

# **PROCEDURE FOR ADDRESSING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR**

## **Unitarian Universalist Church of the Restoration**

**Proposed by the Committee on Ministry to the Board of Directors for  
distribution to the congregation**

January 14, 2009

While openness and diversity 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 disruption is due to a congregant's desire to dramatically demonstrate issues of social injustice, the church should attempt to provide an appropriate venue for congregants to express such beliefs. When disruption is due to behavioral health problems, the church should lovingly encourage and support the individual to accept appropriate treatment. However, concern for the congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of the individual. Disruptive behavior does not need to be tolerated by an organization or a committee or group within that organization. When necessary, UUCR should form an *ad hoc* committee to assist the Minister and the Moderator decide how to proceed and to hear any disputes that arise from interventions with disruptive congregants; this committee should include congregants who have training or experience managing with behavioral health problems.

The following policy shall guide UUCR in actively and promptly addressing situations in which individuals' behavior threatens the emotional and/or physical security of our members and friends. The privacy/anonymity of the allegedly offensive individual will be maintained as much as possible, except in cases in which he/she poses a threat to others. UUCR will follow all applicable state laws and reporting procedures for child abuse when this may be an issue. UUCR should make every attempt to resolve disruptive situations by addressing them directly, with compassion and concern, before resorting to the use of this policy. It is important to keep a written record of all disruptive occurrences and the response to them.

- For ongoing situations and those not requiring an immediate response, the leader of the group or activity in progress when the disruption occurs should inform the Minister and the Moderator of the disruptive behavior and its impact. The Minister and the Moderator will determine whether they wish to handle the situation privately, convene an *ad hoc* committee as discussed above, or direct the group leader to write a

formal complaint to the *ad hoc* committee if one has been established. When appropriate and whenever possible, the Minister will inform the allegedly disruptive individual that a complaint has been filed and is being investigated.

- When a person's disruptive behavior requires an immediate response, the Minister, the Moderator, or a member leading the group or activity in progress should calmly draw the disruptive person aside and state that the behavior is not acceptable and must cease. This may include asking the offending person or persons to leave, or suspending the meeting or activity until it can safely be resumed. If further assistance is required, the Police Department should be called. Anytime such behavior has happened without the Minister and the Moderator present, they should be notified as soon as is practicable, and they should convene an *ad hoc* committee as discussed above or inform the committee if it already exists.

- If a second disruptive incident occurs, the Minister, the Moderator, and the designated committee will investigate the incident and decide together how to proceed. They may write a letter to the disruptive person, stating that the individual must recognize the inappropriateness of the behavior and demonstrate actions to correct it before the individual may return to any church activity. The letter will state that if the individual chooses to do so, he/she can request in writing to meet with the Minister, the Moderator and members of the *ad hoc* committee to discuss any dispute.

- If all reasonable attempts cannot end the disruptive behavior, the Minister and the Moderator together should inform everyone in the church that the person should be denied access to all church events, should, together with the *ad hoc* committee, develop a plan to prevent access, and should inform the disruptive individual of this decision.

- If, in time, the disruptive person reconsiders and wishes to reenter the church, he/she may meet with the Minister or the Moderator to request reentry. The Minister or the Moderator will make a decision about reentry in consultation with the previously mentioned *ad hoc* committee.