Liz explained that the \$46,000 is approximately 2.5 times monthly payroll, and that the money is essentially a grant conditioned on the church not laying off employees. The \$46,000 will offset the projected \$121,000 loss, leaving about \$75,000 needed to pay through June 30. The loan is also proposed as a bridge to the anticipated funds from the Borja estate.

Rev. David and Linn Orear are developing the budget with the staff.

Rev. David noted that in terms of borrowing, the church is going to have some amount of deficit next year without radical cuts, but hopefully within a couple of months we will know more about the amount and timing of the funds from the Borja estate, the use of which is still to be determined.

The Board needs to decide in May or June what to do with the funds from the Borja estate. Past practice for bequests has been to allot 80% to the endowment and 20% to programming; the Board has been discussing deviating from this practice, and Board Members should think about what information they will need in order to make a decision about the split. While it is not required that the Board bring this decision to the congregation, best practice would be to do so.

It was noted that, under the circumstances, putting the majority of the Borja bequest into the endowment doesn't make sense.

The Board was briefed on the details of the loan, which would be interest-only and would not lower the endowment amount. The principal repayment would come from the Borja estate funds.

There are no new updates on the Borja estate sale; the next step is to engage a broker.

Some Board Members expressed discomfort with a loan this size; it was pointed out that the cash flow reality is that the church will have bills to pay before it has the Borja estate funds. The loan is more about capital timing, a bridge loan until the Borja estate can be sold.

Capital projects are currently over budget, but the church will have sufficient contingency funds. Liz is currently waiting for an update from Evelyn Johnson and Mike Knowles as to the pledges that have been paid.

The by-laws require a congregational meeting before June 15; Rev. Teri is looking into ways to keep us within the bylaws given these extraordinary circumstances.

Rev. Teri suggested that a Board Member look at the UUA regional webpage and reach out to Lisa Pressley, because the district and national UUA staff know that every congregation has by-laws requiring a meeting in May or June, every congregation is having cash-flow issues due to the pandemic, and every congregation has by-laws regarding taking money from their endowment. Voting to suspend the bylaws is procedurally onerous and requires various super-majorities for these kinds of actions. Grace volunteered to undertake these activities.

A suggestion was made to plan for an online meeting now rather than waiting to see if the stay-at-home order will lift in time for an in-person meeting. It was agreed that the Board would begin planning for an online meeting for June 14th, with a backup date of the 28th. The church has around 150 voting congregants, and the church's Zoom account allows for up to 250 participants. Given concerns about cash-flow timing combined with a late meeting, it was suggested that the church have an earlier congregational meeting concerning only the bridge loan. The date for the congregational meeting on the bridge loan was set for Sunday, May 17, which will also provide a dry run for an online congregational meeting in June. It was further noted that, while there are usually numerous agenda items for the annual congregational meeting, the by-laws require only that the church elect officers and approve the budget. Any revised committee structure would also have to be addressed at the congregational meeting.

### **Good Relations Report**

Grace provided a written report and updated Conflict-Resolution Policy and provided highlights.

The Good Relations Committee is delighted to have finished its work on the Conflict-Resolution Policy and presented it to the congregation; they have received constructive feedback which has

been incorporated into this latest draft. The language is now more precise; there are additional definitions in the glossary, more clarity is provided on the Policy's fit with existing policies and by-laws and the Board's role. The development of the Congregational Covenant has been put on hold due to the current inability to have face-to-face interaction.

Grace proposed that the Board adopt this latest draft as the Provisional Conflict-Resolution Policy that will be pilot tested for one year to see what works and what needs to be changed.

The Board Members expressed praise for the work of the committee members and staff who worked on this document. John moved to adopt the Conflict-Resolution Policy as the provisional policy for the next year; Cindy seconded the motion, which carried.

### **Annual Fund Campaign Update**

Margie provided an update on the Annual Fund Campaign.

Marge and Lisa Martin-Eatinger are planning a virtual kickoff for the next Sunday during services. The Annual Fund Campaign E-blasts will include filmed testimonials. The chairs are also planning for a mailing no later than the end of the next week; currently, they are in the process of revising the individual letters and brochure. Letters will acknowledge the challenging times but remain positive. The Campaign will be asking the Board Members to assist with follow-up calls. Lisa will be getting testimonials from kids, and Margie from adults. They are also working on expanding the master list to include more friends of the congregation, and already have almost 50 names to add to the list.

Rev. Teri recommended that the Annual Fund chairs reach out to Beth to consult regarding issues involved in streaming video of minors.

### **Final Issues**

Kristin noted that Finley Campbell has placed an announcement for a new class in the church email blast. A new syllabus was not provided to the Board, but it appears to be a similar-sounding class on the same general topic as the previous Nature of Racism class, which appears to be an attempt to make an end-run around the Board's decision regarding the previous class.

Additionally, Rev. David found an envelope of checks and cash in the safe. Rev. Teri recommends that the church donate the windfall to the Hyde Park-Kenwood Interfaith Council Food Program. The motion to do so passes by consensus.

### **Closing**

Ellen offered closing words and the meeting adjourned.

## Balance Sheet

### ASSETS

#### Current Assets

Bank Accounts - Checking and Savings	
1008 - Beverly Bank Checking	\$38,842.00
1106 - Hyde Park Money Market	\$39,746.77
Minister's Discretionary Fund	\$ 2,946.00
Other Money Market	\$ 1,144.23
<b>Total Bank Accounts</b>	<b>\$ 82,679.00</b>

#### UUA Endowment Accounts

1176 - UUA Music Endowment Fund	\$ 43,560.31
1177 - UUA Internship Endowment Fund	\$487,803.72
<b>Total UUA Endowment Fund</b>	<b>\$ 531,364.03</b>

#### Bernstein Endowment

1173-1 Bernstein - Vanguard VI -General Endowment	\$ 612,161.00
1173-2 Bernstein - Vanguard S&P-Fenn Endowment	\$ 156,043.00
1173-3 Bernstein - Ishares S&P-Crypt Endowment	\$ 88,098.00
1174-4 Bernstein - Cash	\$ -
<b>Total Bernstein Endowment</b>	<b>\$ 856,302.00</b>

#### Accounts Receivables

1210 Pledges Current Year	\$ 87,430.00
1290 Other Receivables	\$ 500.00
<b>Total Accounts Receivables</b>	<b>\$ 87,930.00</b>

#### 1499 Other Current Assets

\$ -

#### Total Current Assets

\$ 1,558,275.03

#### Long-term Assets

1760 - Piano	\$ 20,000.00
1761 - Infrastructure/Plant - Boiler	\$ 353,853.00
Note Receivable	\$ 250,000.00
<b>Total Long-term Assets</b>	<b>\$ 623,853.00</b>

### TOTAL ASSETS

\$ 2,182,128.03

### LIABILITIES

#### Current Liabilities

2000 - Accounts Payable	\$ 4,178.00
2050 - Credit Cards	\$ 137.25
2110 - Accrued Sabbatical	\$ 33,288.00



## Balance Sheet

### Unearned Income

2575 - Advance Payments - Endowment Payment	\$ 17,645.00
2910 - Special Collections	\$ 2,946.00
2918 - Pledges - Deferred	\$ 86,479.68
2952 - Crypt Sales	\$ 10,148.00

**TOTAL LIABILITES** **\$ 154,821.93**

### EQUITY

Opening Balance Equity \$ 727,093.00

#### UUA Endowment

2803 - UUA Music Endowment Fund	\$ 45,555.57
Net Gains-Losses-Fees	\$ (1,995.26)
<b>Total - UUA Music Endowment Fund</b>	<b>\$ 43,560.31</b>

2806 - UUA Internship Endowment Fund	\$ 510,147.35
Net Gains - Losses - Fees	\$ (22,343.63)
<b>Total - UUA Internship Endowment Fund</b>	<b>\$ 487,803.72</b>

**Total UUA Endowment Equity** **\$ 531,364.03**

#### Bernstein Endowment Equity

1173-1 Bernstein - Vanguard Index -General Endowment	\$ 685,426.00
Net Gains - Losses - Withdrawals	\$ (73,265.00)
<b>Total Bernstein VI Vanguard -General Endowment</b>	<b>\$ 612,161.00</b>

1173-2 Bernstein - VOO Vanguard S&P-Fenn Endowment	\$ 169,689.00
Net Gains - Losses - Withdrawals	\$ (14,687.00)
Green Sanctuary	\$ 1,021.00
<b>Total Bernstein - VOO Vanguard S&amp;P -Fenn Endowment</b>	<b>\$ 156,023.00</b>

1173-3 Bernstein - Ishares Core S&P- Crypt Endowment	\$ 100,616.00
Net Gains-Losses	\$ (12,518.00)
<b>Total Bernstein - Ishares S&amp;P - Crypt Endowment</b>	<b>\$ 88,098.00</b>

1173-4 Bernstein - Cash \$ -

**Total Bernstein Endowment Equity** **\$ 856,282.00**

Equity Investment (Capital Campaign Investment)	\$ 300,000.00
Retained Earnings	\$ (354,452.93)
Net Income	\$ (32,980.00)

**TOTAL EQUITY** **\$ 2,027,306.10**

**TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY** **\$ 2,182,128.03**

**First Unitarian Society of Chicago - Income Statement 2019-2020 (9 Month)**

Acct. #	Category	Prior Year	Current 31-Mar-20	FY 2020 Annual Budget	9 Month 75%
<b>OPERATING INCOME</b>					
4010	Current Year - received	167,986	174,058	251570	69%
	Uncollected Pledges	578	0	-17610	0%
4020	Prior Year & Augmented	6,478	13,004	2250	578%
4000	<b>Pledge Subtotal</b>	<b>175,042</b>	<b>187,062</b>	<b>236,210</b>	79%
4110	Auction	40	20	8,000	0%
4300	Activites	2,428	2,789	4250	35%
4130	Church Fundraising	20	0		0%
	<b>Fundraising</b>	<b>2,488</b>	<b>2,809</b>	<b>12,250</b>	23%
4200	Contributions/Bequests	5,466	5,978	5,142	116%
	Minister's Discretionary Fund	0	1,000	2,000	19%
4790	Special Offerings/Mission	8,260	5,664	15,000	38%
4712	Plate Offerings	5,250	3,476	6000	58%
4800	Designated Gift	0	200	0	0%
4900	Restricted Fund Revenue	3,642	7,143	0	0%
	<b>Contributions</b>	<b>22,618</b>	<b>23,461</b>	<b>28,142</b>	83%
5000	Space & Other Revenue	148,146	143,417	199,351	72%
	<b>Space &amp; Other Revenue</b>	<b>148,146</b>	<b>143,417</b>	<b>199,351</b>	72%
5100	Endowment (Income)	37,764	49,297	62503	79% 9,568 per congregation
	Sabbatical/Intern	0	20,864	8534	244%
	Music Endowment	0	0	2200	0%
	<b>Total Operating Income</b>	<b>386,058</b>	<b>426,910</b>	<b>549,190</b>	78%
<b>OPERATING EXPENSE SUMMARY</b>					
6000	Senior Co-Ministers	92,470	123,344	134,494	92% Includes reimbursement for Health and Dental overcharges
6100	Sr. Ministers Professional	10,165	11,047	10850	102%
6165	Ministers Sabbatical Accrual	12,272	5,256	7000	75%
6200	Sabbatical/Intern Min. Exp	0	20,864	8534	244%
6260	Minister-at-Large Honorarium	0	0	43	0%
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>114,907</b>	<b>160,511</b>	<b>160,921</b>	100%
6400	Music Director	29,042	28,847	39638	73%
6500,6830	Worship	3,331	3,115	4250	73%
6500	Music	5,667	5,318	6940	77%
6700	Special Offerings/Mission	3,569	3,436	15000	23%
6900	Restricted Funds	400	100	0	#DIV/0!
6120	Ministers Discretionary Fund	0	0	2000	0%
7000	Board & First U Organizations	0	4,323	1000	432%
7032	Membership Coordinator	2,517	0	0	#DIV/0!
7100-7200	Program and Committees	245	805	0	#DIV/0!
7300	Activities	3,000	4,350	4250	102% Peace Circles, Borja Memorial
7400	Denomination	2,500	2,600	2600	100%
7500	Director of Religious Education	36,603	37,281	51383	73%
7900	Religious Education Program	105	5,899	5575	106%
7700	Religious Education Staff	3,187	3,504	4800	73%
7830	Childcare Expense	4,514	4,399	6108	72%
8000	Church Administration	85,239	98,623	113869	87%
9000	Property Expenses	106,092	96,779	130856	74%
	<b>Total Operating Expense</b>	<b>286,011</b>	<b>299,379</b>	<b>388,269</b>	77%
	<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>400,918</b>	<b>459,890</b>	<b>549,190</b>	84%
	<b>Net Income (Loss)</b>	<b>(14,860)</b>	<b>(32,980)</b>	<b>0</b>	

First Unitarian Church of Chicago

Meeting of the Board of Trustees

April 16, 2020

### **Report of the Good Relations Committee**

The Committee is pleased to present to the Board of Trustees the completed Policy on Conflict Resolution for your approval.

This document represents approximately five months of focused and diligent work, with many revisions, to present a policy that is well-defined, with clear language that is readily understood, and is congruent with existing governing documents, specifically the Bylaws and Policy Manual of the First Unitarian Society of Chicago, and the forthcoming Congregational Behavioral Covenant.

We were pleased to receive a positive response at the March 8 First Forum at which we presented the Policy and answered questions and responded to comments. The Feedback Form we distributed at the Forum, and online for three weeks, yielded both affirming comments and a few substantive queries. We carefully considered these, and, as a result, made modifications to the Policy that we thought appropriate and helped clarify its intent. (The changes appear in [blue](#).)

As indicated earlier, we propose that the Board adopt this as a Provisional Policy to be pilot-tested for one year, after which time the Committee will make any further modifications thought necessary to improve its effectiveness. If none are indicated, then we would ask the Board to approve the existing version as the permanent Policy on Conflict Resolution to be included in the Policy Manual of the First Unitarian Society of Chicago.

With the completion of the Conflict Resolution Policy, the next major task the Committee planned to undertake was the development of a Congregational Behavioral Covenant. With the onslaught of Covid-19, this plan has been placed on hold, until we are able to resume face-to-face communication. Even while we have continued our work by Zoom, Rev. Teri, our ministerial advisor, has made us keenly aware that it would be inappropriate, insensitive and ineffective to ask our congregation to undertake such a major process during a time of upheaval, societal restrictions, illness and grief. Other practical considerations had to be taken into account, such as the restriction on travel by the UUA, so that our Regional Congregational Consultant, Lisa Presley, would not have been able to facilitate the planned May 2 congregational workshop.

Our next steps will be to communicate to the Congregation an update on our work, with words of affirmation and encouragement to continue to adhere to our theological covenant to love and help one another, especially during this challenging time. Also, we will begin to process the written communication of concerns and conflicts we have received since July 2019.

Respectfully submitted,

Grace Latibeaudiere-Williams  
Chair

For Board Approval, 4/16/20

## FIRST UNITARIAN SOCIETY OF CHICAGO

### Policy on Conflict Resolution

#### Introduction

Conflict is an inescapable part of human relations and community life. In striving for good relations with each other, our challenge is not to prevent or avoid conflicts but rather to manage and resolve differences of opinion, personalities, or objectives in ways that build rather than diminish our community.

This document identifies the steps that should be followed in our church when conflicts arise. These are:

- Step One: Direct Dialogue Between Concerned Persons
- Step Two: Request Help from the Good Relations Committee (GRC)
- Step Three: Facilitated Conversation with members of the GRC
- Step Four: Concluding Actions (Impasse or Referral to the Board)

This Conflict Resolution Policy, which applies to adults only, fits within a set of documents, [one of which is still under development], including:

- The Bylaws of the First Unitarian Society of Chicago
- The Policy Manual of the First Unitarian Society of Chicago, including the Policy on Disruptive Behavior
- [Congregational Behavioral Covenant \[under development\]](#)

The Good Relations Committee has the role of implementing and managing the Policy on Conflict Resolution, as described. The Committee will not serve as professional mediators, nor adjudicators, nor investigators. The Committee will assess issues brought to its attention, make recommendations for resolution, and serve as trained volunteer facilitators.

The four types of conflict that we address are:

- 1) Between/Among Members/Friends of the Congregation (*chart 1 attached*)
- 2) Between Member/Friend of the Congregation and Church Staff (*chart 2 attached*)
- 3) Between Member/Friend of the Congregation and Minister (*chart 3 attached*)
- 4) Disruptive or Dangerous Behavior (*chart 4 attached*)

We have incorporated a Glossary of terms used, for common understanding, and four charts that provide a graphic representation of the process to be followed in each type of conflict. [Additionally, we have included Tools for Self-Mediated Conflict Resolution.](#)

We expect and hope that most conflicts [and concerns](#) can and will be resolved by effort on the part of individuals to treat each other with dignity and respect, follow our Congregational Behavioral Covenant, and seek resolution when conflicts arise through

the processes articulated in this policy, thereby strengthening the social fabric of our community and our ability to live out our mission.

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS**

### **STEP ONE: Direct Dialogue Between Concerned Persons**

When you have a conflict or concern with another individual or church body, including with another congregant, minister, staff member, or committee you are asked to:

- First address your concern directly with the person or persons involved. If you do not know who is responsible for your area of concern, consult this policy or check with a minister, member of the Good Relations Committee, or member of the Board.

The simplest, most effective path to conflict or concern management is one-on-one, face-to-face, open communication. This honors confidentiality and allows each party to address the issues without involving unrelated third parties that can lead to gossip and escalation of the conflict.

Communicating face-to-face is best or over the phone (if necessary). Avoid communicating via email or text.

- Agree on a mutually acceptable time and place to talk one-on-one and as soon as possible after the incident. Use the "Ground Rules" and "Preparation Suggestions for Successful Resolution" included at the end of this policy to prepare for and engage in a productive conversation.
- If you are uncomfortable meeting directly with the person with whom you are in conflict or with whom you have a concern (e.g., if safety is an issue), the individual refuses to meet or use the ground rules, or a meeting does not resolve the conflict, move to Step 2.

### **STEP TWO: Request Help from the Good Relations Committee**

Often it is helpful to involve other skilled people to advise and assist parties in conflict to resolve their differences in positive ways. First Unitarian's Good Relations Committee is chartered to fill that role.

If you have a conflict or concern that you are unable to address by direct dialogue, you may take your conflict or concern to the Good Relations Committee for their confidential help in resolving the conflict or concern. You may email the GRC chair or email [goodrelations@firstuchicago.org] to schedule a meeting. A member of the GRC will respond to your request within two weeks.

If, for any reason, you are not comfortable with bringing your issues to the Good Relations Committee, then talk to a minister or member of the Board who will provide direction on taking the next appropriate step.

When communicating with the Good Relations Committee, you will be required to describe in writing your concern or conflict stating:

- A brief description of the conflict or concern, including the person(s), committee or situation you are having difficulty with (anonymous complaints are not acceptable--be prepared to take responsibility for your concerns)
- What steps you have taken to resolve the conflict or concern
- What outcome you would like to see

(Assistance in writing up and submitting the conflict or concern summary can be available, as needed, from the GRC.)

As in Step 1, use the "Ground Rules" and "Preparation Suggestions for Successful Resolution" described at the end of this policy to engage in productive conversations with members of the Good Relations Committee about the conflict or concern.

Members of the Good Relations Committee working with you will do their best to listen carefully, try to understand the nature of the conflict or concern, and make recommendations regarding how the GRC can help.

***After assessing the situation, the Good Relations Committee may:***

- Help you clarify your understanding of the conflict or concern
- Help you find words to talk with the person directly
- Help you to prepare to meet with the other party
- Contact other parties to the dispute or concern and offer the services of the Good Relations Committee to them as well

If the initial steps taken by the Good Relations Committee are not able to resolve the conflict or concern, the Good Relations Committee will consider next steps in conflict resolution, which could include facilitated conversation, declaring an impasse, or referring the conflict or concern to the Board.

**In the following cases, the matter will go directly to the Board:**

1. One or both parties refuse to participate productively in the resolution process;
2. The conflict or concern is perpetuated by unchanged behavior;
3. [The conflict or concern involves behavior covered](#) by the Policy on Disruptive Behavior.

**STEP THREE: Facilitated Conversation by GRC Facilitators**

If the Good Relations Committee (GRC) believes that a more formal process would be justified in managing the conflict or concern, the GRC can make a recommendation to the parties that a facilitated conversation be pursued.

- *Selection of a facilitator*  
The GRC will select one or more Facilitators from among the members of the Good Relations Committee or other congregants skilled in conflict resolution if approved by the GRC.
- *Purpose of Facilitated Conversation and Role of the Facilitator(s)*  
The purpose of a facilitated conversation is to make space for the parties in conflict to communicate their respective concerns, feelings and needs. The role of the facilitator is to create space for the parties to voice, and potentially hear, the concerns of the other, but does not extend beyond that. While it is hoped that the parties will be able to come away from the process with greater understanding of themselves, the other, the situation, and likely scenarios going forward, it is ultimately up to the parties involved, not the facilitators, to identify and arrive at any potential resolutions going forward.
- *Format of the Conversation*  
The facilitator(s) will introduce themselves to the persons in conflict, specify the purpose of the conversation, the behavioral expectations, and the time schedule. Each party will be allowed to present their issue, uninterrupted; the facilitator will reflect back to the presenter what they heard and understood. The other party will be allowed to speak, uninterrupted, and the facilitator will reflect back in the same fashion. The facilitator will assist the parties in understanding the nature of their conflict or concern and, if relevant, help them articulate an agreement that will help resolve the issue.
- *Agreement*  
Any agreements reached to resolve the dispute will be documented by the GRC facilitators to ensure a common understanding among the parties. The agreement that the parties arrive at will be filed with the chair of the Good Relations Committee. **Revisions may be made to the agreement only if both parties agree to the changes. If the agreement is violated by either party, the matter will be referred to the Board.**

If the conflict or concern is beyond the scope and/or skills of the Good Relations Committee but the GRC believes that mediation would be justified in managing the conflict or concern, the GRC can make a recommendation to the parties and/or the Board that external mediation resources be pursued. The Board will determine whether it is appropriate to allocate church resources for securing mediation services.

#### **STEP FOUR: Concluding Actions (Impasse or Referral to the Board)**

If the conflict or concern remains unresolved even after receiving help from the Good Relations Committee, the GRC will declare an Impasse or refer the matter to the Board.

### ***A. Declaration of an Impasse***

There may be times in our congregational life when parties seeking conflict resolution find that they are at an impasse. An impasse will be declared when the following criteria in conflict resolution have been met:

- The congregation's Conflict Resolution Process has been followed
- The parties in conflict or concern have met face-to-face to attempt resolution
- Each party involved feels that they have said what needs to be said to the other party
- The Good Relations Committee has been involved in the attempts toward resolution
- The minister(s) is/are aware of the conflict or concern and the attempts toward resolution, either through direct involvement or through consultation with the Good Relations Committee
- The majority of the parties in conflict or concern, the Good Relations Committee, and the minister(s) agree that an impasse has been reached; if the conflict or concern is with the minister(s), the Good Relations Committee is responsible for declaring an impasse.

When an impasse is declared, further attempts at conflict resolution are recognized as futile. However, if the involved parties commit to and uphold First Unitarian's Congregational Behavioral Covenant, they can remain in right relationship with each other and the congregation.

To that end, the parties in conflict or concern shall enter into an agreement called a Commitment to Covenant regarding how they will treat each other with respect in all public settings. In addition to incorporating the standards set forth in the Congregation's Behavioral Covenant, a Commitment to Covenant may also specify limitations on communications **with or** about each other within the First Unitarian community, as the situation requires, and will articulate the terms of confidentiality expected.

The Commitment to Covenant will be made in writing, signed by the parties in conflict or concern, witnessed by one or more members of the Good Relations Committee, and submitted to the GRC for final approval. The Chair of the Good Relations Committee will keep copies of the final Commitment to Covenant in the church's files for record and reference by current and future GRCs, the Board of Trustees, and Minister(s).

Any action that violates the spirit of the agreement shall be deemed as a failure to adhere to the signed Commitment to Covenant and will be referred to the Board for action as described below.



### ***B. Referral to the Board***

Certain behaviors require action to protect the interests of the community and the Board of Trustees is the body established, and with the authority, to address and resolve these issues under the church's existent Disruptive Behavior Policy. Examples of behaviors covered include those which the Disruptive Behavior Policy identifies as dangerous, disruptive, or damaging (see Glossary of definitions for each of these terms).

Conflicts or concerns that come to the attention of the Good Relations Committee that relate to or incite behavior that falls under the Disruptive Behavior Policy will be referred to the Board for resolution under that Policy.

If a conflict or concern is not of the nature described in the preceding paragraph and cannot be successfully managed through Steps 1-3 of this Policy, the Good Relations Committee may also refer the matter to the Board for final resolution.

#### **The types of actions the Board may take include:**

- The Board will consider matters coming from the GRC and take action as they deem appropriate  
If no resolution is possible, concern for the well-being, openness, safety and stability of the congregation as a whole shall be given precedence over the feelings or actions of any individuals
- The Board can endorse the GRC's recommendations or it can set its own recommendations and ask that the parties adhere to said recommendations
- The Board can solicit assistance from the UUA or other resources
- [The Board can exclude or remove](#) a person from church activities [as specified in the Bylaws](#)
- Information sharing  
[The Board will determine the extent to which information will be shared with the congregation according to the necessity of each case.](#)

### **TYPICAL CONFLICT SITUATIONS**

#### **Conflict Between/Among Members/Friends of the Congregation**

You are urged to follow the steps outlined in the policy, namely:

Step One: Direct Dialogue Between the Concerned Persons

Step Two: Request Help from Good Relations Committee

Step Three: Facilitated Conversation by GRC Facilitators

Step Four: Concluding Actions will apply, if no resolution is reached.

### **Conflict with Staff**

The Good Relations Committee processes do not apply to supervised staff. Supervised staff includes the Director of Religious Education, employed teachers, Director of Operations, Nursery staff, the Director of Music, and the Sextons.

If your conflict or concern is with one of the supervised staff, you are urged to attempt Step 1, Direct Dialogue. If this does not result in an adequate solution, your next step is to go to a minister who in their role as Chief of Staff are the supervisors of staff members. If that does not produce a satisfactory result, you may contact a member of the Board.

### **Conflict with Ministers**

If your conflict or concern is with a minister, you are urged to attempt Step 1, Direct Dialogue. If this does not result in an adequate solution, your next step is to go directly to the Board of Trustees, [which is the governing body of the Society to which the Ministers report](#). If necessary, and with the option of consulting with the Good Relations Committee, the Board will consider whether other methodologies for conflict resolution, including denominational resources, and/or declaring an impasse are advisable.

If you have a conflict or concern with a minister regarding performance matters, policy matters or ethical issues, such as honesty, integrity, professional conduct or violation of First Unitarian's Bylaws or Policies, you are asked to:

- Submit a signed complaint in writing to the Congregation's President.
- The Board will acknowledge the complaint in writing.
- The Board will advise you in writing as to the outcome of the review and the Board's actions.

### **Disruptive or Dangerous Behavior**

In these situations, the existing Disruptive Behavior Policy in the Church's Policy Manual applies. This Policy states in part:

" 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 atmosphere where such openness can exist: both for those on its physical property or participating in church activities elsewhere and, by its public presence and impact, for those who might be drawn to it. When any person's physical and/or emotional well-being or freedom to safely express his or her beliefs or opinions are 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."

See [https://firstuchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/PolicyManual\\_May2018.pdf](https://firstuchicago.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/PolicyManual_May2018.pdf)

## **OTHER POSSIBLE TYPES OF CONFLICT**

### **Conflict or concern with/within Committees**

*Process for resolution:* Follow Steps One through Four

### **Conflict or concern over decisions made by the Board of Trustees**

*Process for resolution:* The Board of Trustees is an elected body of the Society. The Trustees establish the policies necessary for the conduct of the programs and affairs of the Society. On occasion, decisions made by the Board of Trustees may generate conflict or concern. In such instances, the complaint/concern should be put in writing to the Board of Trustees. The Board will review and respond in writing as to the results of the review. This decision may be shared with the congregation, as appropriate.

DRAFT

## Tools for Self-Mediated Conflict Resolution

### A. Preparation Suggestions

#### ***For the Party Requesting Dialogue:***

- Before approaching someone about a concern or conflict, ask yourself:
  - What exactly is bothering me?
  - Why is this matter important to me?
  - What do I want the other person to do or not do?
  - Are my feelings in proportion to the issue or are they amplified by some other situation or condition?
  - What is my own role in contributing to the conflict or concern?
- Reflect on the possible outcomes that would bring resolution, remembering that the idea is not to "win" or "be right" but to come to a better understanding of each other and a mutually satisfying and peaceful solution to the problem.
- Approach the person(s) with a request to discuss a concern you have. Be prepared to offer a succinct summary of the issue and to coordinate on a time to talk once the other person has had an opportunity to process the situation and prepare for a productive conversation.

#### ***For the Party Invited to Dialogue:***

- When approached by someone regarding a concern or conflict, be willing to learn more about the other person's concern and experience.
- Give yourself time to consider what is being said. If you need any clarifications, ask.
- Reflect on your intent at the time of the incident and the intended as well as unintended impact on the other person.
- Decide if this is an issue that you can address directly with the person. If you decide to proceed, schedule a time to discuss the issue with the person. Prepare for that meeting by using the tools and strategies included in this document to help facilitate conversation.

## **B. Suggested Structure for Dialogue**

### ***Ground Rules***

Together review and agree to abide by the following Ground Rules:

- We agree to talk directly with the person with whom there are concerns, and not seek to involve others in "gossip" or "alliance building."
- We agree one person speaks at a time so all parties can be heard.
- We will make a sincere commitment to listen to one another, to try to understand the other person's point of view before responding.
- We will provide time and space to say what needs to be said, listening quietly without interruption.
- We agree to try our hardest and trust that the other person is doing the same, approaching the resolution of differences with an open mind and an open heart and not rigid demands.
- We agree to focus on the issues, and not to attack the person with whom we disagree.
- What we discuss together will be kept in confidence, unless there is explicit agreement regarding who needs to know further information.

### ***Sharing & Active Listening***

For the person who initiated the conversation:

- (1) Thank the other person for being willing to meet and discuss your concern.
- (2) State the problem clearly, focusing on your understanding of the facts.
  - Speak from the first person: "This is my experience, my recollection, my perception, my point of view, my interpretation."
  - Be as specific as you can about whatever situation you are describing; give examples.
  - Speak about the behavior you observe, not someone's character or personality.
  - Avoid labels.

- (3) After presenting your understanding of the facts, share your feelings as honestly and completely as you are able.
- (4) What are the "hurts"? Use "I" messages to describe feelings of anger, hurt, or disappointment: "I am sad," or "I am disappointed." Avoid "you" messages such as "you make me angry...."

For the person invited to the conversation:

- (1) Use active listening skills--be careful not to interrupt and genuinely try to hear the other's concerns and feelings. Try to see the problem through the other's eyes. The "opposing" viewpoint can make sense even if you don't agree.
- (2) Take a moment to confirm that you understand what the person said. Try to restate what you have heard in a way that lets the other know you have fully understood.

After the person who has initiated the conversation has confirmed that they feel heard/understood, switch roles, with the invited party sharing their experience, feelings, needs from the same situation/issue and the party that initiated the dialogue actively listening and reflecting.

### ***Devise Possible Solutions***

After each party has been offered a chance to be heard, move into a conversation about potential solutions.

- The party who initiated the request for dialogue should be prepared to propose specific solutions, asking directly for what they want as well as identifying what they themselves might need to change to improve the situation.
- Invite the invited person to propose solutions, too.

Be ready for some compromise.

- Allowing the other person only one course of action will likely hinder resolution.

If you are able to reach agreement on a proposal for change, celebrate!

If you are not, consider requesting help from the Good Relations Committee.

### ***Closing***

Thank each other for being willing to try to resolve the conflict.

## GLOSSARY

**Assessment** – The act of consulting with concerned parties to gain the fullest understanding of a conflict or concern, so that the GRC can make recommendations on how to proceed through the Conflict Resolution Process.

**Agreement** - Harmony of opinion, action, or character; an arrangement as to a course of action; a document detailing the course of action the parties involved reached to resolve the dispute to ensure a common understanding.

**Board of Trustees** – Seven members of the congregation elected to serve as the governing body of First Unitarian Society of Chicago (First Unitarian Church) for staggered terms of two or three years. As stated in the Bylaws, "The Trustees shall have the care, custody, and control of the real and personal property of the Society and shall establish the policies necessary for the conduct of the programs and affairs of the Society."

**Concern** - A worried or nervous feeling about something, or something that makes you feel uncomfortable or uneasy.

**Confidentiality** – The state of keeping or being kept private.

**Conflict** - Strong disagreement between individuals or groups that often results in angry argument; a difference that prevents agreement; disagreement between ideas, feelings, and more.

**Congregant** – A member or friend of the congregation.

**Damaging** - To cause damage to; to injure or harm; to drive people away from the congregation

**Dangerous** – Able or likely to cause harm or injury; behavior that threatens physical or emotional well-being of self or another, or church property.

**Destructive** - Causing or wreaking destruction, or ruin; tending to disprove or discredit.

**Direct Dialogue** – Speaking one-on-one with the person with whom you have a concern or conflict.

**Disruptive behavior** - Behavior that interferes with, or disrupts, the activities of the congregation, disruption of public events and diminishment of the [appeal of the church](#); perceived compromise of the safety or well-being of child or adult.

**Facilitated Conversation** – Conversation between parties in conflict or expressing issue(s) of concern that is guided by a facilitator or facilitators chosen by the Good Relations Committee.

**Facilitator** – Someone who helps individuals or a group of [people in conflict to understand the other's point of view and needs in order to mutually work toward a](#)

[resolution to the conflict](#). In doing so, the facilitator remains neutral, taking no particular position in the discussion.

**Friend (of the congregation)** – Individual who attends, on a regular basis, the worship service and/or activities and events sponsored by the church, but has not fulfilled the conditions of membership, as specified in the Bylaws.

**Good Relations Committee** – The purpose of the Good Relations Committee (GRC) is to foster a congregational culture that reflects our shared values and enables us to live out our covenant and mission. To this end, the Good Relations Committee is charged with: recommending a Congregational Behavioral Covenant for adoption by the congregation; creating a Conflict Resolution Policy; with the Board of Trustees, identifying additional steps and processes needed to help the congregation address unresolved conflicts; after receiving appropriate training, serving as a resource for congregants to turn to when they have unresolved conflicts in the church. After the adoption of a Congregational Behavioral Covenant and a Conflict Resolution Policy, the Good Relations Committee shall provide conflict resolution services to any member or friend of First Unitarian (concerned person) who desires help in getting their church-related concerns addressed. The Good Relations Committee has the role of implementing and managing the Policy on Conflict Resolution, as described. *(See Policy on formation of the Good Relations Committee – link to website)*

**Impasse** - A situation in which no progress is possible.

**Mediation** - Intervention in a dispute in order to try to resolve it. Note: Depending on the conflict or concern, and the assessment of the Good Relations Committee regarding the skill level required to address the conflict or concern, a professional mediator might be recommended.

**Member (of the congregation)** – As stated in the Bylaws: “Any person who subscribes to the purposes of this Society and is approved by the Membership Committee shall become a member of the Society upon signing the Membership Book. Any person who has been a member for at least 90 days and has at least contributed \$50 of record to the Society during the 12 months preceding any regular or special meeting of the Society shall be entitled to vote at that meeting. Upon a member’s prior petition, the Senior Minister may modify for that member the financial requirement for voting.”

**Minister(s)** – Professional clergy “called” by congregational vote on the recommendation of an elected Search Committee, or hired. According to the Bylaws, they have control of the pulpit and general direction of the religious activities of First Unitarian.

The Senior Minister is also the chief administrator and is ex officio member of all committees. Decisions regarding the use of space in First Unitarian’s buildings are to be coordinated with the Senior Minister but are ultimately the responsibility of the Board of Trustees. According to the Minister(s) letter of agreement with First Unitarian,



supervision of all staff is their responsibility, but this responsibility may be delegated where appropriate. Other ministerial positions may include Associate, Affiliate, Minister-at-Large, Minister of Religious Education, and Ministerial Intern.

**Offensive** - Causing someone to feel deeply hurt, upset, or angry.

**Safe** – Protected from, or not exposed to, danger or risk; not likely to be harmed or lost.

**Staff** – Paid employees of the church; namely, the Ministerial Intern, the Director of Religious Education, the Director of Operations, Director of Music, paid RE teachers, nursery staff, the Financial Secretary, the Sextons. Note: The Ministerial Intern and the Directors are supervised by the Senior Ministers; the Financial Secretary and the Sextons are supervised by the Director of Operations, the paid RE teachers and the nursery staff by the RE Director.

[See Flow Charts 1-4 attached]

**Developed by the Good Relations Committee:**

Lisa Christensen Gee  
Jean Hester  
David Hodgson  
Ellen LaRue  
Jim Proctor  
Joan Staples  
Grace Latibeaudiere-Williams, Chair  
Rev. Teri Schwartz, Ministerial Advisor

**Sources:**

The Good Relations policies of: the Unitarian Universalist Church of West Lafayette, IN; the Chalice UU Congregation of Escondido, CA; the Hopedale Parish of Hopedale, MA; the Unitarian Universalist Church of Palo Alto, CA.

Mindful Mediation training of the Pollack Peace Center by Consultant Henry Yampolsky.

With appreciation to Rev. Lisa Presley, Congregational Life Consultant, UUA MidAmerica Region, for her wisdom and guidance in helping the Committee to develop a thoughtful and viable Policy.

# FIRST UNITARIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

## CHART 1 - Concern or Conflict Among/Between Members/Friends



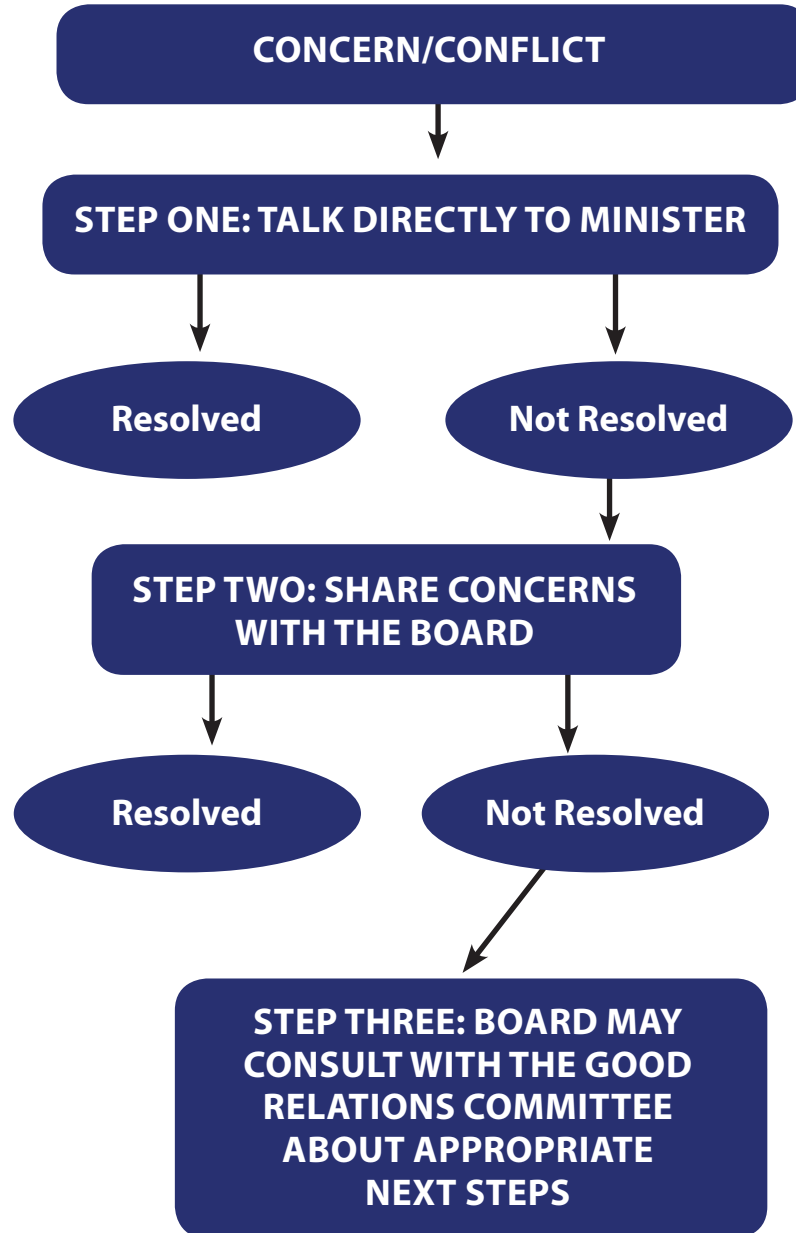
# FIRST UNITARIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

## CHART 2 - Concern or Conflict With Staff Member



# FIRST UNITARIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

## CHART 3 - Concern or Conflict with Minister



# FIRST UNITARIAN CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS

## CHART 4 - Disruptive Behavior Occurring During Congregational Worship or at Meetings, Events or Activities Organized by Church Groups, Either On or Off the Church Premises

