

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH ON MERCER ISLAND

Pastoral Relations Conflict Resolution Policy and Procedure

November 2019

1. Purpose

The Pastoral Relations Committee (PRC) has the responsibility of maintaining and enhancing healthy and open communications between the pastor and the congregation, clarifying pastoral roles and mutual expectations, and supporting the pastor. Documenting a pathway for possible conflicts between the pastor and congregants is part of that remit.

CCMI is an open, affirming, and welcoming church; however, even in the most loving of environments, misunderstandings and conflicts can arise. If those are not addressed through direct and honest communication, the relationships may become broken.

Our belief is that such communications take place daily at CCMI, in a one-on-one manner; for other circumstances we publish this document.

The procedure provides steps for that honest communication between the pastor and parishioners of CCMI.

2. Parties to the Procedure

- Parishioner(s)
- Pastor
- Pastoral Relations Committee

The members of the committee are available to hear concerns from congregation members on a confidential basis and go with them to see the pastor if requested. Their role does not include taking anonymous complaints forward. (See Procedure below)

The committee will also be involved if the process proceeds to Step 2 below.

- Resolution Group

The resolution group will consist of the Moderator, two members of the CCMI Council, and one member of the PRC. Their meetings are confidential.

3. Conflict Resolution Procedure

Nature of the Procedure

This procedure is based on communication, confidentiality and mutual respect.

The process requires all parties to take personal responsibility for their concerns and responses. While entirely confidential, it is not anonymous.

If a parishioner is uncomfortable approaching the pastor alone, a member of the PRC could be asked to attend as a neutral observer.

3.1. Procedure

Step One: Meeting with the Pastor

If a parishioner has a question for the pastor, an issue with the pastor, or a concern about the pastor, the parishioner should discuss the matter with the pastor. The matter may take more than one meeting.

The parishioner may ask a member of the PRC to attend as an observer.

If the pastor has a concern with a parishioner, the pastor will initiate a meeting.

Step Two: Meeting with full Pastoral Relations Committee if required

If the matter cannot be resolved between the parishioner and the pastor in one-on-one meetings, the matter may be placed before the PRC.

The request must be placed in writing—email is acceptable—to the chair of the committee. The request should contain the name(s) of the party(ies) and a basic definition of the matter. The chair will then schedule a meeting with the pastor and parishioner, and at least three members of the committee.

The meeting will be scheduled promptly and will take place within two weeks of the request if possible.

If a follow-up is required, the chair will schedule that.

All PRC meetings are confidential.

Step Three: Meeting with the resolution group if required

If the matter cannot be resolved at the PRC level, the matter may be referred to a resolution group.

Again, the request must be made in writing to the PRC chair, who will ask the Moderator to convene a resolution group. The resolution group (the Moderator and two Council members) will meet with the parties to the matter and one member of the PRC acting as an observer. Such a meeting will be scheduled within one month of receiving the request. Once the issue has been heard, the resolution group will decide if any action is required, beyond the airing of the grievance. The resolution group will respond within two weeks.

The decision reached by the resolution group will be final.

4. Conclusion

Please address any questions about the procedure to the PRC.

“So then we pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another”. *Romans 14:19 ASV*