



## **First Unitarian Society Principles of Right Relations**

### **FUS Covenant**

Love is the spirit of this place,  
And service its law;  
This is our covenant,  
To dwell together in peace,  
To seek the truth in love,  
And to help one another.

The following **Principles of Right Relations** provide guidelines to help each of us live up to our covenant in our interactions with one another:

### **We value trust, respect and acceptance of diversity in our relationships with each other, so we...**

- Listen carefully and actively to each other, seeking both to understand and to be understood.
- Keep our individual needs in balance with the health and vitality of the community as a whole.
- Treat each other with respect, even in times of confusion, misunderstanding, or disagreement.
- Welcome dialogue and cultivate an open and safe environment in which to hear all points of view.

### **We hold honest and respectful communication as the basis of healthy relationships in community, so we ...**

- Are open, courteous and forgiving with each other, suspend judgment of those with whom we disagree, and offer each other kindness and encouragement.
- Share our own views with thoughtful, constructive openness and tact, and listen intently to others' views
- Speak with an open heart directly to those involved when we have concerns or have failed to live up to the FUS covenant.
- Assume positive intent on the part of each individual.
- Deal with complex, emotional or difficult to resolve issues to the best of our ability, and improve our skills to do so.

**We acknowledge that change and conflict are normal parts of life in community, so we...**

- Are firm in our commitment to seeking a mutual solution to our differences.
- Accept skilled help when we cannot reach agreement or reconciliation.
- Are straightforward in addressing divisive or damaging behavior within our community.
- Commit to examining where white privilege, racism, and other oppressions may be informing our interactions, discussions, and decisions, and to discerning what a decision made from a social justice lens would look like.
- Communicate and respect the stated process for coming to closure.

**We are generous with our gifts in support of our mission, so we...**

- Give of our time, talent and resources as we are able to keep our community vital and strong.
- Respect and give thanks and encouragement for the time, effort, and service that others give.
- Work for justice and engage in acts of service and compassion to others.
- Acknowledge humans make mistakes and treat ourselves and others gently when we do.
- Stay engaged in the process of reconciliation with each other.
- Practice forgiveness and begin again in love.

Principals Approved by the FUS Congregation at the Annual Meeting on May 19, 2019.



## **First Unitarian Society Right Relations Plan**

### **I. Purpose**

Despite our efforts to abide by the First Unitarian Society Covenant and Principles of Right Relations, conflicts will arise, sometimes with heightened emotions. Conflict is normal and inevitable when two or more people gather. It creates an opportunity that can lead to growth. Conflict is often necessary to keep an organization mindful of and focused on its mission.

This Plan establishes the FUS Right Relations Team, its Scope of Practice, and a Process for Conflict Resolution with the purpose to:

- practice for ourselves and model for others how people can be real and respectful in their differences;
- be emotionally mature and loving in returning to right relations when we've fallen short;
- provide tools to develop our communication and conflict resolution skills and support FUS members and friends in conversation and return to right relations as needed.

The First Unitarian Society Right Relations Team is a resource for promoting and facilitating open, respectful, productive communication and addressing conflicts in our Congregation in the spirit of our Congregational Covenant.

The Right Relations Team is available to help First Unitarian Society individuals or groups communicate about disagreements or concerns in a respectful, productive way and to assist them in reaching a mutually beneficial agreement or resolution of a conflict. The Right Relations Team is available to provide a space for parties to address a concern or dispute, and work toward an agreement or plan of action.

Right Relations Team members are trained to provide a non-adversarial and neutral environment for managing relational challenges in a confidential and respectful manner in keeping with the First Unitarian Society Congregational Covenant and Principles of Right Relations.

### **II. About the term “Right Relations”**

The term “Right Relations” is used by the UUA to refer to living up to our congregational covenantal relationships with one another. It means having healthy, supportive relationships built on mutual respect, trust, open communication and shared values, where all feel safe and valued.

### **III. Right Relations Team Membership**

- a. Number: The Right Relations Team is composed of at least 4 members.
- b. Nomination, Selection and Terms: In consultation with the Executive Committee, the Board Chair shall appoint members for staggered terms of up to 3 years.
- c. Criteria for Nomination: Members of the Right Relations Team are First Unitarian Society members in good standing who are known and respected by the First Unitarian Society community for maintaining right relations; who demonstrate good communication skills, discretion, compassion; and who commit to initial and ongoing skill development in communication and conflict resolution processes.
- d. Members of the Right Relations Team will elect a Chair annually.

### **IV. Scope of Practice, Recusal, and Limits**

- a. Scope of Practice and Responsibility: The Right Relations Team will:
  - i. Seek quality training as agreed to by the team so that they are equipped to provide a non-adversarial and neutral environment for managing relational challenges in a confidential and respectful manner in keeping with the First Unitarian Society Congregational Covenant and Principles of Right Relations.
  - ii. Bring training opportunities to the Congregation.
  - iii. Model respectful, open communication in the spirit of our Principles of Right Relations.
  - iv. Facilitate regular learning opportunities and share communication skills resources with the Congregation.
  - v. Provide conflict resolution facilitation to members and friends who attend FUS. This includes individual Trustees and committee leaders and could include groups if appropriate.
  - vi. Communicate with the Congregation about the team's role and work.
  - vii. Be responsive to a participant's needs, disabilities, and mental health issues; and recognize the impact of racism, white privilege, and other oppressive dynamics of the conflict.
  - viii. Help individuals identify appropriate persons or groups to which to take their grievance or conflict if the Right Relations Team is not appropriate or is unable to help.
  - ix. Meet on a regular basis, at least twice per year, to take training and to bring training to the Congregation, and meet as called upon to facilitate the conflict resolution process.
- b. Team members will recuse themselves from any conflict in which they are involved or would be unable to maintain neutrality.
- c. The Right Relations Team is empowered to make recommendations and to create behavioral contracts. The team's role is not limited to achieving compromises; when members believe a

situation exists that is harmful to the Congregation, they may recommend that the First Unitarian Society Disruptive Behavior Policy be implemented. In the event that one or more parties continue to behave outside of our Principles of Right Relations, and those behaviors are judged by the Right Relations Team, Senior Minister or Board to have substantial negative impact on the Congregation, the Senior Minister and Board will be made aware of the incident/issues, with the prerogative to offer remedies as believed necessary.

d. The Right Relations Team will help mediate differences between members and/or friends of FUS. Other types of disagreements or mediation needs are handled through other channels as follows:

- i. The Right Relations Team will not directly mediate marital or family conflicts, legal issues, mandatory reportable issues such as a child or elder abuse, situations where there is a threat of self-harm or harm to others, or issues outside of congregational life. These cases will be referred to a minister or, when appropriate, the Senior Minister will be consulted and referrals will be made immediately to appropriate outside resources.
- ii. Conflicts between members and staff: If possible these conflicts should be worked out respectfully between the involved parties. If needed, the issue may be taken to the Senior Minister who is the supervisor of the staff. If the senior minister is not able to be neutral, outside help, such as a UUA representative, should be sought by the Right Relations Team.
- iii. Issues that members have with the Senior Minister, if they cannot be worked out directly with the Senior Minister, should be taken to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees. The Executive Committee and the Senior Minister will seek the counsel of UUMA Good Offices as appropriate.
- iv. Disagreements that members have with a decision or action taken by the Board of Trustees should be addressed to the Board.

## **V. Oversight, Accountability, and Plan Review**

The Right Relations Team may request the Senior Minister to attend meetings and/or consult as needed.

The Right Relations Team takes responsibility for self-accountability by seeking feedback from each person they work with, and from the Congregation to ensure the Team's purpose is being served.

The Right Relations Team reports to the Senior Minister, who will provide oversight and support for the team's work. Complaints about the Right Relations Team should be brought first to the Team itself, which will welcome helpful and constructive feedback.

The Team, in consultation with the Senior Minister and the Governance Committee, will review this Plan from time to time to make any updates that would make it more effective.

## **VI. Conflict Resolution Procedure**

A person who has been involved in the conflict is encouraged to speak directly to the person or persons involved and attempt to reach a mutual understanding and to return to right relations.

The following is an outline of steps to be followed when an issue or conflict is not worked out directly between the involved parties:

- Step 1: If direct conversation between the involved parties has been tried and was not successful at restoring right relations, or if a private meeting between the involved parties wouldn't be productive without a third party, a person who has been involved in the conflict contacts the Right Relations Team to discuss next steps. The person may contact one or more members of the Right Relations Team for facilitation of a return to right relations. Contact information is available on the First Unitarian Society website.
- Step 2: If the conflict is brought or referred to the Right Relations Team, the team will communicate with the parties involved and suggest a process that all agree to. The steps in this process will vary, depending on the nature of the conflict and the needs of the people involved.
- Step 3: the Right Relations Team will arrange a meeting with the parties and at least two members of the team to facilitate a conflict resolution process. It is recommended that a three-part model be used:
  - identify the presenting issues/events;
  - share feelings/thoughts/experiences and previously attempted resolutions; and
  - identify desired outcomes and possible resolutions agreeable to all parties.
- Step 4: The Right Relations Team may schedule follow-up meetings if there is a need. If an agreement is reached as part of the return to right relations that all parties wish to have documented, the Right Relations Team will facilitate that process. The Right Relations Team will respect the confidentiality of all parties involved.
- Step 5: If a return to right relations is not possible after the above steps, and if the conflict is not considered to be harmful to the Congregation's functioning and mission, there shall be no further engagement by the Right Relations Team unless requested by the parties involved, the Minister, or the Board. The Right Relations Team may suggest outside resources such as a counselor, professional mediator, or pastoral care professional acceptable to both parties.

In cases where behavior continues outside the Principles of Right Relations or is considered harmful to the Congregation as a whole or to a class of people, the issue will be escalated to the Senior Minister, and they may activate the (pending) Disruptive Behavior policy.