

## **WESLEY UMC GRIEVANCE PROCESS FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION-JUNE, 2016**

All members, attendees, compensated and uncompensated staff and coordinators, volunteers, laity and clergy should follow the example of Jesus Christ, in treating each other with love and respect. We recognized that differences of opinion and conflict are part of living life and working together. *God will be honored by our efforts to resolve differences in love, maintaining the unity of the body of Christ. (Ephesians 4:2-3)*

Conflict can be defined as a simple difference in perspective, a disagreement over church doctrine, dissatisfaction with church leadership, or an argument involving two or more parties concerning the direction of the church.

1. In all interactions with each other, the United Methodist people will respect different ideas and view, and will express disagreement with civility and Christian love, which *means acting out of a "constant love" for those with which we disagree (1 Peter 4:8) and expressing that love not only in words but in "truth and action." (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 it takes to address the conflict, the harder it becomes to bridge differences (*Matt. 5:23-24*)
4. If two parties have a disagreement, the ideal response is for them to meet together, face to face, to discuss the matter and seek to recognize commonalities (*Matt. 18:15*) *Go directly to those with whom we disagree; avoid behind-the-back criticism (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15-20)*
5. If any person in the church has a concern or a complaint about a leader of the church, whether it is a compensated or non-compensated church staff, pastor or laity, the concerned person is strongly encouraged to discuss the matter directly with the leader/person involved. (*Matt. 18:15*) If satisfactory resolution is achieved at this step, the matter is closed and should not be shared with any other persons. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved, and if the situation still seems to call for it, then the person with the complaint should go on to the next step.
6. If the concern or conflict is between a coordinator, a compensated or non-compensated staff member or a ministry participant or committee member or taskforce person, and the matter could not be resolved with the two parties in a face to face discussion as noted in #4, then these parties should ask for a meeting with the Pastor who will listen carefully to both parties and work towards reconciliation and help resolve their differences with caring mediation. If satisfactory resolution is achieved at this step, the matter is closed and should not be shared

with any other persons. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved and if the situation still seems to call for it, the person with the complaint should go on to the next step.

- 6.1 If the complaint or conflict is with the Pastor, and a face to face meeting with the Pastor as described in #4 did not resolve this conflict, the person with the complaint should go on to the next step.
  
7. Ask to speak to the chair of Governing Board to arrange to meet with representatives of the Governing Board with the desire to resolve this conflict because the initial face to face meeting with the other person was to no avail. If the Governing Board representatives, after careful consideration, advise the person that he or she has no case, the process may stop right there. If the person feels strongly that they must talk to the other party again, face to face, but with Board Members present, the person with the complaint may ask the Chair of the Governing Board for a formal hearing before the entire Governing Board. The entire Governing Board will then decide whether accommodating that request is necessary and in a timely manner let the person with the complaint know their decision. If the entire Governing Board decides a formal hearing is not necessary, a caring and respectful meeting will be held with the party who requested the hearing to explain their decision and that the matter is closed. *Listen Carefully, summarize and check out what is heard before responding. See as much to understand as to be understood. (James 1:19; Proverbs 18:38)*
  
8. If, however, the Entire Governing Board decides a formal hearing is necessary, all parties to the conflict should be present for the entire discussion. Time will be given to all parties to explain their positions. The entire Governing Board will work towards reconciliation between both parties. If however, it cannot bring about reconciliation, it will then take its time in making a decision that will be just and merciful, and will preserve the best interests of the church.
  
9. If, however, the Governing Board cannot bring about reconciliation and the parties continue divided, the next step is to involve the Conference Leadership. Only after every effort has been made to resolve the conflict at the congregational level should the conflict move to the Conference level. *Be firm in our commitment to seek a mutual solution; be stubborn in holding to our common foundation in Christ; be steadfast in love. (Colossians 3:12-15)*
  
10. *Be open to accept skilled help. If we cannot reach agreement among ourselves, we will use those with gifts and training in mediation in the larger church. (Phil. 4:1-3)*

