

Pastor Parish Relations Team Guidelines

Trial Program as of

August 2, 2023

Purpose

The Pastor Parish Relations Team (PPR) will support the healthy communication and relationship between the **Interim Pastor** and the FCUCC congregants to promote faithful and shared ministries.

It should do this in two primary ways: 1) by serving as an advisory group to the pastor, sharing ideas, dreams, expectations, and concerns of the congregation with the pastor, and, 2) by serving as a support group for the pastor's leadership, interpreting roles, functions, boundaries, opportunities, and needs of the pastor to the congregation.

The group's function is to help the pastor and the congregation maintain appropriate expectations for the scope of the pastor's work, and for the pastor to be able to test visions and receive support for their continued growth in ministry.¹

To function well, the group will provide honest communication, robust support and advocacy for the pastor, create confidential spaces for clear communication, and provide opportunities for the minister and the group to reflect on their ministry.

Composition

The Pastor Parish Relations Team will include five members selected from a list of suggested candidates provided by the Pastor, Board and Personnel Committee. The Pastor will select three and the Board will select two members. **These members will initially serve a one-year term, or until an installed pastor is named. At that time, this program will be reviewed and evaluated for its successes, challenges and opportunities, and will be considered by the Board and Personnel Committee for its future status.**

These candidates should possess and model the following skills, traits, and characteristics: spiritually mature, thoughtful, discerning, prayerful, truthful, perceptive, compassionate, reliable, trustworthy, confidentiality, able to appreciate differing points of view and reconcile differences, vitally interested in the life and mission of the church.

Responsibilities

The Pastor Support Group (PPR) shall be the primary body within the church to hear, in confidence, concerns held by the Pastor, individual members, the Board, or other committees. The PPR is tasked with the responsibility to deal creatively and supportively with conflict and to

¹ Wording from UCC Website, Commission on Ministry

reach out to the Association or Conference, in its discretion, should it deem outside mediation to be helpful.

Process

The FCUCC members and the Pastor covenant to honor the communication and conflict resolution process:

If a member or group of members has a concern with the pastor, first bring that concern directly to the pastor.

If hesitant to do so, or if more assistance is needed in resolving the matter, the member(s) shall share their concern with any member of the PPR who will bring it to the entire group. The group will work in confidence with the pastor and the member(s), engage in honest and open discussion, reflection, and conflict resolution, and seek a creative solution to the issues.

In the event the matters presented to the PPR may relate to safety, legal, ethical or job performance concerns, the PPR will request consultation with the Personnel Committee. Actions related to staff may be reported to Personnel for consideration in performance evaluations or other interventions deemed necessary.

At the PPR's discretion, in consultation with the Personnel Committee, they may seek assistance from the Conference to help mediate the situation.

FCUCC Members and the Pastor commit to this process and agree not to bypass this process by taking issues directly to the Conference without going through the PPR.

Problem Resolution Opportunities²

Church members and staff are encouraged to communicate concerns or complaints about a staff member using the following steps:

1. Speak directly with the staff member; if either party feels that the issue has not been addressed or resolved satisfactorily,
2. Both parties meet with the Pastor; if either party then feels the issue has not been addressed or resolved satisfactorily, or
3. If a staff member's concern or complaint is with the Pastor and, after speaking with him, the staff member feels the situation has not been resolved, the staff person should consult the PPR and,
4. Both parties meet with the PPR; if either party feels the issue still has not been addressed or resolved satisfactorily,
5. Both parties meet with Personnel which has responsibility for resolving the situation, subject to Board approval,
6. At the PPR's or Personnel Committee's discretion, they may seek assistance from the Conference to help mediate the situation.
7. Any issue received by the Conference shall be referred back to First Congregational UCC's PPR for resolution, per these guidelines.

² Wording from FCUCC Staff Parish Relations Ministry