

POLICY REGARDING DISRUPTIVE/DESTRUCTIVE BEHAVIOR
UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF BLOOMINGTON, INDIANA

Approved June 25, 2025

Here is the UUA's handbook entry on "Dealing with Destructive Behavior":

"Our congregations strive to be inclusive communities, 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 must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of an individual. To the degree that destructive behavior compromises the health of the congregation, as people of faith our actions must reflect our commitment to maintaining both security and beloved community. Disruptive behavior may involve actions that create concern for the physical or emotional safety of children or adults, staff, members, or even visitors. A baby crying in worship does not threaten the physical or emotional safety of the congregation. It may be distracting, but it is not disruptive. However, someone standing and yelling racial epithets during the service does indeed threaten the physical or emotional safety of those in attendance. This is Destructive. Destructive behavior may involve actions that disturb activities or weaken the congregation's ability to serve current and future members and friends. These incidents can occur on the congregation's property, during a congregational event, or via email and social media.

"Not all conflict is destructive. We hope that most conflicts can and will be resolved by effort on the part of individuals to live our covenant and principles. This includes directly approaching the individual with whom they are having a conflict or consulting directly with the minister or appropriate team member for support and guidance. However, when behaviors are seen to be dangerous (creating concern for the physical and emotional safety of children and adults), destructive (disturbing or interfering with essential congregational activities), or image tarnishing (weakening the congregation's ability to serve current and future members and friends), additional steps may be necessary."

<https://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/covenant/dealing-disruptive-behavior>

While openness to a wide variety of individuals and beliefs is a core value of the UUCB congregation, we also affirm that our congregation must maintain a secure atmosphere in which openness can flourish. We realize that views of what constitutes appropriate behavior are culturally conditioned, and members of our congregation might define the boundaries of acceptable behavior differently. However, when any person's physical safety or emotional well-being is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly. Likewise, any behavior that disrupts UUCB activities or diminishes the appeal of the congregation for existing or potential members must be addressed in the manner outlined below.

IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister, if available, a member of the safety team, 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 time as it may be safely resumed. If further assistance is required to address a threatening situation, the Bloomington Police may be called. Any time such actions are undertaken without the Minister being present, the Minister must be notified; and a follow-up letter detailing the offense and the action taken in response to the offense should be written and distributed to the Minister and the Board President.

REFERRAL TO RIGHT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

Once an immediate response to a disruptive situation has been provided, or if the situation does not require an immediate response, it will be referred to the Right Relations Committee (RRC), or to an ad hoc committee appointed by the Board if there is no RRC, as a formal written complaint.

INQUIRY

After a formal written complaint has been made to the RRC, two or more members of the RRC will conduct an initial inquiry. Members of the RRC will meet with all persons involved to hear their respective concerns. If no RRC has been constituted, the members of the ad hoc committee appointed by the Board will conduct the inquiry.

In evaluating the problem and determining the response, the committee will consider:

- DANGER: Is the individual the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property?
- DISRUPTION: How much interference with UUCB functions occurred/is occurring?
- ATMOSPHERE: How likely is it that current or prospective members will be driven away by the disruptive behavior?

To determine the appropriate response, the committee will consider:

- CAUSES: Why is the disruption occurring? Does it involve a personal conflict between the individual and others in the congregation? Is there evidence that the disruptive behavior is a function of diminished cognitive capacity?
- HISTORY: Is there a history of past disruption by the person or persons?
- PROBABILITY OF CHANGE: How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?

If, during its initial inquiry, the RRC determines the complaint to have merit and the behavior to be dangerous and/or disruptive, the RRC may, if needed, choose to collect additional information before deciding on a response.

TYPES OF RESPONSES

The committee will decide on the necessary response on a case-by-case basis. Four levels of response are recommended:

- **INFORMAL RESOLUTION:** After meeting with all persons involved, the committee may determine that the complaint was without merit, or that an informal resolution may be reached without further formal action. The RRC will prepare a written summary of the complaint, the inquiry, and the response, which will be stored in the congregational files.
- **WARNING:** If the original concern about the person's behavior is determined to be valid, the RRC will communicate this finding in writing to the person in question and will create a contract for clearly defined behavior change. All relevant communications will be documented in writing.
- **SUSPENSION:** If the person in question refuses to sign a contract for behavioral change, refuses to abide by the contract, or continues to engage in disruptive behavior, the matter will be referred to the Minister and the Board for further action. These actions may include exclusion from the UUCB building and all UUCB activities for a specified period of time, with reasons for such action, and conditions for return, clearly communicated and documented in writing. Suspension decisions will be made by the Board, although the Board may choose to delegate the decision to the President and Minister.
- **EXPULSION:** If the behavior of the person in question is deemed to be sufficiently dangerous or destructive, then by decision of the Board, in consultation with the Minister, that person may be permanently excluded from UUCB activities and premises, with steps taken to enforce the decision. If the person is a UUCB member, the Board will consider rescission of their membership at the next Board meeting, offering the member an opportunity to speak at the meeting (either virtually or in person as determined by the Board) before a vote is taken (see Bylaws section 3.3). The President will inform the member in writing of the meeting in advance and of the decision regarding membership within one week of the meeting. All documents and evidence pertaining to the case will be kept in confidential congregational files.

APPEALS

Warnings, suspensions, and expulsions may be appealed in writing to the Board. While the

appeal is being considered, any restrictions placed on the participation of the person remain in effect.

POSSIBLE REINSTATEMENT OF A REMOVED INDIVIDUAL

Any request for reinstatement must be made by the person who was excluded from UUCB activities and premises. The request must provide a rationale for reinstatement, including:

1. a statement showing that the person understands the reason for the exclusion from UUCB and, in the case of a former member, why membership was rescinded;
2. an explanation of how circumstances and conditions have changed, such that a reinstatement would be justified.

A reinstatement request may be made no sooner than one year following the removal. The request will go to the Board. The Board will review the request and respond within sixty days as to whether or not to reinstate the removed person. The decision of the Board will be final and not subject to further appeal.

Sources:

<https://www.uua.org/safe/destructive-behavior-policies>

<https://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/covenant/dealing-disruptive-behavior>

https://www.uua.org/files/2023-04/disruptive_policy.pdf

<https://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/covenant/defining-disruptive-behavior>

<https://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/covenant>