



UUCA Healthy Relations Committee (HRC)¹

Problem Response Process (PRP)

Approved by UUCA Board of Trustees - January 24, 2023

When members (congregants), and friends find themselves in a conflict situation related to their involvement at UUCA, they are encouraged to follow the steps of the HRC's Problem Response Process (PRP). If you have questions about the PRP, please contact the HRC at healthyrelations@uuca.org.

The HRC serves members (congregants) and friends of the congregation. Employees or contractors of UUCA, defined as people receiving compensation, financial or otherwise, from UUCA for their services, are excluded from HRC services, except as requested by the senior minister. In the event of a conflict between a member/friend and a staff person, the HRC will advise the party(ies) to bring the issue to the attention of the senior minister. Upon request of either party, the HRC will accompany or assist the party in approaching the senior minister.

PRP Benefits

1. In a dynamic, vibrant faith community like UUCA, we can **expect conflict** to occur from time-to-time. A process for responding to conflicts empowers individuals and our community to learn from conflict, not be its victims. Well managed conflict can be liberating and enriching and provides an opportunity for individuals and communities to both restore and deepen relationships.
2. Conflicts also can occur in a community of people that is vibrant and alive with diverse identities based on race, ethnicity, culture, age, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, theological or philosophical perspective, and other aspects of the human experience. Our diverse identities and experience of injustice and microaggression related to these identities can contribute to and complicate any conflict. UUCA is committed to examining, understanding, and resolving conflicts through our antiracism, anti-oppression, and multicultural lens.
3. A process to catch congregant concerns early, before they fester, **reduces** the chances of significant **negative emotional impact** on individuals and on our community.

¹ The HRC is a committee of the UUCA Board of Trustees. To access and review the HRC's Mission, Vision, and Functions Statement, click on the following link: <https://www.uuca.org/healthy-relationship-committee/>. Scroll down and click on the heading, "HRC Mission and Vision".

4. Treating everyone with **dignity and respect** are cornerstone practices of our UU faith. The PRP is an affirmation of these foundational practices.

Action steps to take when conflict occurs

Step #1 - Acknowledgement and Agreement. Acknowledge with the other person(s) involved that a conflict exists. Make an agreement with the person(s) with whom you are in conflict to mutually engage in this conflict resolution process. If all agree, then proceed together with this process. The following steps should be followed by all parties in the conflict. If all do not agree, then seek the assistance of a mutually respected third party or the HRC regarding how to move forward.

Step #2 - Reaffirm Our Religious Covenant. Re-acquaint yourself, **through self-study**, with our UU Purposes and Principles, our UUCA ARAOMC Resolution, and our UUCA Covenant of Healthy Relationships. Below are links to these documents. Contact the HRC at healthyrelations@uuca.org if you need hard copies of these documents or use the following links to access electronic copies on your own.

- A. UU Purposes and Principles - <https://www.uua.org/beliefs/what-we-believe/principles> Our UU Principles, our Covenant, and our ARAOMC Resolution serve the purposes of expressing our commitments to each other in building a covenantal faith community and as tools to guide us when we work to restore right relationship with each other.
- B. UUCA Covenant - <https://www.uuca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Covenant-of-Healthy-Relationships-Nov-2011-1.pdf>
- C. UUCA ARAOMC Resolution – <https://www.uuca.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ARAOMC.pdf>

Step #3 – Collect and Clarify the Facts. Write down the facts of what happened to clarify the situation in your own mind. Get a reality check from a trusted third party to make sure you have the facts correct. Compare your perceptions to what others saw and heard. Ask yourself whether others perceive and understand the situation in the same way you do? **Caution: Do this to gain perspective, not as an opportunity to gossip with a 3rd party!**

Step #4 – Engage in Reflection. Sleep on it overnight before taking any action. Take the time to do some soul searching to broaden your perspective and to attempt to see through the eyes of others. Put yourself in the other person's shoes and avoid vilifying them. Seek clarity about what happened; why it was important to you; what is in the best interest of everyone involved, including the community. Look for opportunities within the conflict for growth and deepening of healthy relationship.

Select among the questions below to ask and answer for yourself.

- ❖ *What is important to me?*
- ❖ *What is my role in the conflict?*
- ❖ *What factors could be causing the other person's behavior?*

- ❖ *What assumptions am I making about this situation?*
- ❖ *How can I check-out the accuracy of those assumptions?*
- ❖ *What outcome or resolution would work for me?*
- ❖ *Why is resolving this conflict important in our religious community?*
- ❖ *What past conflicts that I have experienced may be impacting how I view and react to this current conflict?*
- ❖ *What outcome or resolution would be best for the other person(s) involved?*
- ❖ *What outcome or resolution would be best for my relationship with the person(s) with whom I'm in conflict?*
- ❖ *In what ways can this conflict allow me, the other person, and our community to grow and deepen?*
- ❖ *What am I willing to let go of for the good of the other person(s) and our community?*
- ❖ *What can I not let go of in resolving this conflict?*
- ❖ *How do my racial, ethnic, cultural, gender, age, sexual orientation, ability status, and other identities contribute to my actions in experience of this conflict?*
- ❖ *How do my experiences of identity-based oppression, microaggression, and injustice in the wider world, and in this community, contribute to my actions in and experience of this conflict?*
- ❖ *What do my values and sense of justice compel me to do in this conflict?*
- ❖ *What does love of self, others, and this community compel me to do to resolve this conflict?*

Step #5 - Mutually Respectful Conversation. If you are comfortable in doing so, follow the process below to attempt to resolve the conflict and restore your relationship through respectful conversation privately and directly with the person(s) involved.

PROCESS AND TIPS:

- ❖ Agree on a mutually convenient time to talk in private as soon as is practical. Agree on a length of time for the conversation and commit to respecting this time limit.
- ❖ Write down your concerns to clarify them for yourself. Use the questions in Step #4 above to help with this.
- ❖ Begin the discussion by lighting a chalice together, with each person sharing their opening words. Only if both are comfortable doing so, consider clasping one of the other person(s)'s hands during the chalice lighting and opening words.

- ❖ Each person should bring brief opening words relevant to the conflict or to what they are feeling (the HRC can provide suggestions for opening words and ritual – add link).
- ❖ *Follow the principle. “First, seek to understand, then to be understood.”*
- ❖ *Speak clearly and succinctly about your concern(s).*
- ❖ *Use “I” statements (“I feel” not “You did”) to convey your feelings.*
- ❖ *Speak from the heart.*
- ❖ *Listen carefully. Reflect back what you hear.*
- ❖ *Use the words, “Help me understand,” to gain more information and clarity.*
- ❖ Take turns sharing your answers to the self-reflection questions you answered.
- ❖ Regularly restate what you heard the other person(s) saying.
- ❖ As you near the end of the agreed ending time, propose and negotiate a mutually agreeable resolution.
- ❖ If the end comes and a resolution that restores a healthy relationship has not been reached, agree on a time and place for a second conversation. Alternatively, reach out together to the HRC for assistance.
- ❖ Regardless of whether a resolution has been reached, end the conversation by saying one new thing you have learned or have come to appreciate (more) about the other person(s) and one thing you value about your relationship with the other person(s).

The HRC maintains a variety of learning resources related to communications, conflict resolution, and Covenant keeping skills. These resources are available at: <https://www.uuca.org/healthy-relationship-committee/>. Congregants can select and review the resources of value to them as they consider how to best resolve the conflict and restore a healthy relationship.

HRC Engagement – What to Expect

The HRC exists to promote respectful, loving relationships within our community and operates from the perspective that most conflicts can be resolved in good faith by individuals who live by our UU Principles and who do their best to follow our Covenant of Healthy Relationships and ARAOMC commitment.

If you feel that conversation is too difficult to manage alone, call on an appropriate, neutral 3rd party for assistance. The Healthy Relations Committee is available to listen calmly, stay neutral, and offer

support and resources. When HRC assistance is requested, a congregant can expect HRC members to deeply listen to their concern(s) and to respond in a compassionate, impartial, and non-judgmental manner. The HRC works confidentially with all parties who seek its assistance (see **Important Disclosures** below).

Two types of problem resolution assistance are available:

- ❖ **Individual consultation** provides an individual congregant with an opportunity to explore their concern(s) and to decide the mutual best course of action to resolve the conflict and restore the relationship.
- ❖ **Facilitated Conversation** provides parties involved in conflict the opportunity to work together in a structured, mediated process to address their issue(s). It will follow the same format as described above (see **Steps 1 – 5**), but with the addition of an impartial facilitator(s) to help create a safe, healthy, restorative process.

What Will Happen

- ❖ A member of the HRC will respond to a request as soon as is practical. You may request consultation with an HRC member who shares one or more of your identities and we will make every effort to meet this request when feasible, including involving trusted individuals not on the HRC if their identity and perspective can be helpful in resolving the conflict. As needed and when feasible, two facilitators will be provided so that both parties in the conflict will have the support needed for a healthy conflict resolution.
- ❖ A **first contact** conversation will be conducted by the HRC member. The purpose of this conversation is to provide information about the HRC 's Problem Resolution Process and explore the individual's or the parties interest in engaging with the HRC.

In a first contact conversation, specific conflict issues are not identified or addressed. Those matters are reserved for discussion during a **follow-on individual consultation** meeting with a congregant or a **facilitated conversation** meeting with the parties.

- ❖ If a congregant or the parties decide to engage with the HRC, a mutually convenient date and time for a follow-up meeting will be scheduled. Meetings may be held by Zoom or in-person. Any in-person meeting will be held in accord with UUCA's policies related to in-person gatherings.
- ❖ Two (2) HRC members may participate as co-facilitators in an **individual consultation** or a **facilitated conversation**.
- ❖ The structure for an **individual consultation** or **facilitated conversation** includes:
 - Setting of ground rules and agreements
 - Expressing concern(s) by each participant
 - Creating an agenda of issues to be addressed
 - Facilitating discussion of proposed solutions

- ❖ Prior to a first follow-up meeting, congregants will be encouraged to read and be familiar with our UU Purposes and Principles, UUCA's Covenant, UUCA's ARAOMC Statement, and a short reading, "A Model for Covenantal Conversations" by Rev. Kelly Dignan. (For these and other resources, go to <https://www.uuca.org/healthy-relationship-committee/>).

How Do I Contact the HRC?

The HRC can be contacted by email at: healthyrelations@uuca.org. The email addresses of HRC members are available at this same link.

Important Disclosures

1. The HRC does not accept anonymous requests.
2. Any statement, report or impression conveyed to an HRC member that involves possible harm to self or others; or any allegation(s) related to child or elder abuse; or any conduct as described in the UUCA "Serious Covenant Breach Policy" will **NOT** be held in confidence. In such instances, the HRC will involve appropriate UUCA senior ministerial staff and, when appropriate, the Board President.

