

Disruptive Persons Policy

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 their 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 disruptive behavior of an individual in the church building or on the church grounds has led members to voice their concerns about one or more of the following:

1. Perceived threats to the safety of any adult or child;
2. The disruption of church activities;
3. Diminishing appeal of the congregation to its potential and existing membership.

The following shall be the policy of the Unitarian Universalist Church of the Palouse in dealing with these issues:

1. If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister or their designated representative, if available, 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 Department may be called. Anytime any of these actions are undertaken without the Minister, the Minister must be notified; a follow-up letter detailing the offense and the action taken because of the offense should be written and distributed to the Minister and the board president.
2. Situations not requiring immediate response will be referred to an ad hoc committee appointed by the Minister or Director of Faith Formation. The committee will respond in terms of their own judgment observing the following:
 - a. The committee will respond to problems as they arise. There will be no attempt to define 'acceptable' behavior in advance.
 - b. Persons identified as disruptive will be dealt with as individuals. Stereotypes will be avoided.
 - c. The committee will collect all necessary information.
 - d. To aid in evaluating the problem, these points will be considered:
 - i. DANGEROUSNESS- is the individual the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property?
 - ii. DISRUPTIVENESS- How much interference with church functions is going on?
 - iii. OFFENSIVENESS- How likely is it that prospective or existing members will be driven away?

- e. To determine the necessary response, these points will be considered:
 - i. 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?
 - ii. HISTORY- What is the extent, if any, of disruption caused in the past?
 - iii. PROBABILITY OF CHANGE- How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?
- f. The committee will decide on the necessary response on a case by case basis. However, three levels of action/response are recommended:
 - i. LEVEL ONE – The committee shall inform the Minister(s) of the problem and either the Minister(s) or a member of the committee shall meet with the offending person or persons to communicate the concern and set appropriate boundaries and expectations.
 - ii. LEVEL TWO – The offending individual(s) is excluded from specific church activities for a limited period of time, with reasons and conditions of return written and made clear (with a copy going to the offender and one to congregational files).
 - iii. LEVEL ONE or LEVEL TWO action taken may be appealed to the Executive Committee of the Board and/or the Minister(s).
 - iv. LEVEL THREE- The offending individual is banned from church premises and all church activities. Before this is carried out, the committee will consult with the Board and the Minister(s). If it is agreed that such a ban be put in place, a letter will be written and sent by the Minister to the individual outlining the reasons for exclusion, the individual's rights, and any possible recourse.
- g. If the Board or the offending individual reject the resolution proposed, the Board must determine the action to be taken. This could include exclusion from specific Church activities, from all Church activities, termination of membership, or whatever other steps the Board deems appropriate. In extreme cases, the board may need to get a restraining order.
- h. Any Board action will be described in a letter to the disruptive person, and actions of exclusion (not case details) will be announced to all congregants. In addition, a confidential record of all matters pertaining to the disruptive behavior and the steps taken to resolve it will be maintained by the Board Secretary.
- i. If, in time, the person demonstrates change in their disruptive behavior and wishes to return to Church activities, they may make such a written request to the Board, not more than once per church year.

The UU Church of the Palouse 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 disruptive behavior compromises the health of this congregation, our actions as people of faith must reflect this emphasis on security.