

CVUUF Complaint and Conflict Resolution Procedure
Adopted July 17, 2007

I. Background.

- A. In order to facilitate the communication and resolution of complaints and conflicts relating to the Fellowship, the Board of Trustees adopted this Complaint and Conflict Resolution Procedure, effective July 17, 2007 (“Procedure”).
- B. This Procedure is intended to foster good relations within the community by providing safe and objective channels for the resolution of complaints and conflicts.

II. Conflict Prevention and Resolution Committee.

- A. The Board will establish a Conflict Prevention and Resolution Committee (hereafter referred to as “the Committee”). Persons related to the Fellowship, whether participants, staff or groups, finding themselves in conflict which they have been unable to resolve using normal channels, are expected to seek the assistance of the Committee.
- B. The Committee shall have the following functions:
 - 1. The facilitation of resolutions to complaints as defined in Section IV of this Procedure.
 - 2. The facilitation of resolutions to conflicts as defined in Section V of this Procedure.
 - 3. The Committee shall
 - i. Advise members who ask for guidance on the correct process and channels for complaints or conflicts.
 - ii. Meet from time to time to determine procedures appropriate for various types of conflict,
 - iii. Prepare and distribute appropriate pamphlets describing the complaints or conflict management process.
 - iv. Hold workshops or skill training sessions related to conflict management (in consultation with the Adult Religious Education Committee and/or Leadership Development Committee), and
 - v. Advise the Board from time to time on needed changes in policy or on other relevant matters.

III. Membership and Appointment of the Committee Members.

- A. The Committee shall have five members with a quorum of three.
- B. Since the Committee’s impartiality is essential to the successful resolution of conflicts and complaints, the members should not be current staff or members of the board or council or committee chairs. They should be members of the Fellowship who are widely trusted and recognized as capable of being impartial and judicious in all cases. Committee members shall recuse themselves from cases where they have a close relationship (eg of family, business or close friendship) with any of the parties.
- C. The initial members of the Committee shall be appointed by the Board to serve the balance of the current fiscal year. Subsequently, in the interests of ensuring impartiality, the Committee members shall be nominated each year by the Nominating Committee, with input from the Leadership Development

Committee and other sources including CVUUF members at large. The Committee will be elected to serve a term of one year at the Annual Meeting. Additional nominations may be made from the floor with the acceptance of the nominee(s) at any Fellowship meeting at which an election is being held. Acceptance of the nomination may be made verbally at the election or by written notification to the Secretary.

IV. Process: Complaints

Definition: A complaint is a problem or concern that a CVUUF participant has relating to the actions or decisions of staff, trustees or council members, committee chairs or anyone else who has been empowered to act on behalf of or for the Fellowship.

Step One - Full use of all appropriate lower-level procedures.

Complaints should be resolved initially through normal and appropriate means before they are brought before the Committee. This means trying to resolve the issue directly with the person who can address or resolve the concern, and after that to others who have Fellowship authority to resolve it, for example:

- Person in overall charge of the activity involved.
- Chair of the relevant committee, task force or ad hoc body.
- Director of the group which has oversight of the activity concerned.
- Minister.

The aggrieved person(s) may approach the Committee to ask advice to determine where to take the complaint. With limited exceptions, the Committee will not review a complaint until the aggrieved person(s) has attempted in good faith to resolve it through all normal channels.

Step Two - Submitting a Complaint and Initial Review.

The party with the complaint must then complete and sign the Complaint Form (attached) and submit it to the Chair of the Committee, with a copy to the person(s) who are listed in the Complaint Form.

Step Three – Initial Screening and Referral.

The Chair or Vice Chair of the Committee will first ascertain that all usual and appropriate means have been exhausted. If they have not, the Chair or Vice Chair will refer the complaint to the person or authorized group that constitutes the next normal step in reviewing and resolving the complaint. If the parties or the person with the complaint feels that he or she cannot comply with Step One, he or she must contact the Chair of the Committee for permission to skip Step One and proceed to Step Two. The Committee Chair has the discretion to waive Step One if in her or his opinion Step One is not feasible or reasonable to expect.

Step Four – Review and Resolution.

The Committee will review the complaint and may request further information or evidence from the complaining party or the person(s) listed in the complaint. The Committee will hear all parties, and will deliberate to decide on suggested approaches to resolution. The Committee will then present these suggestions to the person or person(s) jointly in writing within 30 days of the receipt of all requested information or evidence and the Committee and the person(s) involved will make every attempt to achieve a voluntary resolution.

Step Five – Appeal.

If the Committee is unable to effect a solution, or if a party (or parties) refuses to implement the suggestions, the Committee shall write a report to the Board, with recommendations and ask the Board to take action. The Board shall normally act on the Committee's recommendations and will use every effort to render its decision within 30 days of receipt of the Committee's report. The Board will communicate its decision in writing and addressed to the parties involved. In cases where the Board does not believe it can or should take action to resolve a complaint, the Board shall give reasons in writing why such action is not feasible. The reasons for declining to take action may include, for example, legal considerations, potential violation of fiduciary duties, or a conflict with overriding Fellowship policies. In cases where an aggrieved party is still not satisfied with the recommendations made by the Committee or the Board's action or inaction with respect to those recommendations, he or she may request mediation services or other relief from the UUA Pacific Southwest District.

V. Process - Conflicts

Definition: A conflict is a disagreement between participants in the Fellowship that materially and adversely affects (or could materially and adversely affect) the health of the Fellowship as a community, or a significant proportion of its participants.

Step One - Full Use of Direct Negotiation

Conflicts should normally be resolved between the involved parties, who may request assistance from a mutually acceptable member of the Committee to mediate. With limited exceptions, the Committee will not review a conflict unless the parties have in good faith attempted to resolve it through direct negotiation.

Step Two - Submitting a Request For Mediation

Any party to the conflict may complete and sign a Mediation Request Form (attached) and submit it to the Chair of the Committee, with a copy to others who are listed in the Mediation Request Form.

Step Three – Initial Screening and Referral

The Chair or the Vice Chair will first ascertain whether direct negotiation has been fully attempted. If this is not the case, the Chair or Vice Chair will refer the conflict back to the parties involved.

If one or more of the parties feels that he or she cannot comply with Step One, he or she must contact the Chair of the Committee for permission to skip Step One and proceed to Step Two. The Committee Chair has the discretion to waive Step One if in her or his opinion Step One is not feasible or reasonable to expect. The Chair shall also determine whether the conflict is one that materially and adversely affects (or could materially and adversely affect) the health of the Fellowship as a community, or a significant proportion of its participants. If it is not, the Committee may recommend the use of professional mediation services. If it is, the Committee shall review the conflict. In cases where a conflict is in process and neither party has requested mediation, the Chair or Vice Chair of the Committee may approach the parties to inquire whether they might want to use the Committee's services.

Step Four – Review and Resolution.

The Committee will review the conflict and may request further information or evidence from the parties. The Committee will hear all parties, and will deliberate to decide on suggested approaches to resolve the conflict. The Committee will then present these suggestions to the person or person(s) jointly in writing within 30 days of the receipt of all requested information or evidence and the Committee and the person(s) involved will make every attempt to achieve a voluntary resolution.

In cases where any party to a conflict is not satisfied with the recommendations made by the Committee, the Committee may recommend professional mediation services. The party/parties may alternatively request mediation services or other relief from the UUA Pacific Southwest District.

VI. Rules of Conduct.

- A. At all times the dignity of all persons will be honored, and matters of privacy and confidentiality will be respected.
- B. All parties involved must:
 - 1. treat others with respect and consideration,
 - 2. listen politely to one another without interruption,
 - 3. refrain from threats and insults,
 - 4. attempt to view the situation from the other perspective, and
 - 5. discuss problems in a positive manner.
- C. Once a complaint or mediation request has been filed, the party/parties will agree to avoid discussing the matter with other participants in the Fellowship until such time as the process has run its course, except for discussions that will aid in the resolution of the matter such as to assemble evidence or documentation. The purpose of this admonition is to limit gossip or other unproductive communications. An aggrieved party who does not feel confident in presenting his or her own case may request a representative to speak for them, but only when they are present.
- D. If the conflict or complaint involves a group, the group shall appoint a representative to bring the complaint to the Committee through this process. Subsequent to the filing of a complaint, the aggrieved group shall instruct its members to avoid discussion of the issue in the wider Fellowship until resolution by this process, except in relation to assembling evidence or documentation needed to present their case.
- E. The Committee and others involved in resolving the problem must:
 - 1. Make every attempt to reach decision and resolutions by consensus,
 - 2. Take due diligence in collecting the underlying facts including asking for further information from the complaining party or the person(s) listed in the complaint,
 - 3. Ensure the confidentiality of participants' discussions, and respect such confidentiality at all times, and
 - 4. Make every effort to render decisions within 30 days.

VI. General

- A. Following mediation, the parties are expected to abide by the terms of their agreement and to fulfill the terms on their own initiative.
- B. Decisions that are made in accordance with this complaint procedure shall be honored by all participants in the Fellowship.

**CVUUF
Complaint Form**

Print Your Name

Date

1. Have you attempted resolution as required by Step One of the Complaint Procedure? (Yes or No) ____.
If no, set forth the reasons you do not think you can comply with Step One.

2. Describe your complaint. Be as specific as possible about your concerns. Try to be objective in stating facts rather than making accusations.

3. Describe the resolution you are seeking (e.g. identify the specific action you want taken, or the change you would like to see made).

4. Is there any other information that you would like to share that you think will assist in the evaluation and resolution of your complaint?

Signature (required)

(Attach additional signatures, if necessary)

Submit this Complaint Form to the Chair of the Complaint and Conflict Resolution Committee and give a copy to all parties involved.

CVUUF
Request for Conflict Mediation

Print Your Name

Date

1. Have you attempted resolution by direct negotiation? (Yes or No) ____.
If no, set forth the reasons you think that step should be skipped.

2. Describe the conflict. Be as specific as possible about your concerns. Try to be objective in stating facts rather than making accusations. Try to explain the other parties' position accurately. [Add extra sheets if necessary.]

3. Describe the resolution you would like to see (e.g. identify the specific action you want taken, or the change you would like to see made).

4. Is there any other information that you would like to share that you think will assist in the evaluation and resolution of your conflict?

Signature (required)

(Attach additional signatures, if necessary)

Submit this Form to the Chair of the Complaint and Conflict Resolution Committee and give a copy to all parties involved.