

COVENANT RESTORATION POLICY

Oct. 24, 2016

Rationale:

The policy below is intended to provide a framework for resolving non-emergency conflicts within First UU's congregation by articulating clear principles for intervention at informal and formal levels. Its purpose is to promote transparency, fairness, and due process in pursuit of resolutions that are acceptable to all those involved. This document has undergone review by the Ad Hoc Committee on Policy Development and by First UU standing committees before going to the Board of Trustees for its review and ultimately to the Congregation for information.

Within this framework are two more specific procedures: the Informal Conflict Resolution Procedure details specific steps that parties to a conflict may use themselves or with the help of the Minister or a member of the Committee on Ministries. The Disruptive Behavior Procedure details specific steps for formal intervention by COM members or, in an appeal, by Board members and/or an Ad Hoc Committee. These procedures will be published to First UU standing committees for comment, then presented to the Board during November 2016, and ultimately to the Congregation for information.

Policy:

The First Unitarian Universalist Church of Indiana, PA (hereinafter called First UU) strives to be a place of safety and integrity for each person's mind, body and spirit. 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. Therefore, we affirm the belief that our congregation must maintain a secure atmosphere where such openness can exist.

This document was created to assist our church community and authorities in dealing with non-emergency conflicts that occur even among people of good will by providing an overarching set of principles for intervention. Emergency situations are covered by a separate Crisis and Safety Management Procedure.

- A. Definition:** Conflict arises when any person's emotional well-being or freedom to safely express his or her beliefs or opinions is threatened. If it is not addressed firmly and promptly, it may damage the church community. This policy is intended to address the following behaviors:
1. Actions that diminish the appeal of First UU to its potential and existing membership, such as acting inappropriately during church events or belittling the church in public.
 2. Disruption of church activities, such as speaking disrespectfully or inappropriately in meetings or services or intentionally failing to observe established procedures.
 3. Disruption of relationships between church members and/or friends, such as intentionally sowing discord between people, cliquishness, or spreading malicious gossip.
 4. Disruption of relationships and cooperative activities between church members and external individuals and entities.

5. Use of emotionally abusive language including threats of physical aggression.
6. Use of physically intimidating behavior (which does not include actual physical violence).

(Note: Examples above are intended to illustrate, not define, behaviors that may lead to conflict.)

- B. **Procedures for Intervention:** The congregation has developed two procedures for responding to non-emergency conflicts. Based on the nature and severity of a conflict, the Committee on Ministries (COM) will determine which procedure should apply and pursue a resolution. At minor or individual levels, a conflict may be addressed informally with the Interpersonal Conflict Resolution Procedure. When the conflict is more serious or widespread, it requires a more deliberate response as described in the Disruptive Behavior Procedures.
- C. **Principles of Intervention:** When a conflict requires intervention, principles for that intervention must guarantee fairness, transparency, and due process as outlined below. Therefore, it is the responsibility of all reporters and report recipients to strictly follow the Interpersonal Conflict Resolution Procedure or the Disruptive Behavior Procedure in order to be as fair and responsible as possible as a community. Staff shall be familiar with each of the procedures and assure that volunteer personnel are also aware of the procedures.
- D. **Reporting a Conflict:** People who believe that they have witnessed or experienced a disruptive incident should report it to any of the following:
1. Any member of the Committee on Ministries (COM), who shall then inform the rest of the COM and the Minister.
 2. First UU staff and elected leaders, who shall inform the COM and the Minister.
 3. The Minister, who shall then inform the COM.
 4. Any member of the Board, who shall then inform the COM and the Minister.
- E. **Who May Report:** While persons outside of those listed in section D are not required to report, as a member or friend of First UU, it is the responsibility of all to aid in maintaining a healthy community as is consistent with our principles and mission. Therefore, an incident may be reported by any of the following:
1. The group leader involved in the initial incident
 2. The person(s) directly involved in or affected by the incident
 3. Any direct witnesses of the incident.
- F. **Investigating a Report:** Upon receiving a report, the COM should meet as soon as possible to determine the level of the disruption and whether it should be addressed under the Interpersonal Conflict Resolution Procedure or the Disruptive Behavior Procedure. According to the chosen procedure, the COM or the Board should then intervene in the matter observing the following principles:
1. Incidents shall be responded to as they arise.

2. Assuming there is no conflict of interest, COM will make every attempt to listen to all parties non-judgmentally.
3. If a member of COM or the Board has a conflict of interest regarding an incident, he or she shall recuse him/herself.
4. The relevant procedure for each level of disruption shall be employed.
5. Persons whose behavior is identified as disruptive shall be dealt with as individuals, avoiding stereotypes or generalizations.
6. There shall be no retaliation against anyone who brings forward a complaint.
7. While First UU cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, COM and Board members shall make every reasonable effort to maintain confidentiality by disclosing the identity of the individuals involved only on a “need-to-know” basis and as necessary to investigate and resolve the complaint.
8. From the moment the COM receives a report, all actions, interviews and meetings relevant to the incident shall be documented in writing until it is resolved. These records should be maintained in a secure location in First UU’s offices.
9. At each level of conflict, if the involved parties cannot agree on a resolution, they have the right to have the right to appeal as described in the Interpersonal Conflict Resolution Procedure and the Disruptive Behavior Procedure.

G. The Minister’s Role: The Minister, both in First UU’s bylaws and in the Letter of Agreement between the Minister and the Congregation, is given full freedom to express views and opinions from the pulpit and in public, except as limited by law or other relevant regulation.

1. The Committee on Ministries is free to consult with the Minister at any point regarding a conflict.
2. As with all members of the congregation, conflicts with the Minister should follow the Covenant Restoration Policy as described herein.

H. In the event that the Minister exhibits inappropriate behavior, the situation shall immediately be brought to the attention of the Committee on Ministries, who will then confer with the Board as necessary.

I. This Covenant Restoration Policy and all procedures referenced herein shall be available on First UU’s website under the “For Members” tab and in print files in First UU’s office.

Version 3.4. Reviewed Oct. 24, 2016 by Ad Hoc Policy Development Committee: Rev. Joan Sabatino, Tina Perdue, Matt Baumer, Megan Miller, Sid Reger, Faye Bradwick

History: In developing this policy, the Ad Hoc Policy Development Committee reviewed several UU churches’ Disruptive Behavior Policies and chose one from Rockford, IL as a template. A sub-committee adapted this policy in multiple revisions over the summer and brought it back to the

larger committee for review in August. More revisions ensued, and another draft was distributed in September to all First UU committee chairs to review with their members. In October, the larger committee met to discuss their suggestions and further revise this policy

Sources Consulted:

Complaint Procedure. (n.d.) First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville, TN. Document from Lori Rittle.

Hurto, Kenneth G. "A Systems View of Congregational Life." In *Safe Congregation Handbook*. UUA Website. <http://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/culture/165814.shtml> . Consulted May 2016.

Policy Regarding Disruptive Behavior. (Rev. June 8, 2008). The Unitarian Universalist Church of Rockford, IL. http://www.uua.org/sites/live-new.uua.org/files/documents/congregations/rockforduuc/disruptive_policy.pdf. Consulted May 2016.

Procedure for Addressing Disruptive Behavior. (n.d.). First Unitarian Universalist Church of Indiana PA.

Procedure for Addressing Disruptive Behavior. (March 18, 2002). Quimper Unitarian Universalist Fellowship. UUA Website. <http://www.quuf.org/opsmanual/policies/disruptive.html>. Consulted May 2016.

"Toward a Safe Congregation Policy." Unitarian Universalist Church of the South Hills, Pittsburgh, PA. <http://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/culture/165814.shtml>. Consulted May 2016.

"Update on Policies and Healing." (Feb. 2016). Safe Congregation Panel. *Newsletter* of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville, TN. Document from Lori Rittle.

"Why Develop a Disruptive Behavior Policy?" UUA Website. <http://www.uua.org/safe/disruptive-behavior-policies>. Consulted May 2016.