

POLICY REGARDING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR **(rev 6/8/2008)**

The Unitarian Universalist Church, Rockford, IL (hereinafter called the church) is a place of safety and integrity for each person's mind, body and spirit. We are a supportive and nurturing faith community, honoring and respecting the rich diversity of those gathered here. Recognizing that warmth, beauty, kindness, and passion will shape us as a congregation of goodwill, generosity, and presence, we covenant to affirm and promote:

- Honesty and authenticity in our relationships
- Words that are supportive and caring, not belittling or demeaning
- A welcoming and non-judgmental attitude
- Respect for each person's boundaries of mind, body, and spirit
- Refraining from displays of temper
- Honoring the gifts and blessings of thought and deed

While openness to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our denomination's purposes and principles, we affirm the belief that our congregation must maintain a secure atmosphere where such openness can exist. When any person's physical and/or emotional well-being or freedom to safely express his or her beliefs or opinions is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly, even if this ultimately requires the expulsion of the offending person or persons.

Disruptive behavior of an individual within the church building may lead to concerns about one or more of the following:

- Perceived threats to the safety of any adult or child.
- Disruption of church activities.
- Diminished appeal of the church to its potential and existing membership.

Therefore, the following shall be the policy of the church with regard to disruptive behavior by an individual or individuals.

REPORTING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Any person who believes that they have witnessed or experienced disruptive behavior or who has had a disruptive behavior incident reported to them should report it to any of the following:

- The minister(s)
- Any member of the Board
- Any paid member of the church staff
- Any member of the Conflict Management Panel

If required by law, ordinance or similar regulation, the senior minister or a designated member of the church staff will immediately report the incident to the proper authorities.

The church will not retaliate against anyone who brings forward a complaint. All church leaders and staff are required to immediately report any knowledge of disruptive behavior, harassment, abuse or misconduct to the minister(s) or the Board.

While the church cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, the church will make every reasonable effort to maintain confidentiality by disclosing the identity of the individuals involved only on a "need-to-know" basis and as necessary to investigate and resolve the complaint.

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

The minister(s) and/or the leader of the group involved will undertake an immediate response to such behavior. This may include asking the offending person or persons to leave, or suspending the meeting or activity until such time as it can safely be resumed. The police department may be called if further assistance is required. Any time any of these actions is taken, the minister(s) and the President and Vice-President of the congregation must be notified. They, in turn, will then consult with at least one additional representative from the Board of Trustees to determine what steps must be taken before the offending person or persons may be allowed to return to the activities involved. A letter detailing these steps will be sent to the offending party or parties.

MORE DELIBERATE RESPONSE

Both situations requiring or not requiring an immediate response will be referred to the Conflict Management Panel by the group leader involved in the initial incident, the victim, perpetrator or any third party having knowledge of the incident. The Conflict Management Panel will respond in terms of its own judgment, observing the following.

- The Conflict Management Panel will respond to problems as they arise.
- There will be no attempt to define "acceptable" behavior in advance.

- Persons identified as disruptive will be dealt with as individuals; stereotypes will be avoided.

The Conflict Management Panel will collect all necessary information. To aid in evaluating the problem, the following points will be considered:

- **DANGEROUS**—is the individual the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property?
- **DISRUPTIVE**—how much interference with church functions is occurring?
- **OFFENSIVE**—how likely is it that prospective or existing members will be driven away by the disruptive behavior?

To determine the necessary response, the following 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 frequency and degree of disruption in the past?
- **PROBABILITY OF CHANGE**—how likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?

The Conflict Management Panel will decide on the necessary response on a case-by-case basis. However, the following levels of response will be followed:

LEVEL ONE—The Conflict Management Panel will meet with the person or persons and other related parties to implement the conflict management process as it is set out in the charter. The Panel will communicate their concern about the disruptive behavior. If the behavior cannot be resolved, it would proceed to level two and the full Board will intervene. Additionally the behavior will be referred directly to the Board:

1. If the individual has been in significant resolutions before, then the Panel will infer that repeated visits have not worked.
2. If the issue affects the larger congregation.

LEVEL TWO—It may be determined that the offending individual(s) actions need to be referred to the full Board of Trustees. If, after conflict management process consultation attempts to implement its normal process does not resolve the situation and the disruptive behavior continues, the full Board of Trustees will become involved. It may be determined that the offending individual(s) needs to be excluded from the church and/or specific church activities for a limited period of time, with the reasons for such action and the conditions of return made clear in a written notification.

LEVEL THREE— the Board of Trustees, after careful consideration, may determine that the offending individual(s) may be removed from membership and,

if appropriate, excluded from the church premises and all church activities. Notification of such a decision will be made in writing, and will explain the individual's right and possible recourse.

Any action taken under Level Three may be appealed, in writing, to the Board of Trustees within thirty days of the letter of notification. An ad hoc appeal committee shall be formed by the Board of Trustees in the event that the action taken under level three is appealed. The appeal committee shall be composed of two members of the executive committee of the Board of Trustees, two members selected by the Conflict Management Panel who are not members of the Conflict Management Panel nor members of the board of trustees, and a fifth church member being an active member of the church, chosen by the removed person. In a case where the individual does not have a member to propose, the fifth member would be selected by the other four members of this appeal committee. The majority decision of the appeal committee shall be final and not subject to further appeal.

The removal of an individual from membership in the church will be announced in the church newsletter Kairos with the statement: In accordance with the Disruptive Behavior Policy a member has been removed from membership. Any church member who wishes to know the identity of the removed member may ask the minister or any member of the board of trustees. The individual will be listed in the annual report with any previous members who have been removed from church membership during the past church year.

POSSIBLE REINSTATEMENT OF REMOVED INDIVIDUAL

Any request for reinstatement must be made by the member who was removed from membership. The request must contain information concerning the rationale for the reinstatement: 1) a statement of understanding of the reasons for which s/he was removed from membership and 2) an explanation in detail how circumstances and conditions have changed, such that a reinstatement would be justified. The request shall go to the Board of Trustees. The Board will review the request and respond within sixty days as to whether or not to reinstate the removed member. The decision of the board shall be final and not subject to further appeal. A reinstatement request may be made no sooner than one year following the removal. In the event that a reinstatement request is not granted, any subsequent reinstatement requests may be made no sooner than one year following the member being informed of a negative decision on the previous request.