

Committee on Ministry

Policy Manual – Working Document

Mission Statement of the Unitarian Church in Westport

The Unitarian Church in Westport is a diverse and welcoming community, free of creed and dogma, and open to people of all backgrounds and beliefs. We inspire and support individual spiritual growth. We connect through worship, music learning, and caring ministries. We act in the service of peace and justice.

The Committee on Ministry (COM)

Our church constitution documents the creation of the Committee on Ministry. The COM is responsible to ensure “that TUCW is fulfilling its Mission and Vision guided by the 7 Principles of the UUA.” The COM has a broad charter that includes providing “consultation, education, conflict management and assessment” for Church leaders and members of the Congregation. The COM works closely with the Board of Trustees and the Ministers, but is answerable to the congregation.

To ensure that the COM does its work in an equitable and consistent manner, the COM will operate under a Policy Governance model. This manual documents the policies that will govern how the COM operates in the various situations for which it has responsibility under its charter as described in the Constitution.

Committee on Ministry Policies

1. Policy Governance

- 1.1. COM behavior is governed by the policies document in this manual
- 1.2. Policies will be reviewed at least every three years for consistency, efficiency and accuracy

2. Confidentiality

- 2.1. Member covenant to uphold confidentiality honesty in all deliberations
- 2.2. Requires high level of trust is paramount to the COMs ability to function and fulfill its mission

3. Membership

- 3.1. Initial membership on the COM is documented in the Church Constitution
- 3.2. One new member each year – membership is for five year term
- 3.3. Waiting periods for COM members to rejoin the committee

4. Accountability

- 4.1. COM accountable to the Congregation
- 4.2. Reports to Board between Annual Meetings
- 4.3. COM has no governance, administrative, or organization management functions
- 4.4. COM may make recommendations to increase effectiveness to the Board or Ministerial staff as appropriate
- 4.5. COM power comes from respect of the congregation and carrying out its duties in a consistent, fair and respectful manner
- 4.6. Focus is always on supporting the Congregation fulfilling its mission

5. Meetings

- 5.1. COM will meet at least monthly
- 5.2. Additional meetings will be scheduled at the discretion of the COM
- 5.3. Meeting are held at a location that ensures confidentiality
- 5.4. The COM is always mindful of the difference between confidentiality and secrecy
- 5.5. The COM focuses on transparency

6. COM Minutes

- 6.1. The COM will maintain minutes of all meetings
- 6.2. Minutes will include topics discussed and decisions made
- 6.3. The COM maintains the right to go into Executive Session where no minutes are kept

7. Internal Membership

- 7.1. Recommendations for member replacement
- 7.2. Vacancies
- 7.3. Expectations for member behavior
- 7.4. Attendance parameters to maintain COM membership
- 7.5. Requirement for attendance at general church services and functions

8. Contact Response

- 8.1. All issues coming to the COM must be in writing and signed by the individual(s) raising the issue
- 8.2. The time frame in which an initial response from the COM must be made back to the individual(s)
- 8.3. Individual(s) raising the issue must predicate a potential positive resolution to the issue
- 8.4. Response reflects the issue in such a manner that communicates the COM has accurately'
- 8.5. Response communicates the process for dealing with the issue
- 8.6. Policy indicates the exact feedback mechanism that will be used

9. Process Policy

- 9.1. COM responsibility is to recommend a process that will help those involved achieve satisfaction of possible resolution that incorporated the spirit of redemption
- 9.2. The COM is NOT responsible for resolving the issue but to define and help facilitate the process
- 9.3. The COM may point in the direction of appropriate information or make appropriate recommendations for action

10. Conflict Management

- 10.1. Policy outlines how the COM will deal with internal conflict between individual members and groups within the congregation.
- 10.2. COM manages conflict, it DOES NOT resolve conflict
- 10.3. COM members are responsible for avoiding triangulation, e.g., providing the solution or becoming an advocate for a party to the conflict
- 10.4. The responsibility for the solution is on the parties involved in the conflict
- 10.5. The COM documents the process steps involved in managing a conflict that supports arriving at resolution or redemption
- 10.6. Policy documents the general steps in the process
 - 10.6.1. Individual with the issues engages the party with whom he/she has an issue
 - 10.6.2. Individual is offered a COM member to facilitate communication between the parties
 - 10.6.3. If party is unwilling to attempt communication, the COM may be forced to call for cessation for the sake of the Congregation – COM may go to the BOT with a recommendation for the sake of the Congregation and its Mission

10.6.4. COM responsibility is to protect the ministry of the Congregation and it well being

10.6.5. The COM may have opinions without falling into triangulation, and these conclusions may help design the process that promote resolution or redemption

11. Follow-through policy

11.1. Policy documents the steps the COM will use to address individuals and issues that are brought to the COM

11.2. Process steps, resolutions and actions taken will be documented and be part of the confidential history of COM deliberations

11.3. Limits of COM responsibility will be document when resolution is not achieved

12. Appeals policy

12.1. Documents the steps that move an unresolved issue through the appeals process when requested by an individual

12.2. If individual communication between parties fails, the issue moves to the Board of Trustees level

12.3. Final appeal is to the Congregation itself.

12.4. Appeals policy must be approved by the BOT as the body that has the authority to act

13. Education Policy

13.1. Documents the ways the COM will provide education to the Congregation on areas for which the COM is responsible and keep the focus on the Church's Mission

13.1.1. Possibilities include but are not limited to: Reports to the BOT, Town Meetings, Small group sessions, columns in Soundings, Church Services

13.1.2. All education activities maintain the focus on assisting the Congregation to see COM activities in light of fulfilling the Church's mission

14. Assessment Policy

14.1. Areas of assessment are documented in the Constitution

14.2. Assessment policy outlines the steps of the assessment process and its contents

14.3. The COM works with the various groups to be assessed and partners with each group to determine how best to assess that area

14.4. The COM designs appropriate forms and questions to be asked to capture relevant data

14.5. The COM assess the schedule by which areas are assessed and the timing of the assessments

14.6. The COM makes recommendations to the BOT on changes to the sections of the Constitution that describe the responsibilities of the COM as appropriate and as experience dictates

15. Recommendation policy

15.1. The COM documents how assessment data will be reported and to whom

15.2. The COM makes recommendations to the appropriate body based on the assessment results

15.3. The COM recommends how the recommendations will be processed and how follow-up will be carried out

16. Ministerial Inclusion

16.1. COM meetings are open to all called and settled ministers

16.2. Ministerial leadership will be sought and valued by the COM in deliberations

16.3. If the minister's leadership effectiveness issues are brought before the COM, the COM and Minister will deliberate on the wisdom of the minister's attendance at the meeting

16.4. If there is no agreement, Minister and COM will investigate deeper trust issues