

## **UUFM COVENANT OF RIGHT RELATIONS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS**

Reverend Thea Nietfeld comments on this newly adopted statement, developed through a series of open congregational meetings and approved by the UUFM Executive Board at the December 2009 meeting:

Healthy congregations are often supported by covenants and processes for inevitable conflict. A covenant links principles with behavior as a statement of aspirations. A conflict resolution process reduces anxiety with planned steps toward resolution.

UUFM members have been thinking together about what causes congregational stress and conflict and how we want to treat each other when we have issue disagreements. The results of these open conversations were adopted by the Board at its December 2009 meeting.

### **UUFM COVENANT OF RIGHT RELATIONS**

- We value each person's worth and welcome people of all ages to participate in Fellowship life.
- We gather to support each other in our personal and community growth.
- Our congregational life provides opportunities to practice working together cooperatively and in friendship, keeping the greater good of the whole at heart. We approach each other with good will, allowing for mistakes and with an expectation that we will forgive each other.
- Recognizing that our different experiences and paths may lead to disagreement, we intend to practice respectful acceptance. Since we need to work together, we will patiently negotiate to reconcile conflicts and choose friendship over irreconcilable differences.
- Practicing right relations in our Fellowship encourages character growth and naturally extends caring qualities into other relationships.

### **UUFM CONFLICT RESOLUTION PROCESS**

We encourage patient self-reflection in times of conflict for personal growth. Members are invited to apply reflection questions that are posted on the bulletin board. Individuals may choose to seek counseling from the minister.

- Members or groups in conflict are invited to first attempt to respectfully resolve issues with the original people or Committee involved.
- If it is not possible to respectfully solve the conflict among the original people/groups, they are encouraged to involve a mediator. Those involved could agree on and choose the minister, another member of the Fellowship, the Conflict Resolution Promoter or Team, a consultant from UUA, or a community mediator.
- The UUFM Board will be the final decision-maker for conflicts unresolved by mediation or where mediation is not useful. If the Board is involved, any leader may contact the MidAmerica District Office for assistance.
- This process will supplement rather than displace other congregational decision-making processes and structures.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR THOSE IN CONFLICT

When conflict arises, each person is encouraged to consider the following before meeting with the person with whom they are in conflict:

1. What do I want my relationship with the Person to be like?
2. What attitudes and values do I want to honor when I'm with the Person?
3. What must I let go of to turn toward the Person?
4. What is the goodness in the Person that I will see and trust?
5. How will I show/tell the Person about the inherent goodness I see in him/her?
6. What will I dare to ask of the Person?

-- from Practicing Right Relationship, by Sellon and Smith

- † How willing am I to resolve this conflict?
- † Do I want this to work for both of us or only for myself?
- † What is the key issue or problem in this conflict?
- † What do I want to change--and how do I say so without blame or attack?
- † How well am I seeing the whole picture?
- † Am I using power inappropriately? Is the other person?
- † Am I judging the other person without hearing him or her?
- † What are my feelings? Am I blaming him or her for my feelings?
- † Have I told him or her how I feel?
- † What would it be like to take the other person's position--to walk in their shoes? What do I wish to accomplish specifically?
- † What can I give?
- † What points would I need to have covered if we made an agreement?
- † How can we all save face?
- † Can we manage this ourselves or do we need outside help?
- † What opportunities are present for our congregation in this conflict?
- † How will we acknowledge and celebrate our solution?

-- from UUA Vision, Mission, Covenant Workshop Resources

([uua.org/documents/congservices/visionmissioncovenant.pdf](http://uua.org/documents/congservices/visionmissioncovenant.pdf))