

UUCPA Conflict Resolution Team Reminder
Making Conversations Safe

UUCPA's Relational Covenant asks us to acknowledge and address disagreements and to express our concerns directly with those involved. Yet often we are reluctant to bring up difficult issues because we fear that the other person may respond with anger or withdrawal. In the book *Crucial Conversations*, Kerry Patterson and his colleagues suggest that these common versions of "fight or flight" usually occur because a person doesn't feel safe. When a conversation goes awry, the authors recommend that you pay attention to restoring safety.

People generally feel safe when they have a sense of mutual purpose and mutual respect. Ask yourself whether you are approaching them in the context of shared goals and in a respectful style, and whether that is clearly conveyed in your words and behavior. Then apologize or clarify as appropriate. Becoming curious about how they are experiencing the conversation can help you engage them in a more productive way.

Other tips for restoring safety can be found in *Crucial Conversations* by Patterson et al.

If you would like help with a disagreement, please speak to a CRT member or send an email message to the confidential mailbox, conflict@uucpa.org. Current members of the CRT are: Joe Chee, Richard Duda, Susan Owicki and John Pierce. More information and past articles are available at <http://tinyurl.com/uucpacrt> on the church's website.