

UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY OF GENEVA

DANGEROUS AND DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR POLICY

Approved by the Board of Directors on March 18, 2008

Reviewed by the Board of Directors on November 8, 2011 (no changes)

As a member congregation of the Unitarian Universalist Association, we have covenanted to affirm and promote the equal worth and dignity of every person; justice, equality and compassion in human relations; and acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation. These principles require us to extend ourselves beyond our comfort zones, to make a concerted effort not only to tolerate, but to welcome and celebrate the many unique individuals who make up our religious community and the world in which we live.

However, in our efforts to accept and celebrate our differences, we must not lose sight of the fact that sometimes, whether intentionally or otherwise, individuals may engage in behavior that disrupts our common endeavors or threatens the health, safety or wellbeing of others within our community.

Scope

This policy applies only to conduct that unreasonably disrupts or interferes with the activities or interests of our community as a whole, or threatens the health, safety, or wellbeing of individuals participating in the life of our community. By way of example and without limitation, this may include the following:

- Any act or threat of violence;
- Repeated outbursts, interruptions, or other inappropriate behavior that unreasonably disrupts worship, RE classes, or any other UUSG-sponsored program or activity;
- Verbal or physical conduct that, intentionally or otherwise, demeans or ridicules another, particularly when such conduct is based upon factors such as race, gender identity, sexual orientation, physical or mental ability, national origin, etc.;
- Unwanted physical contact;
- Theft, damage, or destruction of property;
- Sale, distribution, use, or possession of illegal drugs or drug paraphernalia on church property or in the course of any UUSG-sponsored activity;
- Inappropriate sexual advances;
- Criminal misconduct.

While we should always strive to treat one another with dignity and respect, the purpose of this policy is not to codify a standard of “perfection in character.” It is not intended to apply to ordinary personal conflicts, rudeness, incivility, or similar matters that unavoidably arise within any community, particularly one whose founding covenant includes the phrase “not as agreeing in opinion.” Of course, if such conduct becomes unduly disruptive or potentially dangerous, it may fall within the scope of this policy.

Response to Dangerous or Disruptive Conduct

When dangerous or disruptive behavior occurs, we will strive to address the behavior in a constructive manner and to take effective measures to avoid repeat occurrences. Consistent with our covenant and principles, we will strive to do so without excluding those who, through no fault of their own (e.g., due to a mental or emotional condition), may have a propensity to engage in dangerous or disruptive behavior. Unfortunately, in some cases, this may not be possible without unacceptable risks to health, safety, or wellbeing, or undue disruption of church activities or programs. In such cases, we will take appropriate measures to protect the UUSG community and its members, and to ensure that church activities and programs are not disrupted.

Implementation By the Caring Team

It will be the responsibility of the Caring Team,¹ and in particular the professional clergy, to address dangerous or disruptive behavior that occurs within our congregation. When possible consistent with the need to safeguard the health and wellbeing all members of our community and to ensure that the ongoing work of this congregation is not unduly disrupted, the Caring Team will work to find solutions to behavior issues that do not exclude the individuals involved from UUSG programs or activities. However, if this is not possible, the professional clergy may take steps to remove the individual from the situation and/or to limit his or her future involvement in UUSG programs or activities.

In addition to responding to behavior issues that may arise, the Caring Team will be responsible for advising the Board of Directors, committees, and other lay leaders on formation and implementation of practices and procedures consistent with this policy; and for cooperating with the LRE Committee, Communications Committee, and appropriate others, to provide information, education, and training consistent with this policy.

Reporting Dangerous or Disruptive Behavior

Dangerous or disruptive behavior should be reported to the professional clergy or another member of the Caring Team.

The names and telephone numbers of the members of the Caring Team will be posted on the “People You Should Know” bulletin board in the Common Room, or in a similar prominent location.

¹ The Caring Team was established by resolution of the Board of Directors on February 12, 2008, and consists of the professional clergy, at least one Board member, and at least two other adult members of UUSG. The non-clergy members are selected jointly by the President of the Board and the professional clergy.