

Policy Regarding Disruptive Behavior The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Poughkeepsie

While openness to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Poughkeepsie and is expressed in the Unitarian Universalist Association's Principles, we affirm the belief that our congregation must maintain a secure atmosphere in which such openness can exist. When any person's physical and/or emotional well-being or freedom to safely express his or her beliefs 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.

There have been times when the disruptive behavior of an individual within the Fellowship building has led members to voice their concerns about one or more of the following:

- Perceived threats to the safety of any adult or child;
- The disruption of Fellowship activities;
- Diminishment of the appeal of the Fellowship to its potential and existing membership.

The following shall be the policy of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Poughkeepsie in dealing with these issues:

- The Minister(s) shall be a primary resource for advice and direction.
- A Task Force will be appointed by the Board of Trustees. The Task Force may be appointed as needed.

If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister(s), if available, and/or the leader of the group involved, or a member of the Task Force, if available. This may include asking the offending person or persons to leave, or suspending the meeting or activity until such a time as it can safely be resumed. If further assistance is required, the Police Department may be called. Anytime any of these actions are undertaken without the Minister(s) being present, the Minister must be notified. A follow-up letter detailing what steps must be taken before returning to the activities involved will be sent by the Minister(s), Board of Trustees or Task Force to the offending party or parties.

Situations not requiring immediate response, situations where an immediate response was not undertaken whatever the reason, or situations where a cumulative impact is developing, will be referred to the Task Force. The Task Force will collect all necessary information. To aid in evaluating the problem, the following 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 Fellowship functions is going on?
- **OFFENSIVENESS:** How likely is it that prospective or existing members will be disquieted or driven away?

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 of mental illness?
- **HISTORY:** What was the frequency and degree of disruption caused in the past? Is there documentation of past disruption?
- **PROBABILITY OF CHANGE:** How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?

The Task Force will decide upon the necessary response on a case by case basis. Persons identified as disruptive will be dealt with as individuals; stereotypes will be avoided. The following four levels of response are provided as guidelines:

- LEVEL ONE: The Task Force shall inform the Board of Trustees and the Minister(s) of the problem and either the Minister(s) or a member of the Task Force shall meet with the offending individual to communicate the concern. The Task Force shall present a confidential, written report of this meeting to the Board of Trustees.
- LEVEL TWO: The offending individual is excluded from the Fellowship and/or specific Fellowship activities for a limited period of time, with reasons and the conditions of return made clear. Before taking this action, the Task Force will consult with the Board of Trustees and the Minister(s). This limited exclusion may but need not be in the form of a letter to the offending individual. In the event that a letter is not written, the reasons for the exclusion and the conditions of return shall be reduced to writing and maintained in a confidential folder in a secure location on the Fellowship premises.
- LEVEL THREE: The offending individual is permanently excluded from the Fellowship premises and all Fellowship activities. Before taking this action, the Task Force will consult with the Board of Trustees and the Minister(s). If it is decided that the expulsion will take place, a letter will be sent by the Board of Trustees and the Minister(s) explaining the expulsion and the individual's rights and possible recourse.
- LEVEL FOUR: In extreme cases where a threat to the physical safety of people or property is perceived or disruptive behavior has escalated to an egregious degree, the Board of Trustees may seek to obtain court order to enjoin the offending individual from entering the premises.

Any action taken pursuant to the above may be appealed to the Executive Committee of the Board of Trustees and Minister(s).

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Poughkeepsie strives to be an inclusive community, affirming our differences in beliefs, opinions, and life experiences. 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 the disruption compromises the health of this congregation, our actions as a people of faith must reflect this emphasis on security.

Policy adopted on March 19, 2009