

# The UCE Congregational Relations Team (CRT)

**What is the CRT?** The Congregational Relations Team consists of six UCE members who have training and experience in communication skills and conflict resolution and have been appointed by the board to help promote healthy engagement within the UCE community, including dealing constructively with conflict.

**Why was the CRT formed?** The CRT was formed as a way to recognize that passionate congregational involvement may lead to conflict between individuals and groups within the community. Such conflict can play an integral role in the growth of our community, and we welcome it as an opportunity for creative change; however, we recognize that conflict left untended is potentially destructive.

The UCE Board of Trustees formed an ad-hoc committee in 2010 to recommend an effective approach to strengthen the congregation's health, growth and retention of membership with the goal of continuing to be a thriving community. The committee began with the Covenant of Engagement which was endorsed by the congregation in 2010, and, after learning about teams similar to the CRT at other UU churches, later recommended UCE develop one as a way to help us live the covenant. A task force was therefore formed to adapt a program to the needs of UCE, which resulted in the current CRT.

**CRT Vision Statement:** The Unitarian Church of Evanston will continue to thrive as a healthy community grounded in caring, direct, open, and honest communication with trust and respect, consistent with our Covenant of Engagement.

**CRT Mission Statement:** The mission of the UCE Congregational Relations Team is to:

- Promote the well-being and emotional safety of our community
- Help the congregation address and constructively resolve conflict
- Foster healthy relationships within our community.

**How will the CRT fulfill this mission?** The CRT will promote the well-being and emotional safety of our community, including dealing constructively with conflict, by offering three main services: education, early intervention/consultation, and, when requested and appropriate, facilitated conversations.

- **Education:** The CRT will offer opportunities for UCE community members to learn about healthy communication and conflict resolution within religious and spiritual communities, and will provide resource materials and trainings related to effective communication. Church leadership may engage the CRT to ensure that upcoming changes are addressed in a manner that promotes healthy congregational relations.
- **Consultation/Early Intervention :** The CRT will be available to consult with members of the UCE community experiencing conflict or relationship difficulty with others in the community. CRT members will assist in problem-solving regarding options to address the difficulty (e.g., discussing possible ways to raise the issue with the other party or share the concern with church leaders).
- **Facilitated Conversations/Conflict Resolution:** For situations in which the above efforts at prevention and consultation do not resolve the issue, CRT members will offer facilitated conversations for community members or groups who find themselves in conflict and wish for help in resolving it.

**How will confidentiality be handled?** The CRT functions as a team and all contacts are kept confidential within the team. CRT members may consult with each other and the ministers, as appropriate, but will use discretion when doing so and will not share outside the team except with permission. The requesting party may request that particular CRT member(s) not be included in such consultation if, for example, there is a perceived conflict of interest or confidentiality concern with a particular team member.

**What if a CRT member is a party to a conflict or may not be neutral?** A CRT member may excuse him/herself from participating in a consultation, facilitated conversation or team discussions for any reason, including feeling he or she cannot be optimally impartial or helpful due to a conflict of interest. If several team members find they cannot be impartial, an outside person may be chosen to provide the consultation or facilitated conversation if needed. Also, if either participant in a conflict feels that a particular CRT member may not be neutral, the CRT member will not participate in the process.

**How do I request assistance from the CRT?** By contacting any member of the CRT in person, by email or by telephone. A list of team members, their contact information and information about their experience can be found on the members only section of the website.