

All Souls Church Unitarian

Policy on Congregant Behavior

April 25, 2018

As Unitarian Universalists, we affirm the inherent worth and dignity of every person. We celebrate diversity and welcome all individuals, being mindful that our congregation must maintain a safe atmosphere in order for such openness to exist.

Procedures

The procedures of the All Souls Church, Unitarian, for dealing with alleged incidents of dangerous, disruptive, or disrespectful behavior are set forth below. These procedures may also be invoked if there is reason to believe that an individual may pose a danger to the congregation because of past criminal, violent, or threatening behavior. Even in situations that require the application of these procedures, affected individuals should be treated with dignity and respect.

1. If it appears that an immediate response is needed to an unfolding, dangerous situation, a minister, if available, should initiate the response or, if a minister is not available, the leader of the group involved should act. The response may include (1) asking the offending person or persons to leave; (2) suspending the service, meeting, or activity until such time as it can be safely resumed; or (3) taking other reasonable actions that are deemed necessary. If the disruption poses an immediate threat of physical injury or death or damage to property, then the appropriate authorities shall be contacted. Whenever any of these actions is undertaken without a minister present, notification must be given promptly to the church ministers.
2. A complaint alleging dangerous, threatening, disruptive, or disrespectful behavior for

situations not requiring an immediate response may be sent to any minister or current member of the Board of Trustees. When a complaint is received, the person receiving the complaint shall immediately notify the Senior Minister and President of the Board of Trustees.

3. The Senior Minister and the President of the Board shall jointly determine whether the complaint should be referred to the Committee on Right Relations or to the Congregant Behavior Committee. The Senior Minister and President of the Board shall inform the Board of Trustees of their decision. If the complaint is referred to the Committee on Right Relations, that committee shall handle it according to its Terms of Reference and the All Souls Conflict Resolution Policy.
4. If the complaint is referred to the Congregant Behavior Committee, that Committee shall consider all available information provided and gather additional information, if needed, to gain a full and fair picture of the circumstances. It shall then decide, with immediate effect, how the complaint is to be resolved.
5. When the Congregant Behavior Committee has completed its action, it shall provide a report to the Board of Trustees and to the persons involved, or report to the entire congregation, as the Committee deems appropriate.
6. Any person directly affected by the Congregant Behavior Committee's decision may request, within 30 days, that the Board of Trustees reconsider the Committee's decision and shall have an opportunity to present relevant information. The Board of Trustees shall determine what, if any, further action is appropriate and inform the persons involved.

Guidelines

1. In evaluating the behavior in question and in choosing a response, the responsible parties should consider:
 - a. **DANGER:** Is the individual the source of an actual or perceived threat of physical injury or death or damage to property?
 - b. **DISRUPTIVENESS:** Is the behavior interfering with worship or other church functions? Are other people prevented or intimidated from participating in a congregational activity because of the disruptive behavior?
 - c. **DISRESPECT:** Does the behavior fail to recognize the inherent worth and dignity of each individual? For example, is the behavior harmful or abusive to others or to the community, including but not limited to racist, sexist, or homophobic comments or actions or the malicious spreading of untruths? The content of one's beliefs and the exercise of the right of responsible dissent shall not be considered dangerous, disruptive, or disrespectful.
 - d. **CAUSE:** Why is this situation occurring? Is it a conflict between an individual and others in the church? What other factors need to be considered (e.g., mental health, drugs/alcohol)?
 - e. **HISTORY:** Have there been previous difficulties involving any parties in the current difficulty?
 - f. **PROBABILITY OF RECURRENCE:** How likely is it that the disruptive behavior will occur again if no action is taken?
2. Though resolution will vary depending upon the situation, the following actions might be

used at any stage. It is not necessary for these stages to be completed in order or for any lower stage to be completed before implementing higher stages.

- a. Level One: No further action is taken and the individuals involved are so informed.
- b. Level Two: The minister(s) meet with the individual(s) to communicate the distress and concern of the congregation and to provide other support or resources as appropriate.
- c. Level Three: An individual is excluded from participation in specified activities for a designated period of time when that individual's behavior is believed to present a danger or disruption inconsistent with the All Souls Church Covenant of Right Relations.
- d. Level Four: An individual is excluded from the Church's premises and/or all church activities for a designated period of time, with the reasons for the exclusion and the conditions of return stated in a letter signed by the minister(s) and the President of the Board of Trustees. An individual may also be permanently barred from Church activities or parts of the Church's premises (for example, from activities involving children and youth and from the Religious Education premises when such activities are taking place.)

The Congregant Behavior Committee: Formation and Functioning

1. Annually, the Board of Trustees leadership team and Congregant Behavior Committee Liaison shall recommend a Congregant Behavior Committee with diverse membership composed of three congregants who have demonstrated the ability to work (1) in right relations with other congregants; (2) with discretion; and (3) with efficiency, integrity, and

reliability. Candidates will have been a member of the Church for at least one year and will submit a statement of interest and experience. Trustees may ask for references. In assembling a Committee, trustees will strive for diversity. The committee shall meet as needed during the year to implement this Congregational Behavior Policy.

- a. The Congregant Behavior Committee shall select its Chairperson from among its members.
 - b. Decisions of the Committee shall be made by a majority of its members.
2. The Committee shall handle complaints referred to them according to the following guidelines:
- a. All complaints shall be given prompt and fair consideration.
 - b. All parties to the process shall be free of coercion, restraints, interference, discrimination, or reprisal.
 - c. The Committee shall act with sensitivity, objectivity, and fairness in handling these complaints. The Congregant Behavior Committee may choose to protect from disclosure the identity and personal information of the alleged disruptive person(s), the identity of the person(s) presenting complaints, and/or details of the allegations, when necessary, based on the nature of the disruptive behavior. However, the Congregant Behavior Committee may disclose this information to the Board of Trustees.