

# CHARTER COMMITTEE ON RIGHT RELATIONS

First Unitarian Church of Portland  
Approved May 7, 2025

## MISSION

The mission of the **Committee on Right Relations** (CRR) is to support the wellbeing of the congregation by helping to process conflicts between congregants and between congregants and the church's staff, its executive team, and its board of trustees. The CRR is chartered to:

- Tend the Church Covenant and the Covenant of Right Relations and support the congregation as it strives to live into the Covenants.
- Foster a vision of conflict as an opportunity for understanding, healing and growth.
- Model, teach, foster and support faithful communication and healthy and respectful relations.
- Assist congregants and the Church to practice creative conflict engagement and restoration of right relations.

The CRR may also be called upon to mediate different perspectives and varying viewpoints within the congregation. In doing so, the CRR will work to ensure that all voices are heard and that the best practices of conflict resolution are applied. The CRR will encourage the framing of these kinds of conflicts as opportunities for healing and building community.

The principles of Conflict Resolution and Right Relations are inherently antiracist and support the Church's commitment to equity and anti-oppression.

## FORMATION & AUTHORITY

The CRR is established by the Board of Trustees (Board) as part of the Board's obligation to establish procedures for the resolution of conflict within the Church as an independent committee.

## RESPONSIBILITIES

The CRR has several authorities and responsibilities which are outlined below:

- Educate, Communicate and Model
  - Educate the congregation, staff, executive team and Board about the Covenant of Right Relations and the Conflict Resolution and Right Relations Policy and procedures

- o Coach, support, and train congregants and church leadership in Right Relations concepts and skills
- o Model and provide healthy communication and conflict engagement skills and set the tone and expectation for the congregation and church leadership concerning open, honest, and respectful communication.
- o Provide training and educational materials about best practices in conflict resolution and restoring right relations.
- Convene & Facilitate
  - o Convene Right Relations Teams (RRTs) to facilitate conversations between individuals and/or groups who are in experiencing conflict
    - Assure adequate and ongoing training for all RRT members
    - Assign coaches to congregants who request such assistance
    - Oversee the conflict resolution process: receive requests for assistance, determine what assistance and resources are needed, if any, and make them available.
    - Be visible and available as consultants and listeners to prevent conflict and support early intervention when conflicts arise through coaching and facilitation.
  - o Convene Healthy Congregation Teams (HCTs) to intervene in situations involving a substantial risk to individual or community safety consistent with the Conflict Resolution/Right Relations Policy & Process.
  - o Properly address matters that are outside of the CRR's scope and/or might be better handled by other processes.

## STRUCTURE

- 5-7 members, plus the Board Liaison.
- Chair: Any member of the CRR except the Board Liaison
- One voting Board Member will serve on the CRR and act as Liaison to the Board, but may not serve as Chair of the CRR and does not have a vote on committee matters
- Because teams that have greater diversity tend to be better able to navigate the nuances of intercultural communication and conflict, the composition of the committee should be as inclusive and diverse as is reasonably possible (e.g., age, race, length of membership at First Church, gender identity, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race, physical and mental ability, additional skills, experience in different programs of the church such as RE, music, social justice, etc.).
- The CRR will be an independent committee and neither an official committee of the Board nor of the Church Executive Team.

## **ELIGIBILITY & TERM**

- **Members:**
  - Active in the congregation including having been a member for at least three years and having served in another capacity in the church (on another committee, taught in the Religious Education program, etc.) for at least one year. Continued membership in the church is required for the duration of tenure on the CRR.
  - Initial three-year term, with the possibility of serving for additional defined terms of one to three years following an interview and in consultation with the Chair.
  - Terms begin at the start of the calendar year.
  - Vacancies that occur during a calendar year will be filled by an out of cycle appointment by the CRR and acknowledgement of the Board.
- **Board Liaison:**
  - Designated annually by the Board at the same time as the Board elects Board Officers (generally at the first Board meeting after June 1) or at the next Board meeting following notice of a vacancy.
  - One-year term which may be renewed annually.
- **Chair:**
  - Selected for a three-year term by majority vote of the CRR.
  - May serve again as Chair for a maximum of two consecutive terms.
  - May serve again as Chair after at least one other person has served as Chair for at least two years.

## **MEMBER SELECTION PROCESS**

Because of the responsibility entrusted to the CRR, specific care is given to the selection process. The selection process will be as follows:

- Any person with an interest in serving on the CRR may self-nominate by submitting an online application form.
- Any member of the Church may nominate other congregants who they see as those who they would trust to help them in a challenging or conflictual situation by sharing their name with the CRR.
- An application and interview will be conducted to determine appropriateness for the role. Interviews will be conducted by the Right Relations Formation Task Force at the formation stage, and by the CRR thereafter.
- The CRR will advance names to the Board for confirmation.
- The Board of Trustees will communicate to the Congregation the names of those appointed to the CRR.

## **DESIRED SKILLS AND ABILITIES**

- Committed to the mission of the Church, its Covenant, and the Covenant of Right Relations
- Trusted and respected by the community
- Committed to maintaining confidentiality
- Listens deeply, empathically, and actively
- Skilled in conflict engagement, transformation and resolution or willing to be trained
- Manages own reactivity in the presence of conflict
- Able to hold multiple perspectives at the same time and avoid becoming triangulated into the conflicts of others
- Able to facilitate a process to support and empower others in solving a problem rather than solving a problem for others
- Attentive to power inequities and oppression dynamics
- Demonstrated willingness to serve the entire congregation

## **RECORDS & REPORTING**

- Maintain records related to the work in a secure and confidential manner.
- Make reports to the Board and the congregation as required or requested, and no less than annually. General reports may include the number of matters handled, the type of service provided, the general outcome (e.g., resolved or referred), and the number of hours spent trends in issues. Incident-specific reports from the CRR will be brief and will not reveal confidential details unless authorized to do so by the person(s) involved [unless disclosure is reasonably believed to be necessary to avoid harm to persons or property (including financial harm), or is required by law].

## **POLICY AND PROCEDURE REVIEWS**

- Every two years, by December 31<sup>st</sup> of even-numbered years
  - review and make recommendations to the Board about updates to the Right Relations Policy and Procedures.
- Every five years, by December 31<sup>st</sup> of years ending in 0 or 5
  - review the Church Covenant and Covenant of Right Relations and make recommendations to the Board about updates (e.g., right relations covenant; committee operating procedures), as needed
- Annually
  - review the Church's Strategic Plan to see how the CRR can support the plan;
  - recommend CRR charter, policy and process revisions to the Board as needed

## **ETHICS**

- Engage in ethical practice and remain updated on best practices
- CRR members shall recuse themselves from any issue in which they cannot maintain impartiality, either due to the content of the matter or the participants, for example in a situation to which they are related to a participant or have a material stake in the outcome.
- Maintain confidentiality within the CRR except where disclosure is required by law or reasonably necessary to prevent harm to persons or property (including financial harm).

## **MEETINGS**

- The CRR will hold monthly meetings, and more frequently as specific needs emerge
- The CRR will take minutes of their meetings and store them appropriately.
- A majority of the total number of current voting CRR members will constitute a quorum for decision making.

## **LIMITATIONS ON ROLE**

- The CRR is not a tribunal and does not make decisions about who is “right” or “wrong” in any situation.
- The CRR does not independently police or monitor behavior.
- The CRR does not simply implore people to get along and be nice.
- The CRR is not a venue for gossip or generalized complaining.
- Members of the CRR are not expected to be therapists, to listen to and fix all of a congregant’s problems; the CRR will exercise its best efforts to assist congregants needing additional services with finding the help they might need.