

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR POLICY

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis strives to be an inclusive community, celebrating diversity and individual freedom of belief as stated in our Association's "Statement of Principles and Purposes." We encourage free expression of ideas and opinions consistent with our "Safe Congregation Covenant" which states:

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis 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, 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;

Listening to one another.

As we continue on our spiritual paths, honoring the gifts, blessings and commitments each person brings to our congregation, let us be gentle with each other, for we do not know what is in another person's heart.

In spite of the "Principles" and our "Covenant," we recognize that exchanges and situations will arise that threaten the well-being of a person or the well-being of the congregation as a whole (the church), or the safe expression of beliefs or opinions. These situations must be dealt with firmly and promptly. Respecting the worth and dignity of each individual includes compassionately holding individuals responsible and accountable for their behavior.

The following shall be the "Disruptive Behavior Policy" of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Annapolis:¹

I. Initial Responses

A. Regarding conflicted behavior:

1. **Conflicted behavior** is when individuals are dishonest, belittling, demeaning or fail to respect boundaries of mind, body and spirit.
2. **Response:** Individuals and leaders bear the responsibility to recognize and name conflicts and address them under the guidelines of our "Covenant." They must acknowledge the conflict and deal with it directly and positively by talking to the other party involved with the intention of solving the problem (which could result in agreeing to disagree with civility). If the conflict cannot be resolved to each individual's satisfaction, then it can be considered as disruptive behavior (see below).
3. **Notification:** Timely notification of the incident can be made to the ministerial staff if it remains unresolved or repeated.

¹ This policy has borrowed from the "Policy Regarding Disruptive Behavior" of the Jefferson Unitarian Universalist Church and with reference to similar policies written by the Mainline UU Church (PA), the UU Church of Milwaukee, and the Arlington UU Church (VA).

B. Regarding disruptive behavior:

1. **Disruptive behavior** is when an individual's behavior disrupts church activities or diminishes the appeal of those activities, threatens person(s) and/or property, or violates church policy.
2. **Response:** Members present may notify the ministerial staff, get help from a church leader, ask for a cool off/time out period, adjourn, have a one-to-one discussion, or as a last resort request that the disruptor leave the premises.
3. **Notification:** Timely notification of the incident shall be made to ministerial staff if it remains unresolved or repeated.

C. Regarding threatening behavior:

1. **Threatening behavior** is when an individual's behavior poses an immediate threat by being destructive, creating disorder or threatening destructive actions against persons or property.
2. **Response:** Members who are threatened or witness disruption or threat may ask others for help, request that the disruptor leave, and/or call 911 for police help. If it is suspected a crime has been committed, the police must be called.
3. **Notification:** Ministerial staff, Management Team members or the President of the Board, his or her designee, shall be immediately notified.

II. *Processing inappropriate behavior*

1. In the case of a non-member, the President of the Board, his or her designee, or one of the ministers may take action without prior notice to the offending person to address and resolve the problem.
2. In the case of a member, at each level described below the complaint will be heard, information collected/reviewed from involved parties, consideration given to how dangerous, disruptive, or offensive the behavior was, and a resolution developed, all of which shall be documented with a report filed with the Administrator. At each step, involved parties are charged to act in good faith, with compassion, and with confidentiality as appropriate.
3. Instances of inappropriate behavior may be processed through any one or more of the following levels. Should the resolution not be satisfactory to any of the parties involved, the matter will be referred to a higher level.
4. **Level 1** (generally for less inappropriate behaviors): A minister or lay leader will consult with the member and explore plans to resolve the problem. If no resolution is found or if the inappropriate behavior continues, a written report (see section III) will be filed by a minister with the Administrator and the case will be referred to a higher level.
5. **Level 2:** A hearing with the Committee for Reconciliation.² The Committee will confer with the member, collect relevant information relating to the incident, including interviews if necessary, and adopt a plan for resolution of the problem. The offending person(s) and complainant will be informed of the plan. If no resolution is found or if the disruption continues, the case will be referred to a higher level with the Committee's report and recommendation. This report (see section III) and recommendation will be filed by the Committee with the Administrator.
6. **Level 3:** A hearing with the Board of Trustees. The Board may sustain the report and recommendation of the Committee and/or confer with the individuals, communicating concerns and suggesting steps for

² The Committee will be composed of three members and a minister and is a committee serving the Senior Minister.

resolution. In these cases, the member(s) involved will be provided written notice by certified mail to the address of record at least 30 days prior to the hearing before the Board of Trustees. If deemed necessary, the Board may exclude the individual(s) from specific church activities or property for a limited time (no more than 12 months) with the exception of congregational meetings. Reasons for the action will be given and the conditions for return specified. Following an adverse Board action, should the member(s) wish to resume attendance at church activities earlier, he or she may ask for a meeting with the Senior Minister and Board President to discuss the request. The Senior Minister and Board President, if in agreement to support the request for resumption of attendance, will submit the request to the Board for a decision. A written report of proceedings will be filed by the Board President with the Administrator.

7. Failure by individuals to honor this policy process could result in expulsion from UUCA and/or loss of membership.
8. Upon the recommendation of the Senior Minister to the Board that a member be banned from church property and/or removed from membership because of inappropriate behavior, the Board must follow the steps as outlined in Level 3.
9. Having been removed from church membership, an individual who wishes to be reinstated may present this request to the Senior Minister and Board President, who, if in agreement, will place the request on the agenda of a Board meeting no sooner than six months after the individual's loss of membership.

III. Reports of Disruptions

1. Report of disruptions and actions taken will be kept in the church office. This file shall be kept by the church administrator with access restricted to the ministers and those they deem have a need to know. The information in the report shall include:
 2. Date
 3. Name, address, phone number of person reporting
 4. Description of the incident (what, when, where, who)
 5. Injuries, if any
 6. Missing/destroyed items
 7. Witnesses: names, phone numbers
 8. Immediate action, if any
 9. Police report, court order or other official documents attached, if applicable
 10. Subsequent actions taken (follow-up to persons involved, investigation results, actions taken and at what level)

Approved by the Board of Trustees, August 2018