

Policy on Disruptive Behavior

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.

There have been times when the disruptive behavior of an individual on church grounds or at church sponsored events has led members to voice their concerns about one or more of the following:

- Perceived threats to the safety of any person;
- Damage or threats to damage church property; or other actions that would create a financial burden for Northlake;
- The disruption of church activities;
- Diminishment of the appeal of the church to its potential and existing membership.

The following shall be the policy of Northlake Unitarian Universalist Church in dealing with such issues:

1. If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by a member of the Board of Trustees and/or the Minister. 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 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 Board of Trustees to the offending party or parties.
2. Situations not requiring an immediate response will be referred to an ad hoc committee appointed by the Board. The committee will respond in terms of their own judgment observing the following:
 - The ad hoc committee 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 ad hoc committee 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 church functions is going on?
 - OFFENSIVENESS - How likely is it that prospective or existing members will be 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 is the frequency and degree of disruption caused in the past?
 - PROBABILITY OF CHANGE - How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?

- The ad hoc committee will decide on the necessary response on a case-by-case basis. However, the following three levels of response are recommended:

LEVEL ONE - The ad hoc committee shall inform the Board of Trustees and the Minister of the problem and either the Minister or a member of the ad hoc committee shall meet with the offending individual to communicate the concern.

LEVEL TWO - The offending individual is excluded from the church and/or specific church activities for a limited period of time, with reasons and the conditions of return made clear. Before this is carried out, the ad hoc committee shall consult with the Board of Trustees and the Minister who will then approve the response.

LEVEL THREE - The offending individual is permanently excluded from the church premises and all church activities. Before this is carried out, the ad hoc committee will consult with the Board of Trustees and the Minister. If it is decided that expulsion will take place, the Board of Trustees will send a letter to the individual explaining the expulsion and the individual's rights and possible recourse.

- Level Two and Three responses may be appealed to the Board of Trustees. An appeal by the offending individual should include the acknowledgement of the disruption and plans for a resolution. If the appeal is rejected, the individual could appeal again after one year has passed. The Board of Trustees would set the requirements for a subsequent appeal.

Updated by the Board of Trustees
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