

Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Northern Chautauqua

Policy Regarding Disruptive Behavior

Adopted by the Executive Board of the Unitarian-Universalist Congregation of Northern Chautauqua, (UUCNC) Fredonia, NY, on April 4, 2012, and revised May 23, 2012

While openness to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our Unitarian-Universalist Association 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 or freedom to safely express his or her beliefs or opinions is 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.

There have been times when the disruptive behavior of an individual at a congregational activity has led members to voice their concerns about one or more of the following:

Perceived threats to the safety of any adult or child;

The disruption of church activities;

Diminishment of the appeal of the church to its potential and existing membership.

The following shall be the policy of the UUCNC in dealing with these issues:

If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister and Board member(s), if available, 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, the Minister, Board President, and Right Relations Council must be notified. A follow-up letter will be sent to the offending party or parties by the Executive Board, detailing what steps must be taken before returning to the activities involved.

Situations not requiring immediate response will be referred to the Right Relations Council. The Right Relations Council will respond in terms of their own judgment observing the following:

a. Persons identified as disruptive will be dealt with as individuals; stereotypes will be avoided.

b. The committee will collect all necessary information.

c. 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?

d. 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 shall inform the Minister and Board President of the problem and either the Minister, Executive Board, or Right Relations Council members (in any appropriate combination) shall meet with the offending individual to communicate the concern and actions required for continued participation. If the individual declines to meet and/or fulfill the necessary steps, a letter will be sent informing that person that until they do so they are to refrain from attending any UUCNC-sponsored activity, including services and affinity group meetings. The letter will be sent by the Executive Board.

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; this notification to be made either as described in “Level One” or “Level Three” as appropriate.

LEVEL THREE - The offending individual is permanently excluded from the church premises and all church activities, and if deemed necessary, a restraining order would be obtained. Before this is carried out, the Right Relations Council will consult with the Executive Board and the Minister. If it is decided that expulsion will take place, a letter will be sent by the Executive Board explaining the expulsion and the individual’s rights and possible recourse.

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

The Unitarian-Universalist Congregation of Northern Chautauqua strives to be an inclusive community, affirming our differences in beliefs, opinions and life experiences. However, 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 the disruptive behavior compromises the health of this congregation, our actions as people of faith must reflect this emphasis on security.

NOTE:

The Executive Board of the UUCNC shall identify, appoint and provide training for members of the Right Relations Council.

Until the Right Relations Council is created, the Committee on Ministry, the Minister, and the Board will continue to administer this policy.

This policy may be applied to any incidents presently of concern as well as all future incidents.