

Clemmons United Methodist Church CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

This policy was adopted by the church Leadership Board in 2020, demonstrating our commitment to resolving differences in a Christ-like manner.

It is our prayer that all members and attenders of Clemmons United Methodist Church will establish conflict resolution practice in which we follow the example of our head, Jesus Christ, in treating each other with love and respect. Recognizing that differences of opinion and conflicts are inevitable in any human endeavor, however, our church desires to establish a conflict resolution policy, so that when conflict does occur, Jesus will be honored by our efforts to resolve our differences in love and maintain the unity of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:2-3).

Our goal is that the people of Clemmons United Methodist Church will not walk away from the church because of conflict but will work together to overcome differences and find the common ground we share in Christ. Such an approach is Biblically mandated and serves as an example to the non-Christian world that we are indeed disciples of Christ (John 13:34-35).

Conflict may be as simple as a difference of opinion, or it may involve a disagreement over church doctrine, or dissatisfaction with one or more of the church's leadership, or an argument involving two or more parties concerning the policies and direction of the church.

Therefore, we expect that:

1. In all interactions with each other, the people of Clemmons United Methodist Church will respect different ideas and views and will express disagreement with civility and Christian love, which means acting in the best interest of those we disagree with (1 Peter 4:8, 1 John 3:18).
2. Gossip is strongly discouraged as dishonoring to our Lord Jesus Christ (James 4:11-12).
3. Disagreements and conflicts should be addressed as soon as possible; the longer conflict is unresolved, the harder it is to bridge the differences (Matthew 5:23-24).
4. If two parties have a disagreement, the ideal response is for them to meet, face to face, to discuss the matter and seek common ground (Matthew 18:15, Colossians 3:13)
5. If any person in the church has a concern or a complaint about a leader of the church, whether the pastor, staff, or lay official, the concerned person is strongly encouraged to discuss the matter directly with the leader involved (Matthew 18:15, Colossians 3:13). It is also strongly encouraged to have a second person attend the meeting along with the person who has the complaint.

6. If for any reason it is not possible to meet one-on-one, parties with a conflict or disagreement should seek the mediation of a church leader. Preferred mediators are the lay leader or assistant lay leader, chairperson of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, Leadership Board chairperson or the pastor. Church leaders may recommend another party as mediator, possibly someone from outside the congregation or conference-related mediation resources (Matthew 18:16).
7. Depending on the situation, a team of mediators may be required to intervene in a conflict (Matthew 18:16).
8. If mediation is unsuccessful in resolving a conflict, one or both of the parties may bring the matter to one of the boards of the church. Conflicts involving the pastor or staff members should be addressed first to the Staff-Parish Relations Committee. Other conflicts should be addressed to the Leadership Board. The Leadership Board shall be the final arbiter of conflicts unresolved through SPRC (Matthew 18:17).
9. Only after all these avenues have been exhausted should parties contact the district superintendent or bishop of the Western North Carolina United Methodist Conference.
10. Anyone having concerns involving sexual misconduct of church staff or laity should take the following actions:
 - Contact local law enforcement at 911 and report the crime.
 - Contact the Staff Parish Relations Committee chairperson by calling the church office at (336) 766-6375.
 - File a complaint with the Western North Carolina United Methodist Conference (WNCUMC) as directed in the “Keeping Our Sacred Trust: Sexual & Professional Misconduct Policy for Ministerial Leadership” document. Contact the church office for a copy of this policy.
 - More information is available at UMSEXUALETHICS.ORG
 - Persons may also contact a confidential hotline, staffed by the Commission on the Status and Role of Women of the UMC, by calling 1-800-523-8290.
11. All allegations involving child abuse must be handled as follows:
 - Contact local law enforcement at 911 and report the crime.
 - Contact the Staff Parish Relations Committee chairperson by calling the church office at (336) 766-6375.
 - File a complaint as directed in the church’s Safe Sanctuaries policy.
 - More information is available at [/www.clemmonsumc.org/s/CUMC-Safe-Sanctuary-Policy-Oct17.pdf](http://www.clemmonsumc.org/s/CUMC-Safe-Sanctuary-Policy-Oct17.pdf)
12. Mediators and committees asked to intervene in conflict shall strive to propose resolutions to conflict.

13. Resolution shall be defined as mutual agreement or understanding among all the parties in a conflict.
14. In all circumstances, confidentiality shall be respected.
15. If all efforts at resolution fail, and parties believe they are not able to stay in community in peace, any party wishing to leave the Clemmons United Methodist church family is asked to do so lovingly, without rancor or bitterness on the part of the one leaving or on the parts of those staying at this church, so that we may not bring disgrace on the name of Jesus (1 John 2:10). Members are not leaving the larger Christian church family, but Clemmons United Methodist Church.
16. Anyone who believes they are in a conflict situation and is unsure of how to proceed should first contact the pastor for counsel or, if the conflict involves the pastor, either the lay leader, the Leadership Board chairperson, or the chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

Addendum 1: Conflict Resolution Process

Below is the process to follow when initiating the Conflict Resolution Policy:

Step 1: One-on-One Meeting

“If your brother sins against you, go tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have won your brother.” ~Matthew 18:15

- Schedule a time to meet with the person with whom you have a conflict.
- Discuss the conflict with this person during the meeting. Both parties should intently listen to each other without interruption to understand the situation from both perspectives.
- Work together in this meeting to come up with ways to resolve the conflict and avoid similar conflicts in the future.
- If the person with whom you have the conflict refuses to meet with you, please include a description of how that occurred with your request for a mediation meeting.
- If for any reason you feel meeting with the person with whom you have the conflict would put you in danger even if you meet in a public place, please include a description of why you feel that way with your request for a mediation meeting.

Step 2: Mediation Meeting (if Step 1 does not resolve the conflict)

Mediation utilizes a neutral intermediary who assists the parties in arriving at their own voluntary and mutually satisfactory resolution.

- Make a request to the SPRC chair, or the Leadership Board chair if the conflict is with the SPRC chair, for a mediation meeting.
- The request should include documentation of the conflict along with examples of what has occurred to cause the conflict.
- The request should also include a synopsis of the one-on-one meeting and why it is believed this meeting did not resolve the conflict.
- The Chair will contact the other person in the party to get their synopsis of the one-on-one meeting.
- The meeting will be scheduled and will include both parties, a member of SPRC who will facilitate the meeting, and a scribe whose purpose will be to document the action plan developed at the meeting.
- The facilitator will begin the mediation meeting by reviewing the ground rules that are listed in addendum 2.
- Both parties will come up with an action plan that they both agree will resolve the conflict and that they both agree to put into practice. Questions to consider when developing the action plan:
 - What adjustments can be made to manage conflict more effectively?
 - What do we, as the parties involved, need to keep doing, do more of, do less of, or stop doing?
- The scribe will have both parties sign and date the hand-written plan at the end of the mediation meeting.
- Copies of the plan will be given to all involved as well as those who will be helping to monitor the actions documented in the plan.
- The facilitator will schedule a follow-up meeting to be held in approximately 90 days to review the plan with both parties for the purpose of determining the success of the plan.

Step 3: Escalate to SPRC (if Step 2 does not resolve the conflict):

- Either party can escalate the issue to SPRC if they believe the conflict still exists.
- SPRC will meet to review all documentation and information from step 2 and decide how to proceed.
- Both parties will be presented with the decision from SPRC once it has been made.

Addendum 2: Ground Rules for Mediation Participants

1. We agree to take turns speaking and to try not to interrupt each other.
2. We agree to call each other by our first names, not “he” or “she” or worse.
3. We will ask questions of each other for the purposes of gaining clarity and understanding and not as attacks.
4. We agree to try to avoid establishing hard positions and express ourselves in terms of our needs and desires and the outcomes that we wish to create.
5. We agree to listen respectfully and sincerely try to understand the other’s needs and interests.
6. We recognize that, even if we do not agree with it, each of us is entitled to our own perspective.
7. We will seek to avoid dwelling on things that did not work in the past, and instead focus on the future we want to create.
8. We agree to make a conscious, sincere effort to refrain from unproductive arguing, venting, and narration and agree to use our time in mediation to work toward what we perceive to be our most constructive agreement possible.
9. We will speak up if something is not working for us in the mediation.
10. We will stay on topic.
11. We will request a break if it is helpful.
12. We will point out if we feel the mediator is not impartial as to person and neutral as to result.