

Policy 085

Disruptive Behavior Policy

POLICY:

The Northwood Unitarian Universalist Church (hereinafter called the church) is a compassionate community that strives to be an inclusive community by affirming the differences in our beliefs, opinions, and life experiences. Openness to a variety of individuals is important to our congregation. However, our 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 that disruptive behavior by an individual compromises the health or well-being of this congregation or any of its members, our action, as people of faith, must reflect an emphasis on safety and security. Therefore, if there occurs a situation where any person's physical and/or emotional well-being, or freedom to safely express his or her beliefs and opinions is threatened, or if the ability of the church to serve its members is being disrupted, the source of this threat must be addressed promptly and firmly.

The Healthy Congregation Committee Policy is in place to resolve issues that are not at a disruptive behavior level. This disruptive behavior policy of Northwoods will be used to address disruptive behavior by an individual or individuals.

RELATED DOCUMENTS:

- Northwoods Covenant of Right Relations (Attached Relevant Document)
- Previous NUUC Disruptive Behavior Policy from 2005 (Source Document)
- Rockford UUC Disruptive Behavior Policy of 2008 (Source Document)
- Healthy Congregation Committee Policy - P085 (Referenced Document)

DEFINITIONS:

- **Disruptive Behavior** will be determined on an individual basis.
- **Disruptive Behavior** of an individual or individuals of the church may lead to concerns about one or more of the following:
 - Perceived threats to the safety of any adult or child.
 - Disruption of church activities.
 - Diminished appeal of the church to its potential and existing membership.

PROCEDURE STEPS: Various levels of response are addressed in the procedural steps. They are divided into 4 sections:

- Section 1--Immediate Response to Disruptive Behavior
- Section 2--Reporting Disruptive Behavior
- Section 3--More Deliberate Response to Disruptive Behavior
- Section 4--Possible Reinstatement of Removed Individual

SECTION 1-- IMMEDIATE RESPONSE TO DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

1. If an immediate response is required, Section 1A, will be undertaken by the Minister and/or leader of the group involved.

This may include but is not limited to:

- asking the offending person or persons to leave, and/or
 - suspending the meeting or activity until such a time as it can safely be resumed.
2. If assistance is required, the police department can and should be called.
 - Any time that an immediate response actions is undertaken without the minister being present, the minister must be notified in a timely manner.
 3. If further action is warranted, the issue will be referred to a committee as described in Section 3.
 - The group leader taking such action should document the event, and ensure a copy has been received by the Board President and the minister.

SECTION 2-- REPORTING DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

1. If required by law, ordinance or similar regulation, the minister, a staff member of the church or a first hand observer will immediately report the incident to the proper authorities. The church will not retaliate against anyone who brings forward a complaint.
2. Any person who believes that they have witnessed or experienced disruptive behavior or who has had a disruptive behavior incident reported to them should report it to any of the following:
 - The minister(s)
 - Any member of the Board
 - Any paid member of the church staff
 - Any member of the Healthy Congregation Committee.
3. All church leaders and staff are required to immediately report any knowledge of disruptive behavior, harassment, abuse or misconduct to the minister(s) or the Board. While the church cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, the church will 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.

SECTION 3--MORE DELIBERATE RESPONSE TO DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR

Situations not requiring immediate response, or that require further action beyond the immediate response, will be referred to an Ad Hoc Committee appointed by the Board of Trustees. The committee will include at least three people with at least one being the minister, or a member of the board of trustees, or a member of the Healthy Congregation Committee. The committee will respond in terms of their own judgment with the following guidelines:

- The primary sources of information used to make decisions regarding the initial incident will be first hand accounts and the reports of the victim, of the perpetrator, or any third party having knowledge of the incident. The presence of a combination of at

least two people from the Ad Hoc Committee, the Minister and/or the Board President is required in the gathering of such first hand accounts.

- There will be no attempt to define “acceptable” behavior in advance, such as a listing acceptable vs. unacceptable behaviors.
- Persons engaging in disruptive behaviors will be dealt with as individuals; stereotypes will be avoided.

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 occurring?
- **OFFENSIVENESS**—How likely is it that prospective or existing members will be driven away by the disruptive behavior?

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 or mental illness?
- **HISTORY**—What is the frequency and degree of disruption in the past?
- **PROBABILITY OF CHANGE**—How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?

The Ad Hoc Committee will decide on the necessary response on a case-by-case basis. The committee may decide on either of the first two responses below, (Warning/Counseling or Temporary Suspension) or it may recommend to the board of trustees that the individual be expelled. If the individual is not a member of the congregation, then the committee’s response will generally involve Response 1 or Response 2 of these three forms of response:

1. **Warning and/or Counseling:** The committee shall inform the Minister and the Board President. The Minister or Board President and at least one member of the Ad Hoc Committee shall meet with the offending individual to communicate the concern and determine the appropriate requirements for future behavior by the offending individual.
2. **Temporary Suspension** - The offending individual is excluded from the church and/or specific church activities for a limited period of time, with reasons for such action and the conditions of return made clear in a written notification.
3. **Expulsion** - Expulsion of a member of the congregation requires a majority vote of the board of trustees. The offending individual is removed from the membership (if applicable), banned from the church premises, and banned from all church activities.
 - i. When considering expulsion, the Board of Trustees should consult with the Minister, however, the final decision will rest with a majority vote by the board.
 - ii. If it is decided that expulsion will take place, notification of such a decision will be made in writing by the Board of Trustees to the individual explaining the expulsion and its ramifications, and the letter will explain the individual’s right and possible recourse.
 - iii. The removal of an individual from membership in the church will be announced in the church’s newsletter (ex. Beacon Bits) in a timely manner with the statement: “In accordance with the Disruptive Behavior Policy a member has

been removed from membership. Any church member who wishes to know the identity of the removed member may ask the minister or any member of the board of trustees.”

- iv. The individual will be listed in the Membership’s Annual Report with any previous members who have been removed from church membership during the past church year.
- v. Any action taken under Response 3: Expulsion may be appealed, in writing, to the Board of Trustees within thirty days of the letter of notification. An ad hoc appeal committee shall be formed by the Board of Trustees in the event that the action taken under level three is appealed. The appeal committee shall be composed of the minister, one member of the Board of Trustees, one member of the Healthy Congregation Committee, one member selected by the Healthy Congregation Committee who is not a member of the Healthy Congregation Committee nor member of the board of trustees, and a fifth church member being an active member of the church, chosen by the removed person. In a case where the individual does not have a member to propose, the fifth member would be selected by majority of the other four members of this appeal committee. The majority decision of the appeal committee shall be final and not subject to further appeal.

Any time any of these three responses (Warning and/or Counseling, Temporary Suspension, or Expulsion) is taken, the minister and the President of the Board of Trustees shall be informed.

SECTION 4--POSSIBLE REINSTATEMENT OF REMOVED INDIVIDUAL

Any request for reinstatement must be made by the member who was removed from membership.

1. The request must contain information concerning the rationale for the reinstatement: a statement of understanding of the reasons for the removal from membership; and an explanation in detail how circumstances and conditions have changed, such that a reinstatement would be justified.
2. The request shall go to the Board of Trustees. The Board will review the request and respond within sixty days as to whether or not to reinstate the removed member.
3. The decision of the board shall be final and not subject to further appeal.
4. A reinstatement request may be made no sooner than one year following the removal.
5. In the event that a reinstatement request is not granted, any subsequent reinstatement requests may be made no sooner than one year following the member being informed of a negative decision on the previous request.

5. OTHER INFORMATION:

NUUC Covenant of Right Relations

In the spirit of affirming the dignity and human worth of all persons, and in our individual searches for truth and meaning, as congregants of Northwoods Unitarian Universalist Church, we make the following commitments to one another in the spirit of love:

We work to build community.

- We treat one another in a friendly, open, and welcoming manner.
- We participate in the life of the community, and give generously of ourselves and our resources.
- We actively listen to each other.
- We care for one another.
- We inspire others to participate in the life of the church and acknowledge their contributions.

We work toward open and respectful communication.

- We assume the best of others and treat them with courtesy, honesty, and good faith.
- We speak for ourselves alone.
- We discuss issues out in the open and avoid gossip.
- We nurture person-to-person and group-to-group relationships.
- We give and seek constructive feedback in our relationships with one another.

We accept responsibility to work constructively to maintain right relationships

- We treat others with dignity and sensitivity even when in disagreement.
- We stay in the conversation, even when conflicts arise.
- We attempt to understand the perspective of the other even while in disagreement with that viewpoint.
- We seek common ground rather than dwell on differences and challenge ourselves to forgive past wrongs.
- We commit to working within those processes that have been developed to resolve conflict and keep our congregation healthy.

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