

Complaint/Conflict Resolution Overview

Background

First Unitarian Universalist Church of Austin is a covenantal religious community wherein part of our Healthy Relations Covenant calls us to communicate with one another directly in a spirit of compassion and goodwill and to disagree from a place of curiosity and respect.

Between Congregants and Friends of First UU

First UU members and friends are each responsible for maintaining an atmosphere where both safety and openness thrive. A church member or friend who has a complaint about or disagreement with another church member is encouraged to speak directly with the person involved. If one or both persons are uncomfortable talking alone or are unable to resolve their differences after doing so, they can approach the Healthy Relations Ministry as a resource at healthyrelations@austinuu.org. The Healthy Relations Ministry can meet with the persons involved and/or suggest ways of approaching one another.

Any congregant may bring a suspected serious covenant breach to the attention of the lead minister or, if not available, another minister, who will follow the Serious Covenant Breach Policy.

If a conflict between congregants escalates to disruptive, then the Disruptive Behavior Policy should be followed.

Between Congregants and Visitors/Guests

Every person deserves respect, whether on First UU property or at an off-site UU-sponsored event. If there is a conflict with a visitor/guest, the congregant shall attempt to resolve the issue using covenantal principles. If a conflict between congregants escalates to disruptive, follow the Disruptive Behavior Policy.

With a Member of the Staff or Assistant Minister

First UU is a covenantal church and its staff have agreed to a staff covenant. A church member who has a complaint about an individual staff member or an assistant minister is encouraged to speak directly with that staff member. If the issue is not resolved through such direct communications, the church member may then request to speak with both the employee and their immediate supervisor. The conflict will be handled by the staff person's supervisor using the conflict resolution process in the Personnel Policy Manual. A congregant can also approach the Healthy Relations Ministry as a resource at healthyrelations@austinuu.org.

With the Lead Minister

A church member who has a complaint about the lead minister is encouraged to speak directly with her/him. If the issue is not resolved through such direct communications, board policies 3.8 and 3.9 (which can be found in the Board Policies link below) must be followed. Per these policies, only complaints involving potential violations of a board policy can be taken to the board and must be made in writing. Please specify by policy number and description which board policy is in question. Board policies are available on the bulletin board in the church copy room and on the church website at the link below. A congregant can also approach the Healthy Relations Ministry as a resource at healthyrelations@austinuu.org.

Threats To Anyone's Immediate Safety Or Well-Being

Threats to anyone's immediate safety or well-being are not acceptable, whether on First UU property or at an off-site UU-sponsored event. A disruptive situation can be handled by the lead minister if she/he is available. However, all staff members and congregants have an interest and responsibility in the response to disruptive behavior. As such, any staff member or congregant who feels capable can handle the situation by following the Disruptive Behavior Policy.

Links to other Policies Referenced Above

Board Policies: These can now be found in the Members Group on Church Center

Disruptive Behavior Policy: <https://austinuu.org/wp2013/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/DisruptiveBehaviourPolicy.pdf>

Serious Covenant Breach Policy:

<https://austinuu.org/wp2013/wp-content/uploads/2026/08/SeriousCovenantBreachPolicy032020-1.pdf>