

NRUMC Conflict-Resolution Policy (Revised April 2018)

We acknowledge that conflict is inherent in all human relationships and that churches, being made up of human beings, are no exception. Even in the early church, Christians experienced conflict with one another. Conflict is unavoidable, and though many consider it to be divisive and destructive, it need not be. Conflict is also an opportunity for growth. As followers of Jesus Christ, our goal is to manage conflict in a creative and redemptive way.

The SPRC is the group within the church which bridges the space between the staff and the congregation. As such, it exists to work with pastors and staff to build up the Body of Christ. This does not mean offering unqualified support to pastors and staff in every situation, but rather helping church staff to maximize strengths and overcome deficiencies. To this end, the SPRC has created the following guidelines for how to manage conflict when it arises within our body.

- 1.) If approached by a member of the congregation with a complaint/concern about a member of the church staff, the SPRC representative will first seek to listen sincerely to the concern and then encourage the congregation member to attempt to resolve the issue personally and privately with the staff member. Most conflicts can be resolved with a simple meeting between the parties involved. If the congregation member is uncomfortable or unwilling to undertake this as a first step, the SPRC member will refer them to the Conflict-Resolution Policy posted on our website for guidelines as to how they may proceed to submit a formal complaint in writing to the SPRC.
- 2.) When submitting a letter to the SPRC, all complaints against or concerns regarding a staff member should be specific, factual, and free of rhetoric. Attacks against personalities, personal styles of ministry, or use of demeaning or uncharitable language is highly discouraged.
- 3.) Anonymous complaints, either written or verbal, will not be accepted or considered under any circumstances.
- 4.) Any use of mass emailing to present a grievance, use of written petitions, public airing of complaints using social media such as Facebook and Twitter, are highly discouraged and will result in the complaint not being reviewed or considered by the SPRC until the post/tweet has been deleted or taken down and proper channels have been followed.
- 5.) When a written complaint of any kind has been sent to a member of SPRC, that member will forward it to the SPRC chair who will make copies of the complaint for dissemination to members at the next meeting.
- 6.) All written complaints in turn will be acknowledged in writing by the SPRC chair or his designee upon receipt. The person who submitted the complaint will be advised that the matter is being taken into consideration by the SPRC, and that policy dictates that all complaints be addressed within 30 days of receipt.
- 7.) In the event that the resolution of an issue calls for a formal face-to-face meeting between the congregation member and pastor/staff member, a trained mediator, conflict resolution specialist, or a mutually agreed upon member of the SPRC and/or SPRC chair will attend the meeting and ensure that both parties adhere to the principles found in Matthew 18:15-18. Supervisors of the staff/pastor may also be included in the meeting if the situation warrants it.
- 8.) Though the SPRC holds no authority for disciplining pastors or church members who have acted contrary to Christian principles in dealing with conflict or complaints, the Book of Discipline does set forth guidelines for church trials. This option is rarely, if ever used, but does exist for extreme circumstances. For further information and specific guidelines please see the most recent edition of The United Methodist Book of Discipline, a copy of which can be requested from the church office.