

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax

Operational Policy

Subject: Right Relations Covenantal Process

Number: I.J

Effective Date: 2/12/2020

Approved By: Coordinating Team

Policy

This policy sets forth the Covenant of Right Relations section of this policy and a process to guide UUCF in circumstances when we may not fully live within the Covenant. Even in the healthiest and happiest congregations, conflicts will arise. While we love and respect each other, we are also human. Discord is inevitable, and, while normal, disagreements among individuals can create difficulties in congregations.

The vision of a welcoming, respectful and safe spiritual community led UUCF in 2018 to gather input from the congregation to develop a covenant supporting healthy systems and relationships. In June 2019, the UUCF Covenant of Right Relations was adopted by the congregation. The covenant and these guidelines are designed to address concerns before they become intractable or systemic.

UUCF Covenant of Right Relations

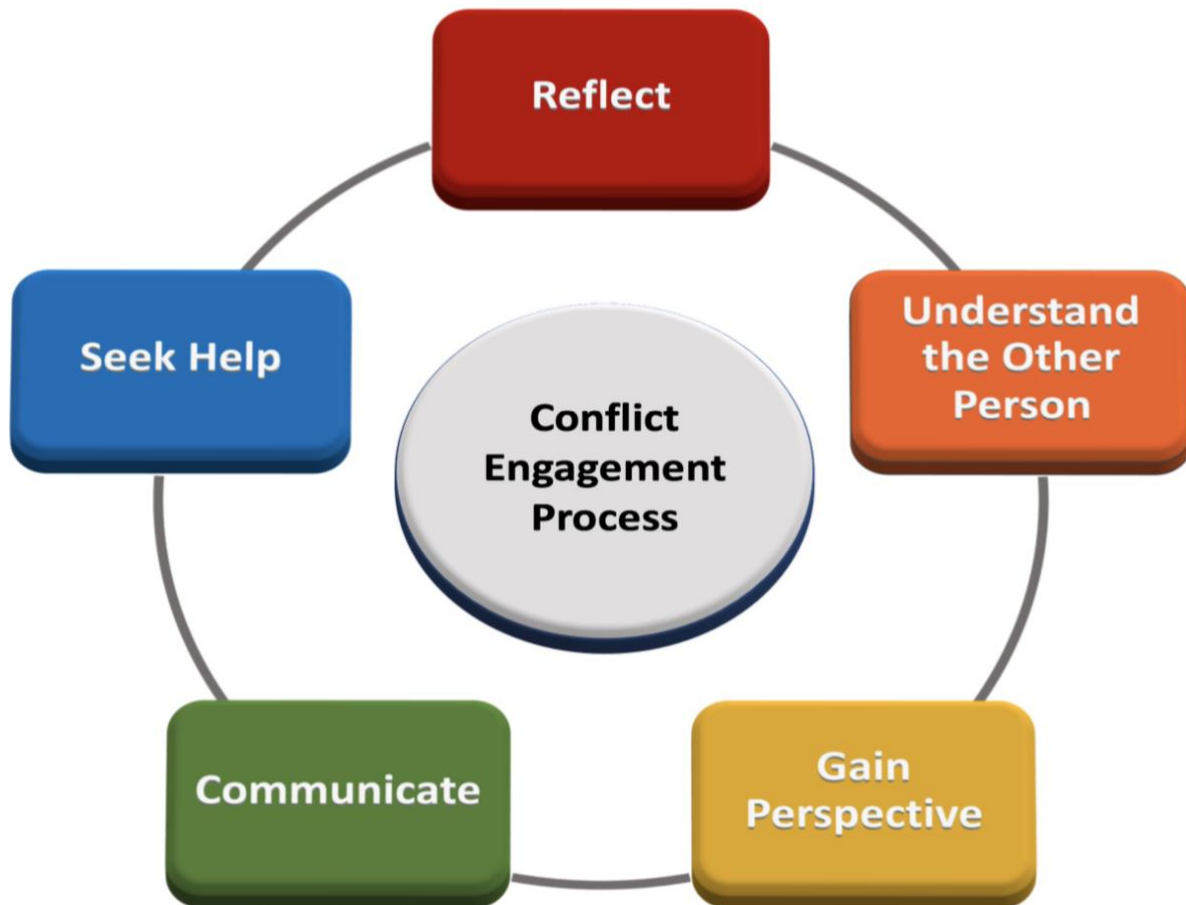
We, the members and friends of the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fairfax, seek to create an atmosphere of honesty, respect, trust, gratitude, forgiveness, acceptance and loyalty within our congregation. Right relations are the foundation on which a safe and healthy congregation is based. To this end, we pledge to govern our actions and our speech by the spirit and letter of this covenant. We therefore promise to:

- Affirm and kindle the living spirit of which we are all a part.
- Listen with open hearts and open minds.
- Be present for each other in times of struggle and times of joy.
- Honor our commitments to ourselves and to each other.
- Give freely of our time, gifts and financial support as we are able.
- Acknowledge, respect and embrace our diverse experiences.
- Welcome, seek and foster deeper connections through mutual care and inclusion.

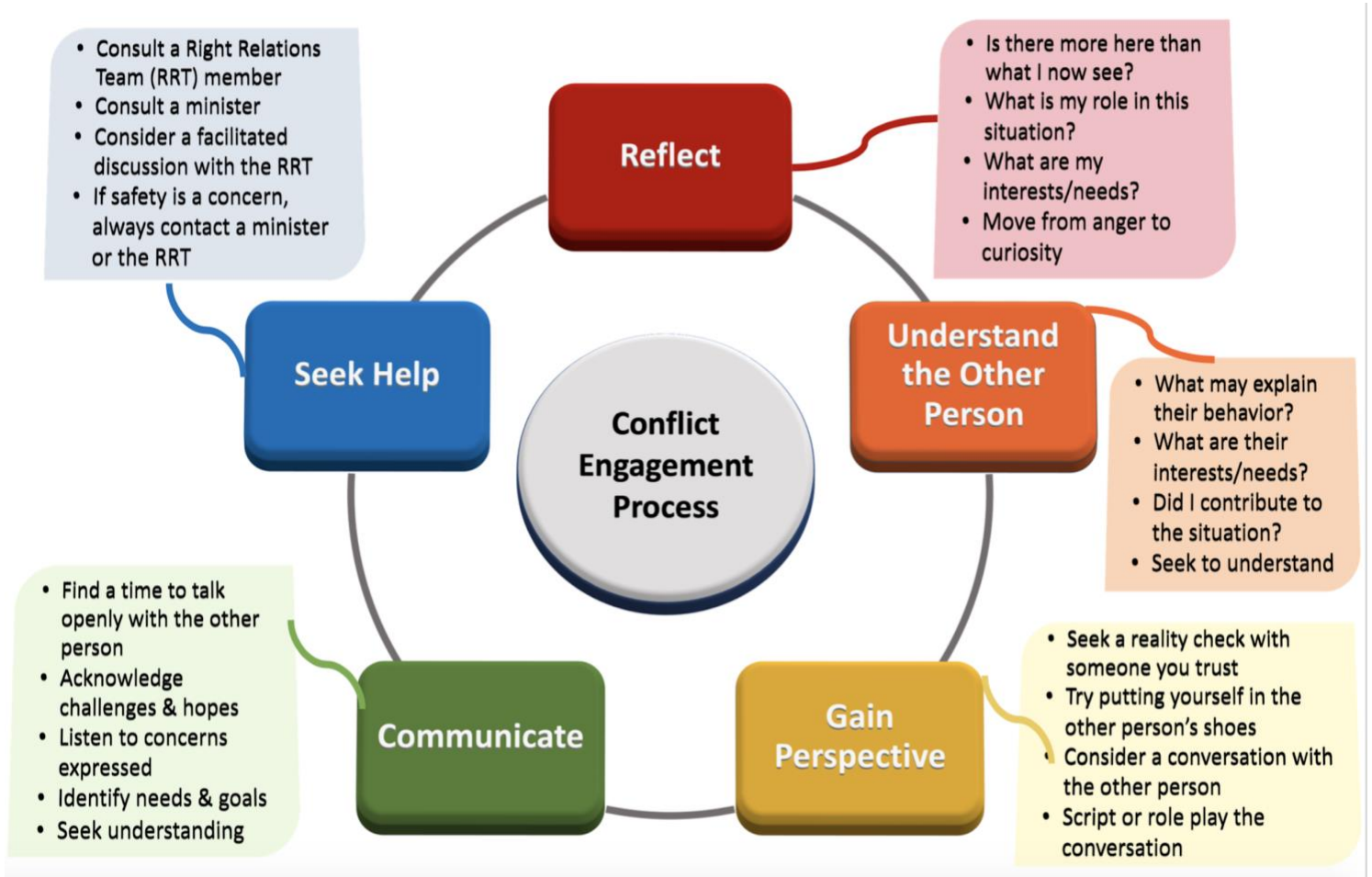
- Be mindful of the impact of our interactions on others.
- Engage with one another directly, honestly and respectfully.
- Acknowledge and accept our imperfections and begin again in love.

Conflict Engagement Process for a Healthy Congregation

The Conflict Engagement Process illustrated here provides an approach to address concerns and disagreements among individuals before they become intractable. This process is intended to help us to learn from our conflicts to better understand ourselves and others. Engaging in this process can help us to keep our differences in perspective and strengthen our UUCF community.



While it is anticipated that congregants involved in a conflict will begin with reflection, one may enter this process at any point. The following thoughts and questions are some examples that may guide individuals through each stage of this process:



Guidance

When using the Conflict Engagement Process, one may consult with a minister, any member of the Right Relations Team or any Coordinating Team (CT) member.

Right Relations Team (RRT) Organization Structure

1. Authority

The RRT is a committee appointed by the Coordinating Team (CT) to implement the Right Relations Policy and Process.

2. Composition

The RRT is composed of five members of the congregation. The CT will communicate to the congregation the names of those appointed to the RRT. RRT members will elect a chair annually. Three RRT members will constitute a working team.

RRT members should each:

- Exhibit good listening skills.
- Demonstrate the ability to seek fairness toward everyone and remain neutral when involved in disputes.
- Have experience with best practices in conflict resolution or be willing to learn.
- Not currently be serving as a member of the Board or the CT.
- Demonstrate a willingness to serve the entire congregation.
- Maintain confidentiality of conflicts raised to the RRT

3. Term

RRT members will serve staggered terms of 2 years with the possibility of renewing for one additional term. Terms start at the beginning of the UUCF fiscal year. Vacancies that occur during the year will be filled by appointment of the CT. The CT will consult sitting members of the RRT prior to appointing new members.

4. Responsibilities

- The RRT oversees the conflict resolution process outlined here. When it receives requests for assistance, it determines what support and resources are needed, if any, and makes them available.
- The RRT oversees communication to the congregation regarding the conflict resolution process and policy. The RRT also oversees education and training in conflict resolution for the congregation and its leaders.
- If individual attempts at conflict resolution are unsuccessful, the RRT may make recommendations for resolution, consistent with this Covenantal Process of Right Relations. The RRT may also bring in a third party, for example a trained facilitator, or refer any conflicts to the CT for resolution.

- The RRT may also be called upon to mediate different perspectives and varying viewpoints within the congregation. In doing so, the RRT will work to ensure that all voices are heard and that the best practices of conflict resolution are applied. The RRT will encourage the framing of these kinds of conflicts as opportunities for healing and building community.

5. Operational Guidelines

The Right Relations Team shall:

- Respond to each request for assistance, exercising independent judgment and guided by the Right Relations Covenant, the UUCF Bylaws and UU Principles.
- Recuse themselves from any issue to which they are a party or a stakeholder. Any RRT member may declare a conflict to exist for themselves or for another member, and recusal will follow.
- Meet at least quarterly and report activities to the CT at least quarterly.
- Communicate information regarding healthy systems and relationships.
- Submit an annual budget request to fund training, resources and outside consultants.
- Develop additional procedures as needed.
- Recommend additions to these guidelines to the CT as needed.
- Maintain confidentiality of records, referrals and at every stage of the process.