

Charter for Healthy Congregation Team (HCT)

Purposes:

- To facilitate the well-being of the Northlake Community by fostering harmonious relations and mediating conflicts within the membership.
- To be visible and available as a listening ear so that when an interpersonal conflict arises, members can seek support and advice before the conflict grows.

Composition:

- Is composed of three members, whose names and contact information are made available to the members of the congregation, to contact as needed.
- Members are appointed by the Board, with the advice of the Minister and the Committee on Ministry. An effort should be made to choose members representing the broad diversity of the congregation, including ensuring they are not seen as part of the same “circles”.
- Members should be chosen for these skills:
 - wisdom
 - experience
 - good listening skills
 - skill in conflict resolution
 - respected by church members
 - able to remain impartial in the midst of conflict
- Membership will be for two years. Members may serve for two consecutive terms.

Role (“Steps” listed below refer to steps in the document “Pathway to Conflict Resolution”)

- Be available to listen, support, and advise members of the congregation who are experiencing an interpersonal conflict or feeling like they are not in right relations with another member of the congregation, or with church staff.
 - Step 1a: If an HCT member is approached by a church member (Person A) asking for support: they should meet with them within a week to provide reflective listening and offer guidance that can point the way toward reconciliation. The focus is on self-reflection on Person A’s role in the conflict, and on empathy for Person B and their perspective. The HCT member should listen to person A’s concerns, ask clarifying questions, and share suggestions that may help them to resolve the situation themselves. If person A continues to have an issue with person B, HCT may propose that they move to step 2 of conflict resolution, where person A would speak directly to the person with whom they have concerns, or step 2a where a member of HCT would accompany them in this direct conversation.
 - Step 2a: If an HCT member is approached by a church member for assistance with a direct conversation, the HCT member should work with parties A and B to arrange a time for a private meeting within a week for a facilitated conversation. At the meeting, the HCT member will facilitate a dialogue between parties A and B. The goal is to assist them in understanding each other and the issues. The focus is on the parties’ willingness to solve the problem rather than determining who is guilty or at fault.

- Step 3a: If facilitated dialog is not possible, or does not resolve the conflict, Person A, B, or the HCT member can suggest moving to level 3 of conflict resolution, engaging the board. Before doing so, they should work together to gain clarity on what issues still feel unresolved.
- Promote Right Relations and healthy conflict resolution:
 - To regularly publicize our Healthy Congregation packet, including the covenant of right relations and policies for resolving conflict. One method for doing this would be placing our prepared insert into the Sunday bulletin for one service per quarter.
 - If the HCT believes that the congregation as a whole would benefit from education on right relations (for example, a town hall or an adult RE class), they may notify COM, the Board, or our Director of Religious Education and provide support with planning, as they are able.
- Limitations on Role: Members of the HCT are not expected to be therapists, to listen to all of the member's problems, or to fix all the problems. They are focused only on providing support with interpersonal conflicts between members, or between a member and a staff person.

Confidentiality:

- Conversations with members of the HCT team are confidential, and details will not be shared without the explicit permission of the person(s) involved in the conversation. If the HCT member believes it to be important to discuss the issue with other members of the HCT, they will ask permission to do so.
- Note: Exceptions to this confidentiality would be made in cases which might involve criminal activity, including abuse or maltreatment of a child or other vulnerable person.

Meeting and Reporting:

- The HCT does not hold regular scheduled meetings. Members of the team may choose to meet at any time to consult on issues as needed.
- The HCT is not required to make regular reports to the Board. The Board may ask for a "snapshot report" when needed, which is intended to give them a brief insight into the state of the congregation. The report from the HCT would be brief, with no confidential details. Examples might be: "No concerns were reported to the HCT in the past two months." "We have had four individuals come to us for support. Two were able to resolve their own issue. One needed assistance speaking to the person they were in conflict with, but it is now resolved. One is not resolved, and may require escalation to the Board."

Approved by the Board of Trustees
Northlake Unitarian Universalist Church, Kirkland, Washington, January 16, 2017