

# **UNITED CHURCH OF GAINESVILLE**

## **A ROADMAP TO HELP MEMBERS ADDRESS THEIR CONCERNS ABOUT THE CHURCH**

The Congregation-Ministry Review Board (CMRB) serves as a communication link between United Church of Gainesville (UCG) members and the church clergy and staff. CMRB has constructed this easy-to-follow roadmap for members who have concerns about UCG that they need to express. The UCG community is open and accepting of the diverse background each member brings with them when they join the church, and most membership concerns will be resolved between the people involved. At the same time, CMRB wants everyone at UCG to know that there are formal channels of communication available and that there are people who are ready and willing to listen to members' concerns. CMRB and the Church Council are committed to healthy communication processes that promote active listening and conflict resolution. A roadmap has been developed in order to facilitate the expression of members' concerns. As with most conflict resolution processes, documenting your concern in writing is recommended.

### **I. If you have concerns about a church board, or committee, or program:**

- A. Consult the church office or the Moderator or one of the ministers to identify which church board or committee or group relates most closely to your concern. Contact the chairperson of that group and/or the staff resource person for that group and describe your concern.
- B. Request that you be kept informed about how your concern will be addressed and the status of any actions taken to address the concern. Be certain that you know who will provide this feedback to you on behalf of the group.
- C. Request that you be invited to attend a meeting of the board or committee that relates to your concern in order to express your concerns to the entire group.
- D. If you still feel dissatisfied by the responses you have received:
  1. Call the Moderator, one of the two Council Members-at-Large, or the Chairperson of CMRB and describe your concern. You may ask to meet with any or all of these officers. Again, be certain that you are clear on actions that will be taken to follow up on your concern.
  2. In consultation with the officer(s) above, you may choose to meet with CMRB, who will listen to your concern and follow up with a response to you.

### **II. If you are concerned about your relationship with the church, or if you are thinking of leaving the church, and you would like an opportunity to express your concerns:**

- A. Make an appointment to meet with or call the Moderator to express your concern.
- B. Make an appointment to meet with one (or more) of the ministers.

- C. If your issues remain unresolved, contact the Chairperson of CMRB to set up a meeting with that board. CMRB will listen to your concerns and then follow up with a response to you.

**III. If you have a concern involving a clergy person, a member of the church staff, or one of the church officers:**

- A. Attempt to resolve the conflict:
  - 1. In ways that are respectful and in line with UCG's values as stated in the Compact,
  - 2. By communicating directly with the person(s) involved in ways that are safe for all parties (i.e., in person, via telephone, letter, and/or email).
  - 3. If the party concerned is out of the office for an extended period of time, the individual with the concern should talk to the next level supervisor or wait until the person is back in the office.
  - 4. If the concern is resolved, the individual's supervisor will normally be advised of the concern and the resolution.
- B. For concerns that are not resolved in a satisfactory manner:
  - 1. If your concern is with a member of the church staff or with an officer, talk with the minister who supervises that staff person or that church officer.
  - 2. If your concern is with an Associate Minister, talk with the Senior Minister.
  - 3. If your concern is with the Senior Minister, talk with the Moderator and/or the Chairperson of CMRB about other informal avenues of conflict resolution that are possible. If an informal avenue is an option, follow through with that option.
- C. Initiate a formal Grievance Process using the UCG Grievance Procedure which is available in the church office.

**IV. If you have an issue with another church member:**

- A. If the issues that arise are not addressed by the Roadmap or the Grievance Procedure, then attempt a resolution of the situation by communicating directly with the person(s) involved in ways that are safe for all parties (i.e., in person, via telephone, letter, and/or email).
- B. If resolution does not result, then a meeting will be called with a member of the ministerial team to seek resolution in a satisfactory way.
- C. If resolution still does not occur, then a meeting will be called between the concerned parties, the ministers, a representative from the Executive Council and/or the Chairperson of CMRB. At this meeting, minutes will be kept which include a clear description of the presenting issues. Church leadership will name specifically any behaviors that must change or expectations that must be followed, and together, action plans will be developed for behavioral changes, communication, and resolution, and formulated into a behavioral covenant.

- D. It is recommended that the behavioral covenant be signed by the Senior Minister, the Executive Council representative and/or the Chairperson of CMRB and the individual in question. As needed, follow-up meetings will be scheduled to determine the status of the behavioral covenant. CMRB will be updated on the situation. If CMRB determines it advisable, Church Council will be informed.
- E. Should agreement not be possible, or should previously established behavioral adjustments not be met, then a 3-month suspension from all church activities will be recommended. The individual in question must display clear behavioral adjustments before church participation will be restored. Should the individual in question not abide by the stated expectations of living in community with the United Church of Gainesville, then CMRB may recommend further actions such as a temporary or permanent termination of membership. If CMRB recommends membership termination, then the Church Council will vote to affirm or deny that recommendation. Pending the outcome of the vote, the individual will be made aware of the Church Council's decision. A report will be filed with the Church Administrator, detailing all communications, meeting notes, decisions, and direct reports of any incidences in question.

**V. Process for Restoration of Membership Privileges**

- A. If an individual's membership with the United Church of Gainesville has been terminated due to previously stated behaviors, then that individual may request a restoration of limited privileges after a prescribed time away from all church activities. These limited privileges would relegate the individual to "Friend of UCG" status.
- B. An individual may make a request for participation and membership restoration. The request will be presented in writing and offered to a member of the ministerial staff and to the Chairperson of CMRB. The Church Moderator, the Chairperson of CMRB, and the ministers will meet to consider any progress in the satisfactory resolution of the situation. If needed, they will draft a new behavioral covenant for that individual, and present it to CMRB in a timely manner.
- C. CMRB will review the covenant and the case of the person in question, and may offer suggestions and edits to the document.
- D. The ministers, the Moderator, and the Chairperson of CMRB will meet with the individual seeking membership restoration and will outline the revised expectations for membership participation at the United Church of Gainesville. Should all parties agree to the behavioral covenant, then the signed covenant will come to Church Council for a vote. After the vote of the Church Council, the individual will be made aware of Council's decision.

- E. Should a second violation of the behavioral covenant occur, then it will be assumed that the individual in question no longer wishes to be in covenant with the United Church of Gainesville, and therefore all membership privileges will be revoked.
- F. Subsequent restoration of membership privileges will be at the discretion of CMRB and will be considered on an individual, case by case, basis.