

**Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Healthy Congregation Team
Vision, Mission and Team Goals**

FVUUF members are called to be actively, passionately, and responsibly involved in the life of the Fellowship. The Fellowship understands that such passionate involvement may lead to conflict between both individuals and groups within the community. Such conflict can play an integral role in the growth of our community, and we welcome it as an opportunity for creative change, on both a personal and a community level. We also understand the potentially destructive nature of conflict left untended.

We commit ourselves to challenge actions that threaten the well-being of our community, or the personal safety or integrity of our members and friends.

Vision Statement

The FVUUF will remain a healthy community that is grounded in direct, honest, and caring communication in an atmosphere of openness, trust, and respect.

Mission Statement

The Healthy Congregation Team (HCT) is dedicated to creating and maintaining healthy relationships within this growing and diverse religious community. We believe conflict can be addressed and resolved constructively, in keeping with our U.U. principles. We are committed to the safety and well-being of all of our members and friends.

Healthy Congregation Team (HCT) Goals

Education

The HCT will offer opportunities for members to learn about healthy communication styles within religious and spiritual communities:

1. How to enhance committee meetings charged with a task
2. Ways to communicate new ideas to a larger audience

The HCT will offer opportunities for members to learn about conflict within community:

- The character and origins of conflict
- How to recognize conflict as it develops
- How to manage and resolve conflict constructively
- How and where to seek help from the community leadership

In conjunction with the Crystal Ball Committee and Fellowship leaders, the HCT will offer ongoing educational opportunities to learn about healthy transitions within other religious and spiritual communities.

Prevention/Consultation/Early Intervention

The HCT will offer information and consultation that may be used to prevent or minimize unnecessary conflicts between individuals and groups.

Conflict mediation

The HCT will offer trained, skilled mediators for community members or groups who find themselves in conflict and wish for help in resolving it.

Training

The HCT members will engage in ongoing training for skill development.

The HCT will sponsor or offer training for fellowship members who wish to deepen their skills in conflict resolution.

Leadership

The HCT will provide information and recommendations to the Fellowship's leadership. The HCT will work with the Fellowship's leadership to identify potential sources of conflict within the community and provide consultation and recommendations where appropriate.

**Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship
Healthy Congregation Team**

Proposed Healthy Congregation Team (HCT) Organizational Guidelines

Membership term

- Each member will serve for two years, and can serve two consecutive terms. Members may return to the team after two years off.
- The first term will be for either two or three years to allow for continuity when members begin to rotate off of the team.

Criteria for membership

- Member of the congregation in good standing
- Has visibility and respect in the Fellowship
- Has demonstrated tolerance/acceptance of differences
- Has good verbal and listening skills
- Ability and willingness to make the time commitment for training and participation as a HCT member
- As far as possible, members of the group should reflect the diversity of the Fellowship
- Currently not serving as a church employee

Method of selecting members

The HCT will maintain three to five members. At least three members will be members in good standing at the Fellowship for more than three years.

The Healthy Congregations Task Force will make initial recommendations to the governing board for new members. The HCT will then make recommendations each March thereafter for the following fiscal year.

Consideration of new members will remain confidential. New terms will begin on July 1 and run until June 30 of the second year.

Decision-making

As a means of encouraging cooperation, unity, and trust, the HCT will use the consensus model of decision-making. The facilitator of the group will make sure all viewpoints have been heard and will take the time needed to develop a decision that is endorsed by the whole group. The decision does not have to satisfy everyone, but it must be one that all members are willing to live with. If serious objections still exist, then a decision is not made.

Conflict of interest

Members may find themselves in a non-neutral position concerning some of the issues brought to the team for conflict mediation, or may have close ties to one of the participants. If this is the case the member will excuse him/herself from participating in the mediation. If several of the team members find they cannot be impartial, an outside person may be chosen to conduct the conflict resolution session. Also, if either participant in a conflict feels that an HCT member may not be neutral, the member will not serve as mediator.

Fox Valley Unitarian Universalist Fellowship Healthy Congregation Team

Procedural Guidelines: Conflict Resolution

The conflict resolution procedural guide included in this document has been adapted from the Unitarian Universalist Church of Elgin, Illinois as revised by the Unitarian Universalist Church of Columbia, Missouri, and taken from the manual, Mediating Interpersonal Conflict (Education for Conflict Resolution).

The HCT responds when a member or regular attendee of the Fellowship requests assistance from any of the team members. The team member encourages the parties to get together to talk, either on their own or with a mediating team, in order to develop solutions for working together while maintaining the principles of the community.

If either party is not interested in mediation the HCT will consult to determine if the team can provide some other intervention or if it is simply a situation in which the team cannot participate.

The mediators serve as neutral facilitators. They help the parties see their areas of agreement, direct the conversation in productive ways, and keep track of the solutions that are offered. They do not offer solutions.

Conflict mediation occurs in five phases: initiation, issue clarification, mutual understanding, agreement, and closure.

Initiation: an individual approaches an HCT member for conflict mediation

- Discuss the issue in a private, neutral setting.
- Provide encouragement for process and fill out intake form with individual.
- Answer questions about process of mediation and role of HCT.
- Restate and summarize individual's concerns.
- Let individual know what to expect in the process, including who is going to contact the other individual in conflict.
- If the person is an interested third party to the conflict, encourage him or her to have one of the persons in conflict call an HCT member.
- HCT members consult to decide if mediation is best intervention.
- Contact other party, fill out second intake form, and set date for mediation.

Issue Clarification: exploration of the conflict in mediation

- Schedule three hours in a neutral setting.
- Two HCT members will make every effort to balance the participants in gender, interest, and/or experience. Both mediators should speak at beginning of the session, to give participants a feel for the mediators.
- Clarify beforehand who will do which part, to create a strong working agreement between mediators.

Mediators will:

1. Validate participants' willingness and courage in seeking mediation.
2. Explain the process (impartiality of mediators, and goal of voluntary agreement)
3. Go over ground rules for session:
 - Speak respectfully
 - Try to remain open to hearing the other person's point of view
 - Each participant will have equal opportunity to speak
 - Confidentiality
 - Any other rules which are important to participants
4. Ask the first questions and restate the answers to clarify issues.
5. Move conversation between participants to reduce tension and hostility.
6. Provide the survey before and after the session.
7. Clarify, validate, and follow leads, and ask about both issues and feelings.
8. Take notes and summarize issues at end of this phase.
9. Summarize issues and ask if there is anything more before moving on.

Transition occurs when all major issues are clarified and participants seem ready to speak to each other. One mediator explains next phase and validates efforts of participants.

Finding mutual understanding

Mediators choose an easy issue or common ground for participants to begin this phase.

- Guide parties to speak to one another, beginning with chosen topic.
- Help them to restate the other's point before responding, especially at first when understanding is key.

- Allow productive dialogue, but intervene when parties get stuck or break rules.
- Guide parties to speak out of hurt rather than anger.
- Help parties focus on specific issues.

Transition occurs when parties understand main concerns and they trust each other enough to work together at solutions.

Agreement

Mediators help participants develop a mutually-agreed upon resolution.

- Begin with easy issues and working towards most difficult disagreements.
- Make sure each agreement is clear, mutual, and workable.
- Bring back suggested solutions from earlier phases.
- Guide participants to resolve each important issue.
- Do not suggest solutions.
- Create and read aloud, point by point, a written resolution.

Transition occurs when both participants agree to sign it.

Closure

- Affirm and encourage both parties and their work in the session.
- Give a copy of the agreement to both participants or let them know when they will receive it.
- Determine which of the mediators will follow up with participants in 2–4 weeks.

Note: If skilled help is determined to be needed, but is not accepted:

In our Principles for a Healthy Community, we have agreed to strive to accept skilled help when we cannot reach agreement or reconciliation with another member. If either or both parties in an ongoing conflict refuse to engage with the HCT process, the HCT may take any of the following actions, in consultation with the governing board and in accordance with our bylaws:

- Request one or both parties step down from any or all leadership positions.
- Request one or both parties end their participation in any or all Fellowship-sponsored small groups or committees.
- Request one or both parties to end their membership with the Fellowship.