



EASTMINSTER
UNITED CHURCH

Healing Ways

Restoring Relationships in our Faith
Community

A Conflict Resolution Policy for Eastminster United Church

Prepared by: Ministry & Personnel Committee

April 2018

Healing Ways - Restoring Relationships in our Faith Community

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This Policy applies to:

Ministry personnel, staff, volunteers, church members and adherents

Context

Conflict is inevitable in any group of people engaged in creating community and meaning in their lives. Nonetheless, conflict can often cause pain and anxiety for those involved. Managed well, conflict can contribute to the growth of the individuals and the communities; however, when conflicts go unresolved, they can deter from our work and mission, and cause communities and relationships to suffer.

Conflicts arise for many reasons related to our own human imperfections, including: strongly held differences in opinion, assumptions made by the other person and his or her motives, a failure to listen and understand the other person's point of view, impatience, a lack of information, different working styles, poor communications and/or social skills, avoidance, an unwillingness to focus on the real issue(s), reacting too personally to an issue, etc.

Seeking Resolution and Reconciliation

When conflicts do arise, the church community is called to resolve it as effectively as possible. This usually requires love, forgiveness, openness, compassion, humility and patience. Fairness should always be a key consideration. Justice must be done – and be seen to be done. To this end, relying on fair processes is important. Conflict should never become an arena for political games, contests of will, gossip, division and needlessly drawing people into a dispute.

Many conflicts within the church will call on informal processes whereby people involved simply try to resolve issues on their own, or with the help of another person or a group such as Eastminster's Ministry & Personnel Committee (M&P Committee). In other cases, the United Church has formal processes available to assist in conflict resolution.

Regardless of the conflict, the church should deal with this issue pastorally, and provide pastoral support where possible.

Ways to Healing

The First Step

If a conflict arises, the people involved should try to resolve it themselves, wherever possible. To this end, the following principles may be useful:

- Clarify the problem.
- Choose to meet in a quiet location to discuss the issue.
- Agree on facts where possible.
- Listen. Try to see the other person's perspective.
- Give your point of view. Discuss impact and feelings. Avoid blame.
- Seek feedback, where appropriate.
- Creatively generate and brainstorm elements of a possible solution and way forward.
- Seek a suitable solution you can be content with. Do not insist on a "win" on your sole terms.

The Next Step

If a conflict cannot be resolved, or if one of the parties feels uncomfortable addressing the conflict with another party, the following process should be followed:

The person can reach out to:

- (i) A member of the M&P Committee (See current members listed below).
- (ii) Alternatively, a member of Council, who will reach out to an appropriate member of the M&P Committee
- (iii) A member of the ministry personnel team

Upon request, pastoral care is available to persons dealing with conflict. When the conflict is brought to the attention of the member of the M&P Committee, or a member of Council, pastoral support should be offered as a matter of course.

When a member of the M&P gets involved, he/she might look to try to resolve the issue in a way that repairs harm and restores relationships, asking participants to consider: What does each party need to do to make things right? What needs to happen to make things right?

The Final Step

In some instances, the United Church's formal dispute resolution process may be engaged, as per s. J.11 of *The Manual of the United Church of Canada* (2016). For more information on this process, please contact a member of the M&P Committee, or the United Church's General Council Office. *The Manual*, the *Dispute Resolution Policy/Handbook* and other relevant documents are available on the United Church website: www.united-church.ca/handbooks.

As at April 2018, the members of Eastminster's M&P Committee are:

Carol Bennett (Chair), Christine Leblanc and Cindy Zwicker-Reston