

## **First Unitarian Church of Oakland Disruptive Behavior Policies**

Adopted August 26, 2010

### A. 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, and/or their ability to voice and practice their religious beliefs are 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. Actions to address disruptive behavior are undertaken with compassion and the hope of reconciliation.

First Unitarian Church of Oakland strives to be an inclusive community, affirming our differences in beliefs, opinions and life experiences. However, in some cases, concern for the safety and well-being of the congregation as a whole and/or the professional staff must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of an individual. To the degree that disruptive behavior compromises the health of this congregation, our actions, as people of faith, must reflect our commitment to maintaining both security and beloved community.

### B. Procedure:

The following shall be the process of First Unitarian Church of Oakland in dealing with these issues:

1. If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Senior Minister or h/h designee; 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 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 Senior Minister or the Committee on Ministry Chair being present, the Senior Minister, and the Chair of the Committee on Ministry must be immediately notified in writing and with a phone call. A follow-up letter detailing what steps must be taken before returning to the activities involved will be sent by the Senior Minister, h/h designee, and the Committee on Ministry to the offending party or parties. Whether another follow-up letter is written by the Senior Minister, h/h designee or the Committee on Ministry will be mutually decided based on how quickly a letter is needed, and the availability of all concerned.

2. Situations not requiring immediate response will be referred to the Committee on Ministry. The Committee will respond in terms of their own judgment observing the following:

a. The Committee on Ministry 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, 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?

e. 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?

f. The 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 Committee on Ministry informs the Executive Team and Senior Minister of the problem. Designated members of the Committee on Ministry, the senior minister, and/or a member of the Executive Team shall meet with the offending individual to communicate the concern. Specific efforts should be made to prevent future episodes of disruptive behavior. This should include providing clear guidelines to the offending individual about what constituted the disruptive behavior, and recommendations of behavior that needs to be avoided in the future.

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.

g. Any action taken under item f. (above) may be appealed to the Executive Team.

LEVEL THREE - The offending individual is permanently excluded from the church premises and all church activities. This step should be taken only in situations in which there is a clear threat to the safety to other members or staff of the church that has not been resolved through other steps. Before this is carried out, the Committee on Ministry will consult with the Executive Team and Senior Minister or h/h designee and consensus must be achieved among the Committee on Ministry, the Executive Team, and the clergy that this step is warranted. If it is decided that expulsion will take place, a joint letter will be sent by the Executive

Team and the Committee on Ministry and clergy explaining the expulsion and the individual's rights and possible recourse.