

# Community Church of Chapel Hill Unitarian Universalist Conflict Mediation Procedure

The Community Church of Chapel Hill Unitarian Universalist is committed to fostering right and respectful relations among its members, friends, and staff. We understand that conflict is sometimes an inevitable part of a healthy community and can serve as an opportunity for growth and development. As members of this congregation, an important part of our daily spiritual work is handling conflict in ways that reflect our covenant. When conflict arises among members of our church community, we will employ the following mediation process.

## Pre-mediation Steps

1. If a church member approaches the Committee on Ministry (COM) or minister seeking assistance with a conflict with another member, the member will be provided with a [conflict resolution brochure](#) and will be encouraged to reflect on the congregational covenant and to address the conflict directly with that member.
2. If the conflict is not resolved after these initial steps, the parties may wish to engage in mediation. The minister can facilitate the process of selecting an appropriate person to serve as mediator.
3. If the conflict is deemed private then no church representative is needed. However, if the conflict affects the church, then the church is considered an involved party and should be represented as appropriate.
4. If appropriate, the minister can choose to contact the [Dispute Settlement Center](#) (DSC) in Carrboro to request a mediator. Depending on the circumstances, the church may be able to partially or fully subsidize the cost of mediation.
5. The DSC mediator will contact the involved parties to schedule a meeting at their office.

## Mediation Process

1. Inform the participants of the three pillars of mediation: 1) voluntary, 2) confidential, and 3) self empowerment, meaning the participants should be aware that they will be making the final decisions that will resolve their concerns, not the mediator. The only confidentiality exception is when a concern needs to be raised with the minister and/or board.
2. Begin the mediation by lighting a chalice and reading the Congregational Covenant aloud together.
3. Listen and tell, using reflective listening.
4. Identify issues: each person's needs, interests, and concerns.
5. Brainstorm solutions. Get as many ideas on the table as possible, and don't judge the ideas as they are proposed.
6. Evaluate solutions based on how well the various interests are met and the feasibility of implementation.
7. Come to a mediated agreement.

## Unresolved Conflicts

If the conflict remains unresolved after mediation, the mediator might suggest some of the following options:

1. Take a break and try again later after tensions have eased.
2. Include additional people in a second mediation if it is determined there are others who should be involved.
3. The mediator might encourage some individuals to seek private counseling if they think it is warranted.

If still no resolution or compromise is reached and the conflict is deemed disruptive to the church, the minister will initiate the Procedure for Addressing Disruptive Behavior.