

Ethics Review System (ERS)

4 of 4 communications



This is the fourth installment of four (4) communications regarding areas important to our movement: Transformation Experience, Integration, Ethics Review System (ERS) and Finances.

Over the past months, through various venues, there has been a range of opinions and, in some cases, misinformation and misperceptions about the integration proposal, ethics review issues, programs, finances, and leadership of your Unity Worldwide Ministries expressed. We feel it is critical to offer some factual information so our membership may make informed personal decisions on matters before us.

History

Over the last three years there has been a great deal of concern over the process of ethics review used by our Unity Worldwide Ministries' organization. The board began a review of the system in early 2009 which it turned over to the CLMRS Review Team just prior to the 2009 Unity People's Convention. That team, which included people experienced in the system and people who had concerns about the system, suggested modifications that were approved at the 2010 Unity People's Convention. The primary element of those modifications was the addition of an Advocate. "The Advocate works with the Review Team on all aspects of the investigation, however, his/her specific function is to maximize communication between the Reviewee and the Review Team, and ensure that all CLMRS policies and procedures, as well as our Unity Worldwide Ministries' Code of Ethics, are adhered to." (CLMRS Review Task Team Report, January 27, 2010)

With the new system, now called the Ethics Review System (ERS), in place, concern has continued to be expressed over some cases that were handled by the old system (referred to as the CLMRS system). These concerns suggest that there are some questions on the CLMRS Review Teams use of authority. There were also concerns that there may have been situations where communication may not have been respectful or compassionate that may have impaired the objectivity of the process.

To that end, the board has been exploring several avenues related to the functioning of our ethics review processes-past, present and future-that it believes would assist in supporting the goals of the healthy, responsive system we all desire.

Three Areas Under Consideration

There are three specific areas of concern being addressed. In this first area that relates to past CLMRS cases, the board is seeking to determine if an alternative review process can be devised that is fair and objective, respecting the many individuals involved and impacted in any case.

1. A proposed process is being examined that would apply to past CLMRS cases to determine if an advocate's presence might have substantially impacted the outcome. Questions of appropriate use of authority by CLMRS

review teams may also be within this process. This process would not involve the reexamination of the case because this cannot be done in a way that is fair to all.

- a. The concept has been sent to the ethics review team and the standards team for their feedback to the Unity Worldwide Ministries' board.
 - b. A final action on the concept is planned for the August Unity Worldwide Ministries' board meeting.
2. An effective way that anyone who is not in good standing can return to "in good standing."
- a. The Standards Team, with the board, has modified the prior Restoration process so that it is fully focused on developing a healthy relationship between the individual and Unity ministry. The past situation that resulted in suspension will no longer be the focus, and would have minimal impact for most individuals. (Areas where there are sexual or financial questions would necessitate some focus on past circumstances.) These changes were approved at the April 2011 board meeting. One of the changes made by the board to the old language was to remove the requirement to admit wrongdoing. The people who conduct the restoration process are members of our Standards Team, which is comprised of our Regional Representatives.
 - b. In addition, feedback from our Ethics Review Team and our Standards Team may suggest other options for our board's consideration in the restorative process for the past CLMRS cases being examined.
3. Inquiry into the development of a process for ongoing and long-term oversight and continual improvement of the current Ethics Review System is in process.

Our system of ethics review has developed over many years. Each time the system has been modified it was with a desire to increase fairness and responsiveness. In part, those changes have been motivated by discontent over how the system at the time impacted the people involved. Uncomfortable feelings are always involved in such a process. While the board is committed to move toward the fairest and most responsive system our movement can create, we also depend on all of us in our movement to remain in compassion, embrace forgiveness, and hold the very highest vision for all of our colleagues.