



Conflict Resolution Policy

Purpose and Values

Collier Street United Church [CSUC] is a nurturing faith community where diversity and differences are welcomed and celebrated in our worship and work in the community and the world.

We honour the diversity and uniqueness of everyone. We recognize that conflict is natural and view it as an opportunity for growth. When a dispute arises, we acknowledge that it exists; we approach it fearlessly; we address it respectfully and promptly; and we seek resolution in positive, non-adversarial ways, wherever possible.

This Conflict Resolution Policy aims to guide our CSUC community towards a healthy approach to managing, resolving, and transforming conflict. This policy seeks to foster and maintain healthy relationships within CSUC and establish a congregational process and structure for resolving conflicts.

Roles and Responsibilities

Complainant: A person who has made a complaint. The Complainant is expected to participate in the resolution process(es) fully.

Ministry & Personnel Committee [M&P]: The responsible individual or group of individuals that receive the complaint, manages the Informal Resolution Process and prepares a recommendation based on the outcome(s) of the informal process. M&P is a liaison for CSUC with the Region, supporting the Formal Complaint Process. M&P will be briefed on the Formal Investigation Report, will carry out and follow up on the approved actions as required, and will brief the PRE or Church Board on the outcomes and required actions, as may be necessary, in a timely manner.

Personnel Review Executive [PRE]: The PRE comprises the Chair of M&P, the Chair of the Church Board, and the Minister and acts on behalf of the Church Board as outlined in the CSUC Constitution. The PRE will review the recommendations provided by M&P and will approve the appropriate actions to be taken.

Respondent: The person alleged to have discriminated against, harassed, or committed an act of violence toward another person. The Respondent is expected to participate in the resolution process(es) fully.

Support People: A complainant or respondent may request a support person to accompany them during the interview(s) as part of the complaint process. An eligible support person does not include an individual who is a party to the process; holds a board or other executive volunteer or

paid role at Collier Street United Church; a staff member at CSUC, or a legal representative (i.e., lawyer). A support person is present to support the individual they accompany; they do not have any standing within the complaint process, nor do they participate in any way.

Process

a) Informal Resolution Options

Informal Resolution Process – See *Appendix A and CSUC Discrimination, Harassment, and Violence Prevention Policy*:

- i. A representative of the Ministry & Personnel Committee [M&P] may advise the complainant to speak directly with the respondent only if it is safe and practical. The complainant should tell the respondent that their behaviour or comment is unacceptable and is being experienced as discrimination or harassment and ask the respondent to stop. One situation where this may work is when the complainant believes the respondent is unaware of the impact of their actions or conduct.
- ii. The complainant can request assistance and be accompanied by another person at the meeting with the respondent or any other appointment in the process.
- iii. If the complainant does not believe it is practical or safe for them to communicate directly with the respondent, they can confidentially discuss the incident(s) with a representative of M&P.
- iv. M&P will determine the appropriate resolution steps to resolve the matter. Informal processes may be recommended, such as a facilitated conversation, mediation, or other forms of dispute resolution, to be facilitated by the M&P or appointee. Before any informal resolution options are implemented, both parties must agree that such an option can be pursued.
- v. Following informal resolution steps, M&P will review the gathered information and outcomes and prepare a recommendation(s) to resolve the matter for the PRE of the CSUC Church Board.
- vi. The PRE will review the recommendation(s) and will approve the appropriate actions to be taken.

NOTES:

- Should a member of M&P or the PRE be the complainant or respondent, a different board member will be appointed in their place.
- The Complainant may withdraw from the Conflict Resolution Process at any time by providing appropriate written notice to an M&P Representative. Upon receipt of the Complainant's withdrawal from this Process, M&P will determine next steps.

Preparing for the Conversation (Informal)

Step 1 – Explore and Reflect

- What am I feeling and why?
- Are there personal issues from the present or the past that may add to my feeling of conflict and discomfort?
- On a scale of 1-10, how important and urgent is it to me to solve this conflict?
- Do I want or need to resolve this conflict?
- Am I ready to talk about the facts and feelings with the other person?
- You may want to explore your conflict style.

Step 2 – Personal Preparation for Discussion

- Write down the facts, concerns, and feelings about the incident.
- Try to set feelings of anger aside. Try to use “I” statements to clarify your impressions of the incident or situation.
- For example, “You never listen to anyone, and you’re not listening to me now” can be turned into “I feel that my concerns are not being heard.”
- Identify what you think the issue or problem is.
- What do you need to make it possible to resolve the problem?

Step 3 – Invite a Conversation

- Let the other person know this is important to you.
- Invite them to discuss your concerns, but be prepared that the other party may refuse your invitation.
- Agree to meet in a quiet but neutral place and at a time convenient for you both.
- Listen carefully to the other person’s side of the story, their concerns and what they need from you
- For example, repeat their words back to them (“What I hear you saying is...”). Ask questions to clarify information (“What did you mean when you said...”). Don’t interrupt; let the person finish their thought.
- Present your side of the conflict and your needs in a calm and orderly manner.
- Be prepared to accept that there may be different points of view.
- Seek to understand how the other person views the conflict and their point of view instead of getting what you want or seeking to win.

Step 4 – Agree on the Problem

- Discuss the current issue, not past issues.
- Focus on the problem only, not the person’s character or personality.
- Avoid attacking or blaming others for this conflict.
- Together agree on naming the problem.

Step 5 – Brainstorm Creative Possibilities

- Try shifting from a “Winners or Losers” mindset to a “Winners and Learners” mindset.
- What are you willing to do to meet each other’s needs?
- What next steps can you generate together?
- What next steps seem most workable? Most satisfying?
- Which next steps would improve the relationship?
- If appropriate, offer apologies, accept apologies and practise forgiveness.

Step 6 – Negotiating toward Resolution

- After exploring and discussing your options, agree on solutions that meet both needs.

- Discuss how and when these solutions will be met.
- Talk about what can be done to prevent this conflict from recurring.
- Agree to check in with each other to ensure that there has been progress in solving the problem.
- If the agreement is not working, **go back to step one, or consider an alternative** (See Notes below).

Step 7 – Acknowledge and Affirm

- Thank each other for meeting over a difficult issue and taking steps to the right relationship.

Notes – Additional Informal Process Options to Facilitate Conflict Resolution

- If the individuals involved cannot resolve the conflict, they should discuss it with M&P.
- M&P may recommend an alternative dispute resolution option to resolve the conflict prior to invoking the Formal Complaint Process.
- Alternative Dispute Resolution options include a facilitated conversation, mediation, or other forms of dispute resolution, to be facilitated by the M&P or appointee.
- Before any informal resolution options are implemented, both parties must agree that such an option can be pursued.

b) Formal Complaint Process – See Appendix B for a sample process and CSUC Discrimination, Harassment, and Violence Prevention Policy:

If the matter remains unresolved for any reason, or if it is determined that informal efforts are not appropriate in the circumstances, the complainant must set out a detailed complaint in writing, including the date and time of the incident(s), location, names of any witnesses, and a description of the incident(s).

- i. Matters requiring a Formal Complaint Resolution Process will be referred to appropriate United Church Region personnel for resolution, utilizing the most current investigation policy and process. Each stage in dealing with a formal complaint needs to minimize further distress for the parties involved and include as few people as possible. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality to the extent possible; confidentiality is expected of all involved. The Investigation process will be concluded as timely as possible.
- ii. M&P will provide liaison services during the formal investigation process. Upon conclusion of the investigation, M&P will receive a briefing on the investigation report, will carry out and follow up on the approved actions as required, and brief the PRE and/or Church Board on the outcomes and required actions, as may be necessary, in a timely and confidential manner.

c) Responding to Complaints of Systemic Discrimination

- i. A complaint alleging that a policy or procedure is discriminatory must first be brought to the attention of the chairperson of the Church Board.
- ii. On receiving a complaint of systemic discrimination, reasonable efforts will be made to resolve the complaint if that is possible. The informal resolution could include amending a policy or procedure on an agreement or bringing a proposal (*see The Manual, section F, Initiating Action and Change*).

- iii. If these methods cannot resolve the matter, a formal complaint may be brought forward to the regional council about CSUC or to the General Council Executive if the complaint relates to denominational structures or policies alleged to be discriminatory.
- iv. Note that the three-month time frame within which complaints against individuals are usually resolved may not apply to complaints of systemic discrimination.

Notes to the Policy

Bad faith, trivial, or vexatious complaints made by complainants may themselves be a violation of this policy. A bad faith complaint is one that the complainant knows is false or is made for a purpose other than gaining a satisfactory remedy. The decision can be made to refuse to deal with such matters at any stage of the complaint or investigation process. Anyone who is found to have made such a complaint may be subject to a range of penalties similar to those that may be taken when a respondent is found to have discriminated against or harassed another person.

Confidentiality: Confidentiality concerning complaints is maintained to the extent possible regarding the circumstances giving rise to the complaint and is subject to CSUC's obligation to conduct a thorough investigation. Information obtained about an incident or complaint of workplace harassment, including identifying information about any individuals involved, will not be disclosed unless the disclosure is necessary to investigate or take corrective action on the incident or complaint or is otherwise required by law. A breach of confidentiality violates this policy and the CSUC Code of Conduct, and Communication Policy.

Confidentiality regarding the findings of an investigation is maintained, except to the extent necessary to implement or defend the corrective or disciplinary action taken or as required by law. Where corrective or disciplinary action is taken against either the complainant or the respondent, the other party is advised that action has been taken but is not provided with the particulars of that action.

Freedom from reprisal: Every person with a concern or complaint has the right to bring it forward under this policy without reprisal or threat of reprisal.

Records: All materials related to the complaint, including the investigation and outcome, are retained in confidence according to CSUC/UCC retention guidelines.

Timelines: All incidents will be addressed, and procedures carried out in a timely fashion – in most cases, within three months. However, exceptions do occur, and in cases that require more time, the parties are informed of the delay and, if appropriate, the reasons for the delay.

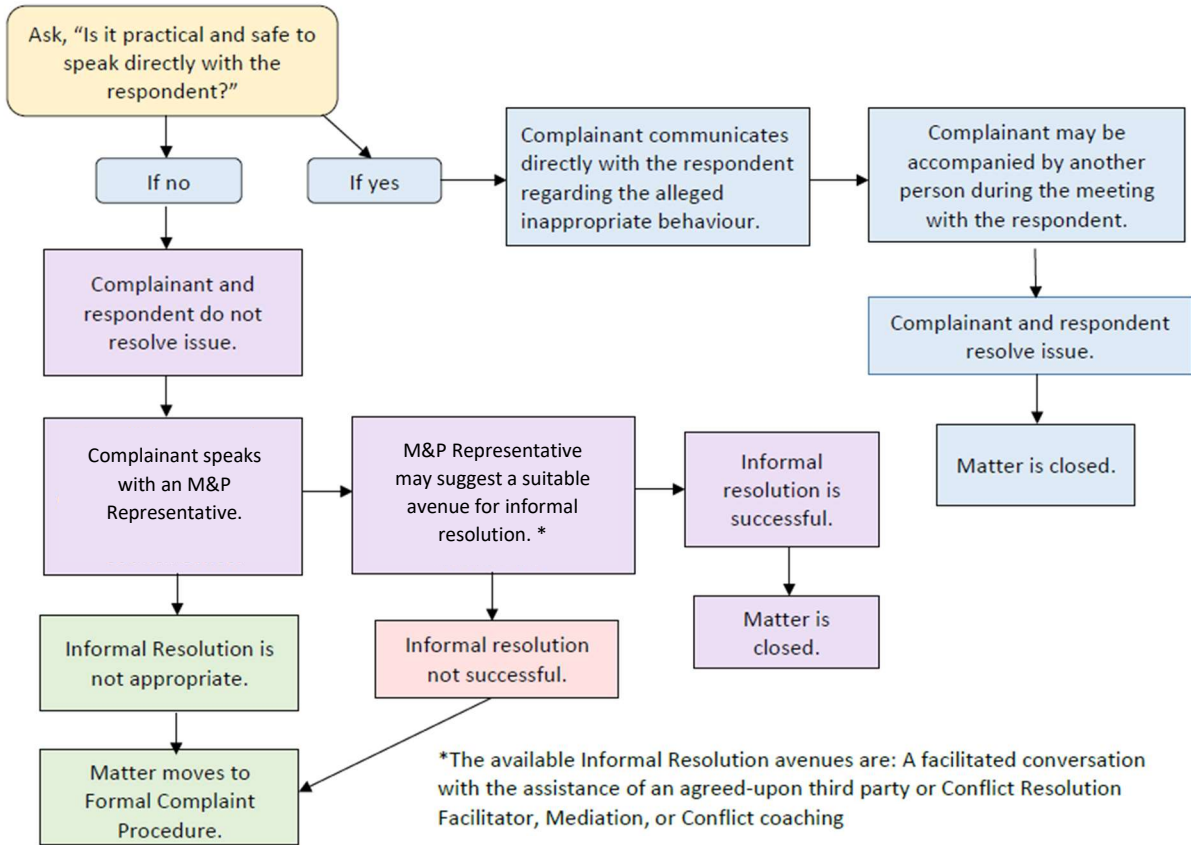
1. APPROVED (Church Board):

Board Chair (Name)

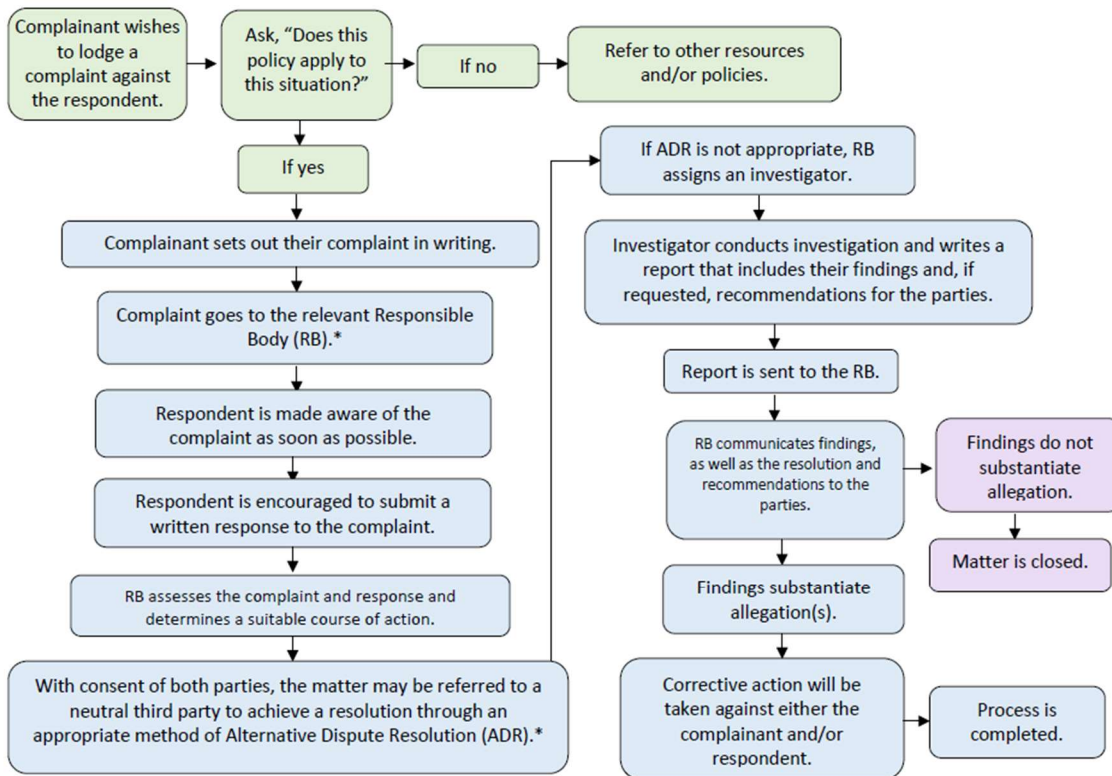
Board Chair (Signature)

DATE APPROVED: _____

Appendix A – Informal Resolution Process



Appendix B – Sample Formal Resolution Process (see UCC Workplace Discrimination, Harassment and Violence Response Policy for current Formal Resolution Process)



*See **Responsible Bodies** (Appendix G).

*If both Complainant and Respondent are employees, counselling and support are available through Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP). If any party does not have access to EFAP, pastoral care is available upon request.

*Applicable ADR methods include Mediation, No Blame Conciliatory Meeting, and Facilitated Conversation.