

HEALTHY CONGREGATION POLICY FOR THE HEALTHY CONGREGATIONS TEAM AND THE CONGREGATION AT LARGE

Date approved by Board: *January 13, 2021*

POLICY:

In alignment with our congregational covenant and UU Principles, the Healthy Congregation Team (HCT) supports our UUCGT congregation in discussing how we ideally ARE with each other. The Healthy Congregation **policy** encourages us all to become observers and thinkers in our group dynamics, especially when we are feeling anxious. The Healthy Congregations Team is here to help us practice healthy communications every day and learn healthy ways to resolve conflicts or other obstacles to good group functioning when they do occur.

PROCEDURE: *(how we do what we do)*

- The Healthy Congregations Team (HCT) consists of at least five members appointed by the Board, one shall be the minister, at least one shall be a Board member and at least two shall be Congregants.
- Members serve for staggered two-year terms.
- The committee will set its own meeting schedule with a recommended frequency of once each month.
- Notes are kept for reference by the team secretary.
- Activities will be reported to the Board as appropriate.
- The HCT will work closely with the Minister in planning team participation in Sunday services or related Adult RE classes.
- When conflicts between members/friends or members and staff arise, the HCT will support the congregation at large in following our Healthy Congregation procedure outlined below.

Healthy Congregation Procedure:

The three steps below serve as a guide to what we DO with each other when conflict or discomfort inevitably arises on occasion at church, and are also useful practices at home and in our greater community.

STEP 1: Talk directly with the person (member, Minister, staff) with whom you have the conflict.

- Anonymous complaints are not acceptable. Own the issue.
- Examine your role in the conflict. Why is this matter important to you? Get clear in your mind what happened and why. Write your thoughts.
- Email is not an acceptable means of communication in a time of conflict.
- As soon as possible after the incident, agree on a mutually acceptable

- time and place to talk in private with the other person(s) involved.
- During the discussion, use “I” statements (“I feel” not “you did”). Actively listen to the other person with your full attention. Check in by sharing what you heard along the way to verify that you have accurately understood her/him. Communicate to achieve understanding.
 - If you feel that safety is an issue, or that the conversation is too difficult to manage alone, seek the assistance of an appropriate, mutually acceptable, third party. The Healthy Congregations Team has members who are available to help.
 - Avoid any action that can lead to gossip. Choose your support and help wisely.
 - If the conflict is not with the person, but with how that person is performing a job (staff, RE teacher, etc.), address your concern to the Minister if one-on-one discussion does not work or does not feel possible.

STEP 2: If, after having a direct discussion, the issue remains unresolved, go to the Minister

- Counseling by the Minister must be acceptable to all parties. If the Minister is not appropriate or available, seek a member of the Healthy Congregations Team.
- If the conflict involves the Minister, the issue should be taken to the Healthy Congregations Team with strong encouragement to direct them back to the Minister, or offer to go with them to the Minister. The HCT will let the Minister know regardless of which direction the person chooses.

STEP 3: If, after Ministerial counseling, the issue remains unresolved, the services of the Safe Congregation Response Team (SCRT) will be requested and the Board may become more engaged. The SCRT is empowered to formalize the resolution process between the parties involved with a focus on keeping our community safe in alignment with our UUCGT covenant and policies. The SCRT has the discretion to engage a professional mediator to support discernment of issues when necessary.

In summary, our Healthy Congregation guidelines are recommended to clearly communicate to all who walk together at UUCGT that:

- Whenever two or more people gather, it is normal for conflict or upset to occur.
- It is expected by the Congregation and the Board of Directors that conflicts can and will be resolved respectfully by the individuals involved, acting in alignment with Unitarian Universalists Seven Principles and our UUCGT covenant.