

DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOUR POLICY

POLICY SUMMARY

DATE APPROVED : February 21, 2018

While openness to a wide variety of individuals and viewpoints is one of the prime values held by the First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa (FirstU) and is expressed in our values 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 and in a manner which is consistent with the severity of the behaviour, even if this ultimately requires expulsion.

RATIONALE

As a Unitarian Universalist (UU) congregation, we affirm and promote UU principles, including respect for the inherent worth and dignity of every person, and justice, equity and compassion in human relations. We welcome people from different faith backgrounds and value different beliefs and opinions that are consistent with our principles. We aspire to live together in beloved community by following our congregational covenant. When we fall short of our aspirations, we must ensure that our congregation remains a secure, safe and welcoming environment.

DEFINITION

Disruptive behaviour may be defined as involving:

- Physical or sexual assaults or threats
- Verbal or written threats, bullying or on-going conflict
- Disruption of Church activities
- Diminishing the appeal of the congregation to its potential or existing membership.

Disruptive behaviour is on a continuum from offensive behaviour which may drive away existing members and visitors, to behaviour which may interfere with church activities, to dangerous behaviour which threatens the emotional or physical safety of a person or property.

POLICY DETAILS

Every effort should be made to resolve disruptive situations which do not threaten the safety of individuals or property by addressing them directly, with compassion and concern, before resorting to use of this policy.

Reporting Disruptive Behaviour

Any person who believes they have witnessed or experienced disruptive behaviour that, with a good faith effort has not been resolved, may enlist the Minister, any member of the Board of Directors, or any member of the Right Relations Team for assistance. If required by law, the Minister, the President of the Board or their designate will immediately report the incident to the proper authorities. All church leaders and staff are required to immediately report any knowledge of disruptive behaviour, harassment, abuse or misconduct to the Minister or the Board.

Addressing Disruptive Behaviours

The procedures outlined below will be followed to deal with disruptive behaviour.

PROCEDURES

1. If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister **or staff**, if available, and/or the leader of the group involved. This may include asking the offending person or persons to leave, or suspending the meeting or activity until such time that it may be safely resumed. If further assistance is required, the police may be called. Anytime any of these actions are taken without the Minister present, the Minister must be notified at the earliest opportunity. A follow-up letter detailing the offense and the actions taken because of the offense, must be written and distributed to the Minister and the Board President.
2. Situations not requiring an immediate response will be referred to the Right Relations Team. The RRT will respond in terms of their own judgement observing the following:
 - a. The RRT will respond to problems as they arise. There will be no attempt to define 'acceptable' behaviour in advance.
 - b. Persons identified as disruptive will be dealt with as individuals. Stereotypes will be avoided.
 - c. The RRT will collect full information from the complainant(s) concerning the incident before determining any course of action.
 - d. The RRT will contact the person(s) named as the source of the problem and obtain information from the individual(s) in question concerning the incident.
 - e. The RRT will send a written summary of their findings and recommended action to the Board of Directors.
 - f. The Board of Directors will decide on the action to be taken in accordance to options listed in paragraph 4 of this policy.
3. Both the RRT and the Board will consider the following questions in making any recommendations and/or decisions:
 - a. **Dangerousness:** Is the individual a threat or a perceived threat to a person(s) or property including him/herself?
 - b. **Disruptiveness:** How much interference is occurring with individual members or with church functions?
 - c. **Offensiveness:** How likely is it that prospective, or existing members, will be driven away?
 - d. **Context:** Why is this disruption occurring? Is it a conflict between the individual and others in the church? Are there extenuating circumstances, for example, has the individual shared that they have a professionally diagnosed condition of mental illness or are undergoing grief or other extraordinary stress.
 - e. **History:** What is the frequency and degree of disruption in the past, if any?
 - f. **Probability of Change:** Is it likely that the problem behaviour will diminish in the future?

4. With recommendations from the RRT, the Board of Directors will decide on the necessary response on a case-by-case basis. The following levels of response may be implemented:
 - a. **No action:** The Board may determine that the complaint is not warranted. The Board will explain and discuss this finding with the complainant.
 - b. **Warning:** A member of the Board will meet with the offending individual to communicate the concern and expectations for future behaviour.
 - c. **Suspension:** The offending individual is excluded from the congregation and/or specific activities for a limited period of time, with the reasons for the exclusion as well as the conditions for the individual’s return clearly stated in writing by the Board President.
 - d. **Expulsion:** The offending individual is permanently excluded from church premises and all church activities. Before making this decision, the Board will consult with the Minister, and may also consult with the CUC. The Minister and/or Board President will write a letter to the individual explaining the reasons for the expulsion, the individual’s rights and any possible recourse.

5. Where an individual refuses to be part of the process as outlined and is unwilling to meet or talk to the RRT, the Board may, with or without recommendations of the RRT, decide on the appropriate response and inform the individual accordingly.

REPORTING AND MONITORING

The RRT will monitor the implementation of this policy and will include as a part of its annual report to the Board a summary of cases of disruptive behaviour dealt with under this policy and any recommendations for changes to the policy.

REFERENCES AND/OR RESOURCES

WHO DEVELOPED THIS POLICY

The policy is based on the sample provided by the UUA.

WHO WAS CONSULTED ABOUT THIS POLICY

Personnel Committee
 Lead Minister
 Board of Directors

WHO APPROVES THIS POLICY

Board of Directors

DATE APPROVED : February 21, 2018

REVISION HISTORY:

Revision	Version	Comments	Date Approved