

# **Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Fort Wayne**

## **Disruptive Behavior Policy**

As a Unitarian Universalist congregation we have covenanted to affirm and promote UU principles and practices. As members of the UUCFW we have agreed to aspire to live together in beloved community by also following our Behavioral Covenant. When we fall short of our aspirations, we must ensure that our congregation remains a secure, safe and welcoming environment. The following policy shall guide us in actively and promptly addressing situations in which individuals' behavior threatens the emotional and/or physical security of our members and friends. Disruptive behavior is on a continuum from offensive behavior which may drive away existing members and visitors, to disruptive behavior which may interfere with church activities, to dangerous which is a threat to person or property. Every attempt should be made to resolve disruptive situations by addressing them directly, with compassion and concern, before resorting to the use of this policy.

### **REPORTING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR**

Any person who believes that they have witnessed or experienced disruptive behavior that, with a good faith effort has not been resolved, may enlist the minister, any member of the Board of Trustees, or any member of the UUCFW staff for assistance. If required by law, the Minister, the president of the Board of Trustees, or a staff member, will immediately report the incident to the proper authorities. Any time the Minister is not present, the President of the Board of Trustees must be notified as soon as it is possible. Complaints will not be met with retaliation. All church leaders and staff are required to immediately report any knowledge of disruptive behavior, harassment, abuse or misconduct to the Minister or the Board.

### **IMMEDIATE RESPONSE**

If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister, if available, and/or the leader of the group involved. This may include asking the offending person or persons to leave, OR suspending the meeting or activity until such time that it may be safely resumed. If further assistance is required the Police Department may be called. Anytime any of these actions are undertaken without the Minister, the Minister must be notified; a follow-up letter detailing the offense and the action taken because of the offense, should be written and distributed to the Minister and the Board President.

### **DELAYED/NOT URGENT RESPONSE**

Situations not requiring immediate response will be referred to an ad hoc committee appointed by the Board. Once the Board is made aware of a complaint, the committee will be appointed at the next regularly scheduled Board of Trustees meeting. The ad hoc committee will make every effort to respond to the complaint within 90 days. The committee will come from a pool of members of the congregation trained in dealing with difficult behaviors within the context of a congregational behavioral covenant. The committee shall consist of an odd number of members.

The committee will respond in terms of their own judgment, while referring to the Behavioral Covenant, observing the following:

- a. The committee will respond to problems as they arise. There will be no attempt to define “acceptable” behavior in advance.
- b. Persons identified as disruptive will be dealt with as individuals. Stereotypes will be avoided.
- c. The committee will collect all necessary information.
- d. To aid in evaluating the problem, these points will be considered:
  - Dangerousness – Is the individual the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property?
  - Disruptiveness – How much interference with church functions is going on?
  - Offensiveness – How likely is it that prospective or existing members will be driven away?
- e. To determine the necessary response, these points will be considered:
  - Causes: Why is the disruption occurring? Is it a conflict between the individual and others in the church? Is it due to a professionally diagnosed condition or mental illness?
  - History – What is the extent, if any, of disruption caused in the past?
  - Probability of change – How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?
- f. The committee will decide on the necessary response on a case by case basis. However, three levels of action/response are recommended:
  - Level One – The committee shall inform the Minister of the problem and either the Minister or a member of the committee shall meet with the offending person or persons to communicate the concern.
  - Level Two – The offending individual(s) is excluded from specific church activities for a limited period of time, with reasons and conditions of return written and made clear (with a copy going to the offender and one going into congregational confidential files).
  - Level One or Two – Action taken may be appealed to the Executive Committee of the Board, and/or the Minister.
  - Level Three – The offending individual is permanently excluded from the church premises and all church activities. Before this is carried out, the committee will consult with the Board and the Minister. If it is agreed that the expulsion take place, a letter will be written and sent by the Minister to the individual, outlining the expulsion, the individual’s rights, and any possible recourse.

Our congregation strives to be a beloved community where freedom of thought, affirming differences, and compassion abound. However, concern for the safety and well-being of the congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of the individual. To the degree that disruptive behavior compromises the health of this congregation, our actions as people of faith must reflect this emphasis on security while valuing justice.

Policy Adopted by the Board of Trustees on:  
June 15, 2015