

Common Flame: a Unitarian Universalist Congregation

Common Care at Common Flame Handbook

*How Common Flamers care for each
other*



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Mission Statements

Common Flame

We nurture religious community in which we:

- Deepen Spiritually
- Connect Authentically
- Serve Respectfully
- Love Radically

Common Care Coordinating Team

The mission of the Common Care Coordinating Team is to assess and coordinate the spiritual, physical, emotional, and social needs and interests of the congregation and strive to meet each other's needs through our caring community.

-adopted 2025

Contact Information

Common Flame Office:
303-279-5282

Common Care Email:
cares@commonflameuu.org

Common Care on-call minister
720-CHURCH9 (720-248-7249)

Common Care Covenant

With each other, we will:

- Maintain communication following the processes defined
- Be open to adjusting processes
- Practice direct communication
- Attend regularly scheduled meetings and ongoing training sessions
- Commit to our own ongoing spiritual practice and self care
- Focus on the purpose of the team, not personal agendas or silos
- Proactively create a safe environment for our meetings
- Care for all

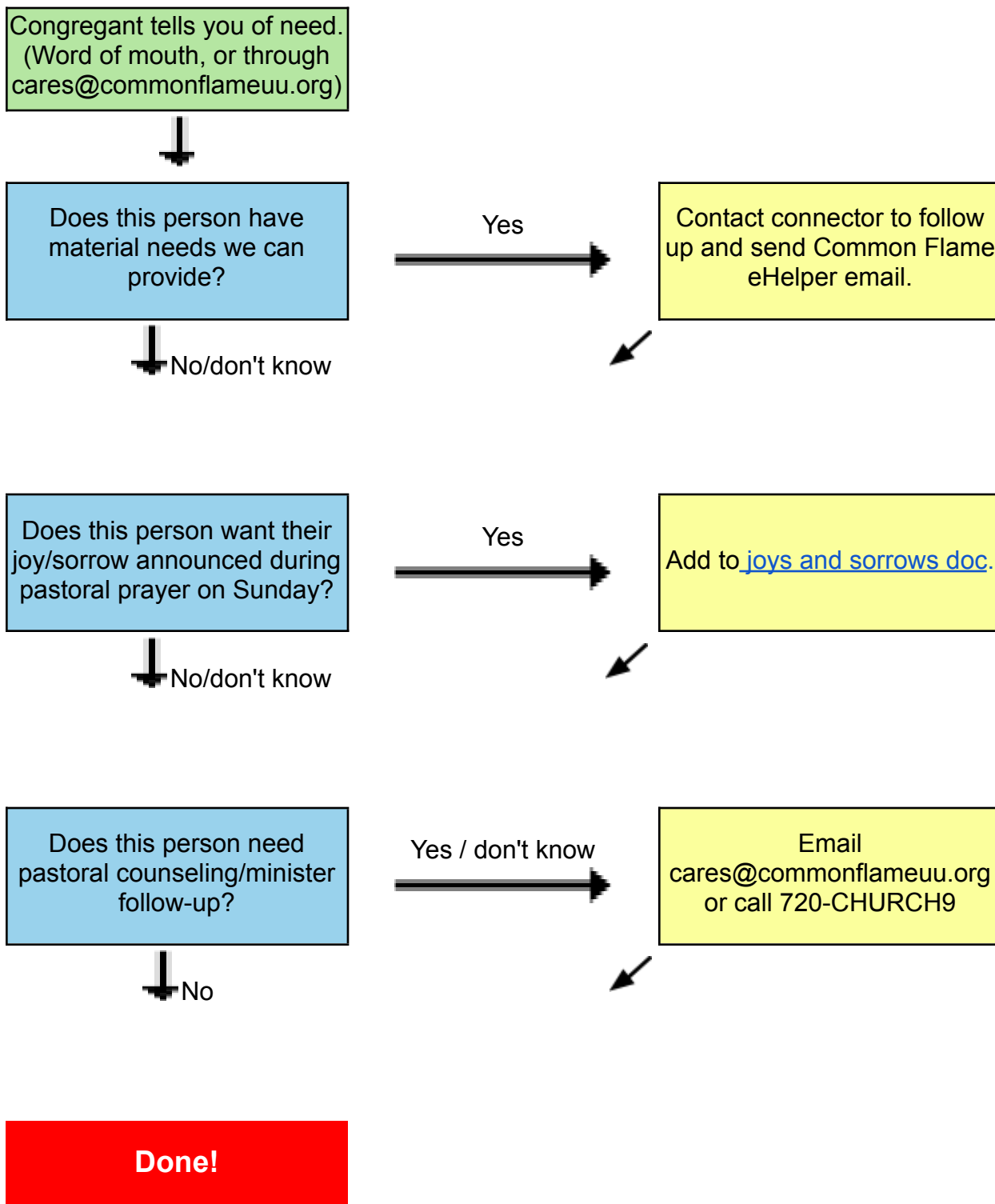
In our work as pastoral caregivers and leaders, we will:

- Fulfill the duties of our roles in a timely manner
- Treat pastoral care recipients with compassion, empathy, and sensitivity
- Keep all spoken or written information concerning a pastoral care recipient confidential
- Share information only with the Ministers and the Pastoral Care team as necessary for the wellbeing of the pastoral care recipient and with their permission
- Not contribute to gossip in general, either by listening to or circulating rumors
- These confidentiality covenants apply for all time, in all settings personal and private, even if we are no longer a Pastoral Care Team Members or Ministers in this congregation

Common Care Team Organizational Chart



Common Care Flowchart



Roles and Responsibilities

Overview

Common Care at Common Flame is the shared ministry of lay leaders and the Common Flame professional ministry team. The principal intention is to help Common Flame members and friends care for each other. The work of the Pastoral Care Team is accomplished through the following subgroups:

Common Care Team Overview

Leadership Team

The leadership Team “steers” by creating the vision, executing strategies, and overseeing the lay volunteer pastoral care subgroups to accomplish program goals and objectives.

Spiritual Companions

This team consists of lay people who are specifically trained in spiritual companioning and pastoral care. They visit (in person or via phone or zoom) congregants with less acute, ongoing spiritual needs, providing companionship and a listening ear. Members of the professional ministry team will assign spiritual companions to congregants.

Cards Ministry

This team sends greeting cards to Common Flame members listed in the weekly Joys and Sorrows email, as well as other members referred by ministers, staff, spiritual companions, or pastoral care team members.

Connectors

Connectors serve for a month at a time providing logistical support for members' material needs. Upon receiving a request from a minister, congregant, or lay pastoral care team member, they enlist and coordinate with eHelpers to provide for the material needs of Common Flame members and follow up after the eHelper visit. They also point congregants to community resources for requests that Common Flame is unable to fulfill.

Common Flame eHelpers

Common Flame eHelpers are members who have agreed to be on Common Flame's eHelper email list. They step up to provide meals, rides, and lightbulb ministry help (household assistance requiring 90 minutes or less) during stressful life events.

Memorial Reception Team

This team prepares, sets up, serves, and cleans up the standard light reception that Common Flame offers for memorials of members and their loved ones. They are enlisted by and coordinate with Carol Wilsey on the details and logistics of the reception.

Professional Ministry Staff

Ministers coordinate with all of these teams to identify and address pastoral care needs. Ministers should be the first contact for congregant emergencies such as severe illnesses, accidents, or deaths in the family. They also offer marriage and grief counseling.

Roles and Responsibilities

Detailed Descriptions

Common Care Leadership Team

The leadership team keeps the pulse of pastoral care at Common Flame. Its mission is to assess and meet the pastoral care needs of the congregation as a whole, as well as to support and direct the lay pastoral care subgroups.

Members attend monthly meetings of an hour and a half. The minister responsible for pastoral care, or their designee, prepares the monthly meeting agendas. Minutes should be taken to record significant decisions or other matters of archival interest.

Duties of the team include:

Oversight

The team will receive monthly reports from pastoral care subgroups. Team members will either be a member of that subgroup, or will be assigned as a liaison.

Procedures

The team will evaluate procedures of the various subgroups and make changes based on feedback from subgroup members, professional ministry team, and staff.

Programming

The team will plan and host workshops, retreats, seminars, or other events to meet the perceived pastoral needs of the congregation, working closely with staff.

Accountability

The team reviews the last month of the pastoral care log form for outstanding requests to ensure satisfactory delivery of care.

Budget

The minister develops a yearly team budget, usually sometime in February/March with input from the Common Care Leadership Team. Funds can be spent in service of pastoral care programs by lay leaders. A minister shall sign off on all reimbursement requests.

Annual Report

In early spring, the minister prepares an annual report on PCT activities for the year with input from the leadership team. This report is included in the Congregational Annual Report, presented at the May congregational meeting and available online.

Holiday Projects

In fall, the leadership team or a designated task force:

- 1) Reviews membership lists for congregants who have suffered a loss in the past 2 years so as to send invitations to the annual Holiday Grief & Remembrance service in December and coordinate the reception.
- 2) Reviews membership lists for elder homebound congregants, plans the contents of holiday gift bags for them, assembles the bags, and coordinates congregants to deliver them.

Common Care Connectors

Connectors serve as the Common Flame point of contact for a church member or friend experiencing an acute stressful situation in his or her life. Connectors coordinate logistical support through Common Flame eHelpers in a sensitive and emotionally supportive manner, as well as following up to ensure that care has been given.

Qualities of the Ideal Connector

- A good listener and a sensitive person who respects healthy confidentiality
- Serves the person in-care, and is not seeking an audience for their own life stories
- Does not pass judgment on the person in-care
- Listens with empathy and offers help within available resources
- Is not a counselor, but does keep their ears open for bigger issues that could require referral to a minister
- Checks in regularly with the person in-care for as long as the person needs the support

Common Care Connector Duties

This role rotates monthly among the connector team, so that no one person is Connector for an extended period. Connectors may sign up for a month on the [Signup Genius website here](#).

The connector links members with support resources (including eHelpers, with the congregation, community resources/organizations, and professional ministry team), updates the [Pastoral Care Log Form](#), and keeps in touch with the following month's connector as needed.

In more complicated or lengthy [cases](#), [they may help](#) to establish online coordination through [Lotsa Helping Hands](#), [Caring Bridge](#), or [other platforms](#).

Connectors attend a beginning of the church year launch meeting and report back to the pastoral care leadership team with a monthly report, as well as any concerns they have about the process or the needs of the congregation.

Connectors Task Flowchart (rev 9/23, transcribed 3/26)

On referral by a common care volunteer or staff, connector calls congregant to determine need. Connector gently inquires if congregant has Common Flame connections who may be available to fulfill the need (e.g. Affinity Group, etc.)

If proceeding with the Common Flame eHelpers process, Connector asks permission to share congregant's name and city/zip code with Common Flame eHelpers.
Connector also requests permission for a Joys & Sorrows announcement.

Using the following recommended format, Connector sends Common Flame eHelpers requests for meals, rides to appointments or Common Flame activities, or for borrowing medical equipment.

Send email to: [Common Flame jucehelpers@commonflameuu.org](mailto:jucehelpers@commonflameuu.org)

Subject: Request for (rides, meals, medical equipment) in (city/zip code)

Content: Succinct description of needs. Include person's name, if permission is granted.

"A member of Common Flame (or person's name, 'with permission') who lives in _____ (City/Zip Code), needs _____ on _____ (include dates if applicable). If you can help with fulfilling this request, please contact _____ (assigned Connector) at _____ (email & phone #).

Thank you for being part of the caring community at Common Flame. _____ (your name)."

When a response is received, Connector emails the responding eHelper the information and contact details to fulfill the request.

Connector also emails full Common Flame eHelpers team that the request is fulfilled.

**Connector contacts the on-call Minister ASAP by calling 720-CHURCH9 and emailing cares@commonflameuu.org if the Connector fears the congregant is in crisis and/or may harm self or others. **

Connector completes the [Pastoral Care Log Form](#) for every congregant helped, and every request received. A new form is completed if a need thought to have been resolved in a prior month is reopened.

**Connectors please retain the confirmation email generated when the form is completed: this is the only means by which the form can be corrected/updated at a later time. **

At month end Connector emails connectors@commonflameuu.org, pcladership@commonflameuu.org, spiritualcompanions@commonflameuu.org the following: 1) notification that the Pastoral Care Log is current; 2) the names of the following two months' Connectors, 3) specific information for the incoming Connectors re: ongoing need(s) for person(s) currently in-care.

Future Step: creation of a procedure whereby the original Connector follows up with person(s) in-need: collecting feedback on their experience with the Connectors process.

Common Care Log Form

Connectors and Spiritual Companions record their interactions using this form. The form provides information concerning a member's situation and what assistance is needed. It also indicates their congregational and family connections.

In the 'Notes' section, be brief, providing details on who provided care and next steps, if any. Always use healthy confidentiality when filling out the Pastoral (now Common) Care Log Form.

[Click to access form](#)

Pastoral Care Log Form (rev. 8/24)

This form is for Connectors, Spiritual Companion Team, and Pastoral Caregivers

jen@jeffersonunitarian.org [Switch account](#)



* Indicates required question

Email *

Your email

Date of contact *

When did the contact/event occur? (if it is notification of an event that previously occurred and notification was delayed (i.e. John Smith died on 1/14/2013, or Jane Doe had a baby on 2/17/2014) use this field to record the date of the event. Otherwise (i.e. Jimmy Dean has cancer and will have surgery next week, etc.) the date of contact by the Pastoral Care Connector should be used.

Date

mm/dd/yyyy



Memorial Reception Coordinator

The church business administrator (Carol Wilsey) will contact the Coordinator with information about the upcoming memorial service and information and time and the family contact person.

The Coordinator contacts the family contact person to share the established

format for the reception and listen to the needs and wishes of the family.

The Coordinator will contact committee members with the need for help and specify times each volunteer will serve (before, during, or after the reception).

The family may also choose to augment the reception with finger food platters or to engage a caterer, if they wish. If they choose this option, provide contact information for suggested caterers. The church will still provide cookies and beverages if the family so wishes.

Reception Details:

When the memorial service begins, close the kitchen door and close windows to minimize noise.

During the service, the team arranges the serving table, makes punch and other beverages. Any leftover food should be packaged and sent home with the family and/or designated guests.

Volunteers clean up the kitchen and put everything away. Allow about 1-1½ hour(s) for the reception before starting to clean up.

The Coordinator or another volunteer will take the tablecloths home to launder and return to the storage closet.

Reception Preparation:

As for an estimate of how many will attend.

Explain that the church provides and serves cookies, punch tea, coffee and water.

The family may choose to provide beer and wine along with cups for service, and assign an adult(s) to staff this table.