

# UCC: HOW OUR CHURCH WORKS

## XII. Right Relationship & Safe Congregation

### A. *Policy for Supporting Healthy Group Dynamics*

#### **Theological Grounding for Policy (Adopted 2/2013)**

The Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Augusta honors the inherent worth and dignity of all members, friends and visitors. UCC wants to support the religious diversity and spiritual growth of members and friends by encouraging open and inclusive small groups where individual expression and group dialogue fosters respect and celebration of shared, different and divergent ideas and experiences. To this end, the following policy has been developed to support the good relations in small groups and respond to concerns regarding group dynamics.

#### **Policy Statement:**

For the purpose of this policy, groups will include, but not be limited to committees, choir, work group, task forces, and teams.

When conflict or other concerns about group dynamics arise within a group, the individuals involved should attempt to resolve the problem through open, respectful dialogue. If the issues are not resolved promptly and did not involve the group leader/chair the issues should be brought to the attention of the group leader/chair for further attempts at satisfactory resolution. All attempts at resolution should be guided by the principles described above.

Issues that are not resolved within the group should be brought to the attention of the most appropriate staff person (SGM coordinator, Director of Religious Exploration, Choir Director or Minister) by the group leader or chairperson. If the group leader/chair fails or refuses to do so, any group member with ongoing concerns should contact the appropriate staff person or Minister.

The staff member or Minister will share the information received with the appropriate committee and together they will, again based on the principles described above, determine and undertake any intervention necessary to resolve the ongoing problem. The staff or committee may consult the minister; and the minister may consult or refer to Committee on Ministry for guidance.

If in the judgment of the Committee or Board of Trustees, group dynamics have deteriorated to the point that the group can no longer function in a way that meets the purposes and goals of the program, the Board of Trustees may disband the group.

### B. *Policy toward right relationships (Adopted 2005; amended 2011) Note: Previously titled and noted elsewhere as Policy Regarding Disruptive Behavior*

The Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Augusta has enjoyed a long tradition of peace, fellowship, and civility within our congregation. Each Sunday, we affirm our commitment to being a free and open church where differences are respected. In order to secure our tradition of civility and tolerance, we recognize the need to address the potential for behavior that may challenge our sense of individual and communal safety and well-being. Therefore, the following shall be the policy of our Church if and when such a challenge may arise:

**Procedure:**

1. Situations involving disruptive behavior will be brought to the attention of the Board of Trustees President. The Board President may ask the Committee on Ministry to investigate the matter using this policy as its primary source of guidance.
2. Persons identified as being disruptive will be responded to as individuals of dignity and worth.
3. Information concerning the alleged incident(s) that led to concern will be systematically collected from the concerned parties by delegated committee members and documented before any action is taken.
4. The committee will meet to assess the findings and decide on a course of action, with the following four levels of response recommended to them.
  - a. Level One: A committee member or members contacts the person named as the source of the disruption and informs them of the nature of the concern. The person's viewpoint of the matter will be elicited, valued, and documented. Committee members will then assess the situation.
  - b. Level Two: If the basis of the original concern is determined to be valid, this finding will be clearly communicated to the person in question and a contract for clearly defined behavioral change will be negotiated. Such communication and contract will be documented.
  - c. Level Three: If the person in question refuses to negotiate a contract, refuses to abide by a contract, or is engaging in behavior of sufficient severity, he or she may be excluded from the church for a specified period of time, with reasons for such action, and conditions for return, clearly communicated and documented.
  - d. Level Four: The person in question is permanently excluded from the church and the church premises with steps taken as needed to enforce the integrity of this decision.
5. Should the Committee on Ministry decide that exclusion or expulsion from the church is necessary, they will consult the Board of Trustees prior to action being taken.
6. The four levels of response recommended by this policy may be applied in the order determined by the Committee on Ministry and the Board in their best judgment.
7. If appropriate, the committee may offer referrals for professional services.
8. In the event of imminent risk or actual harm to church members, church employees or church property, immediate action will be taken to secure the safety of persons and property.

9. All documentation developed in the course of investigating and resolving allegations of disruptive behavior will be kept confidential. The President of the Board of Trustees will be responsible for determining access to such documentation and for ensuring its security.

The following are offered as dimensions to be used in assessing the nature and severity of referred problems:

1. **Dangerousness** – Is the individual a source of threat or harm to persons or property?
2. **Disruptiveness** - What is the extent of disruption to church functions?
3. **Congregational Integrity** – How likely is it that existing or prospective church members will be driven away by the alleged behavior?
4. **Probability of Change** – How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?
5. **History** – What has been the frequency and the degree of disruption caused by the individual in the past?

***C. Policy regarding responding to the safety of the congregation and potential threatening situations and/or persons.***

The Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Augusta honors the inherent worth and dignity of all members, friends and visitors. Equally UUCC holds a thoughtful and important voice and stance on the important issues of social justice and civil rights in the greater Augusta community. UUCC wants to maintain a welcoming open door, a voice that is heard, while having some oversight to the safety of the congregation, minister and staff. To this end, the following policy has been developed to respond to the potentially threatening behavior during Sunday morning services and church activities throughout the week.

A policy regarding disruptive behavior was adopted in May of 2005 to address emerging concerns regarding situations or persons whose behaviors disrupts and challenges congregational safety. This policy addresses situations where imminent risks to the congregation require an immediate response.

There are many situations where it is neither appropriate nor expedient to try to assess risk and engage with people who are angry and/or demonstrating threatening behavior. This would apply to an unknown person or a known person who is acting in a way that is dramatically out of character.

**Procedure**

If there is a person inside or outside of the church engaging in an escalating, angry, questionable, or threatening behavior, the following steps will be followed.

1. Err on the side of safety. **Call 911 to report the situation immediately.** The police are trained to assess the risk and threat level and intervene accordingly. The police would prefer to respond when someone is walking away rather than when someone has entered the church to cause harm.

2. If a potentially threatening person is outside the building on church property or the edges of the property, encourage members to stay indoors. Assign a church leader to keep an eye on the person. Do not confront the threatening person.
3. If a potentially threatening person is in the building, try to lead the person out the nearest door by using active listening and agreement.
4. If needed, ask someone to lead children away from a potential threat if this can be done safely without further escalating the situation.
5. Inform the Minister of the situation as soon as possible.

Multiple groups in the church will review this policy at the start of each Church year in the fall. Those groups are Minister, Religious Exploration staff, Board of Trustees, Committee on Ministry, Committee Chairs, Worship Committee (including worship associates and regularly scheduled greeters). These are the people who will look to each other to work together to respond to any threat.

There will always be a phone available in the kitchen when the church is open.

### **Notification & Follow-up**

In the event the above policy is implemented or there is a concern for safety on the church grounds, the following people will be consulted and/or notified:

1. Minister
2. Church President
3. At least one member of the Committee on Ministry
4. UUCC Staff
5. Group leaders who have meetings scheduled during the upcoming week

The minister will work with the Committee on Ministry member, Board President and Office Administrator regarding who will be contacted. They will share responsibility for communicating information to the relevant parties.

Adopted November, 2010, Amended Sept. 1, 2011 by Rev. Carie Johnsen, Abbie Lourie, Committee on Ministry, Sheila Comerford, Board President

### ***D. Response to Allegations of Abuse or Misconduct***

#### **Theological Grounding for Policy**

The Unitarian Universalist Community Church of Augusta honors the inherent worth and dignity of all members, friends and visitors. Equally, UUCC holds a thoughtful and important voice and stance on the important issues of social justice and civil rights in the greater Augusta community. UUCC seeks to maintain an open door and freedom of expression, while having some oversight to the safety of the congregation, visitors, minister and staff. To this end, the following policy has been developed to ensure a balanced, planned and respectful response to any allegations of misconduct, sexual or physical abuse, harassment or neglect.

## **Policy Statement:**

### **I. TO BRING A CONCERN FORWARD**

Any complaint of misconduct, abuse, neglect, or harassment should be reported to the Minister or the Director of Religious Exploration or President of the Board of Trustees, whoever is most appropriate for the circumstance or with whom the complainant is most comfortable.

For complaints involving members of the congregation see section

For complaints involving UCC staff, including contract staff, see section II and section III.

For complaints involving the Minister (to be reported directly to the President of the Board of Trustees) see section II and section IV.

For complaints involving the abuse or neglect of a minor or vulnerable adult (elderly or disabled) see section V.

### **II. RESPONSE TO COMPLAINTS OF MISCONDUCT, ABUSE, NEGLECT, OR HARASSMENT:**

1. When any such complaint is received, a Response Team will be convened immediately and will consist of the Minister, the President of the Board of Trustees, the Director of Religious Exploration (as appropriate), a member of the Committee on Ministry, and at least one other member of the congregation appointed by the President. If the complaint involves any member of the Response Team listed above, the BOT will replace that member with an appropriate person.

2. The team will gather information to develop a planned response to the allegations or concerns. The plan will be in writing, specific to the particular complaint, and updated by the team as new information or findings become available.

3. The Response Team will refer to the UCC's Right Relationship and Safe Congregation Disruptive Behavior Policy in developing a response. For the safety of all involved, the Team may include in the Response Plan restrictions on the alleged abuser's attendance, contact with children, or other such boundaries, such as having an approved "buddy" with the accused at all church events. Expectations of and limitations on the alleged abuser will be clearly communicated to him or her in writing.

4. The Response Plan will include methods to address the Pastoral needs of all involved. This may include referrals to an appropriate professional, support group, or church resources for the victim, the alleged abuser, and others affected by the allegations, including family members, church staff, reporters, and witnesses of said abuse. If warranted, the Response Plan may include outreach to other victims who may have been reluctant to come forward.

5. Allegations of physical or sexual harassment of minors which do not require involvement of the DHHS, such as peer to peer harassment, will be referred to the Director of Religious Exploration and the Minister. The Religious Exploration Staff and Minister may request the involvement or advice of the Response Team. The parents of the minor(s) involved shall be informed, and involved, as appropriate, in the development of a plan to ensure a resolution of these complaints.

### III. RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS AGAINST STAFF

In the event there is a substantiated complaint against a UCC staff (including contract staff) the Response Plan may include restrictions on work performance and other disciplinary actions. The Response Plan will become a part of the minister or staff person's personnel record. The Response Team will determine which records will be removed and under what circumstances they will be removed and which records will become permanent part of the personnel records.

### IV. RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS AGAINST THE MINISTER

Effective ministry is grounded in honesty, respect, trust, wholeness and right relationships. Ministerial misconduct may occur when the Minister violates the Code of Conduct included within the UUMA Guidelines for the Conduct of Ministry (See Appendix J). Examples of misconduct include: sexual activity, sexualized behavior or sexual harassment with congregants or employees, and misappropriation of money or property belonging to the congregation. The Code of Conduct is posted on the Leadership Bulletin Board in the vestibule of the church building.

In the event there is a substantiated complaint against the Minister, the Response Plan may include restrictions on work performance and other disciplinary actions. The Response Plan will become a part of the minister's personnel record. The Response Team will determine which records will be removed and under what circumstances they will be removed and which records will become permanent part of the personnel records.

### IV. MANDATED REPORTING OF ABUSE OR NEGLECT INVOLVING A MINOR OR VULNERABLE ADULT

**CHILDREN:** It is not the function of any representative of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church to conduct an investigation of the alleged or suspected child abuse or neglect; that responsibility lies solely with the State. This includes complaints or suspicions of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse or neglect. Maine law dictates that such concerns be reported immediately to the Department of Health and Human Services Child Protective Unit.

All suspected child abuse/neglect will be reported to the Minister and Religious Exploration staff. The Minister will call the report into the DHHS Child Protective Unit. The Minister and Religious Exploration staff will inform the parent or guardian that a report is being made or has been made to DHHS. The

only exception to informing the parent/guardian is if the information could cause greater harm to the child or any member of the family. The Minister and Religious Exploration staff will keep the informants name confidential. The phone number for the child protective unit is 1-800-451-1999.

**ADULTS:** It is not the function of any representative of the Unitarian Universalist Community Church to conduct an investigation of the alleged or suspected abuse or neglect of any vulnerable adult; that responsibility lies solely with the State. This includes concerns about physical, sexual, emotional or financial abuse or neglect. Maine law dictates that such concerns be reported immediately to the Department of Health and Human Services Child Protective Unit.

All suspected abuse/neglect of a vulnerable adult will be reported to the Minister and Religious Exploration staff. Minister will call the report into the DHHS Adult Protective Unit. The Minister will inform the family that a report is being made or has been made to DHHS. The only exception to informing the family is if the information could cause greater harm to the adult or any member of the family. The Minister will keep the informants name confidential. The phone number for the adult protective unit is 1-800-624-8404.

Once a report of abuse or neglect has been made, the Minister will also notify the Northeast District Executive and the Church's insurance company for their advice and counsel. In the event the accused is the Minister, the filing of reports falls to the President of the Board of trustees.

#### ***E. Policy for inclusion of convicted Sex Offenders***

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Augusta Maine 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. This policy anticipates limiting or restricting inclusion of some individuals in our faith community. At the same time, this policy strives to demonstrate the 1<sup>st</sup> UU principle “the inherent worth and dignity of every person.”

**1. Identifying sexual offenders.** A person is only identified as a sex offender if he or she has been convicted of a crime that includes sexually violating another person or is listed on a State Sex Offender Registry or self-identifies. It is expected that congregants will inform the minister of any person with this status.

#### **2. Once a person has been identified the following process will be used:**

A. The minister will meet privately with the person when identified by criteria set out in #1 above. The minister will discuss with the individual the concerns that have been raised. Prior to the meeting, the minister will check the Maine Sex Offender Registry.

B. A Response Team will be convened immediately after a person has been identified and will consist of the Minister, the President of the Board of Trustees, the Director of Religious

Exploration (as appropriate), a member of the Committee on Ministry, and at least one other member of the congregation appointed by the President. If the complaint involves any member of the Response Team listed above, the Board of Trustees will replace that member with an appropriate person.

C. The response team will determine if the identified person is willing to sign and maintain a Limited Access Agreement to assure the safety of all congregants and church visitors. This agreement limits the person's inclusion in church functions.

D. The Minister, the Director of Religious Education, and the President of the Board will know that the person has a history of sexual offending and has agreed to limit his/her participation in the church. The Response Team will determine who else needs to know about the person's history. The Response Team may determine that the entire congregation needs to know.

E. If the person is unwilling to sign and maintain an agreement that limits inclusion, then the person will be restricted from participating in all church activities, including worship services.

**3. Confidentiality.** Confidentiality and privacy for all involved will be a priority of the Response Team. Copies of files, including Limited Access Agreement, will be kept in a secure locked file drawer.

**4. Legal questions.** If and when legal questions arise, the minister and/or Board President should contact a lawyer who can provide information and advice informed by local and state statutes that apply.

**5. Religious Exploration.** A person who has been convicted of any sexual misconduct (or has a pending court case) will be excluded from all religious exploration and youth group activities.

#### Reasons for Excluding a Person from All Congregation Activities

1. Refusal to sign a Limited Access Agreement.
2. Refusal to comply with the requirements of the Limited Access Agreement.
3. The victim is participant in the church.

#### **The Limited Access Agreement**

A Limited Access Agreement is drafted with the Minister. This agreement invites the person with a history of sex offenses to participate in certain aspects of congregational life, setting clear boundaries including what the individual will not do.

The Limited Access Agreement will specify participation in adult worship services, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, all-adult social events, and well-supervised intergenerational events as acceptable.

The Limited Access Agreement will ask the person to avoid all contact with children on congregation property or congregation-sponsored events. This includes not talking with children, volunteering or chaperoning children's events, including children's religious education classes, talks with children during worship, and children's activities during intergenerational events.

The person will be required to remain in the presence of an adult who knows their situation at all times when children are present, including in some cases, asking the person to suggest a group of people to act as companions at church events where children may be present.

The person will not have access to keys to the building and will not be allowed in the building unsupervised when activities involving children are in session, such as nursery school or youth group.

#### ***F. Emergency Evacuation and Fire Safety Plan***

Adopted by Board June 10, 2014

Developed by Safe Congregation Task Force, April 24, 2014

#### **SAFETY EQUIPMENT**

Fire extinguishers are located at three exits in the church building, one in the kitchen and one each floor of the Judd and Drew House.

Judd and Drew House have interconnected smoke alarms on the first and second floor with battery backup.

The fire alarm in the church building is connected to the fire department. Smoke detectors are in multiple places. The kitchen has a heat detector and freezing sensor.

#### **LOGISTICS**

The Church has manual fire alarms are located at each entrance (Summer St., Winthrop St., side entrance of fellowship hall).

Drew House and Judd House do not have manual fire alarms. Whistles will be hung in in the doorways of each classroom, the primary and secondary entrances and in the kitchen of the Judd House and Drew House.

The nursery care and chalice children classrooms and will have knotted ropes available in their classrooms to hold on to during drills, and in actual emergencies, to help them stay safely together.

#### **INFORMATION AND PUBLICITY**

UUCU Minister, staff, board of trustees, leadership council and classroom teachers will receive information on fire safety at the startup of each church year and during orientations and new family registrations. Printed copies will be part of the yearly RE registration. Copies of the plan will be posted in all kitchens and RE classrooms and at the Summer and Winthrop Street entrances of the church building. The evacuation plan will be publicized periodically in church newsletter and orders of service.

#### **ANNUAL FIRE DRILL**

The Minister and Director of Religious Exploration are responsible for conducting a yearly fire drill at each of the three church buildings: Judd House, Drew House and The church.

#### **EVACUATION PROCEDURE for 69 Winthrop:**

In the case of a fire, smoke, fire alarm or other announced emergency situations, **pull on of the**

**manual fire alarms located at each church entrance as you evacuate the building.** This alarm informs the security company and fire department automatically and immediately. For fire drills the same evacuation procedure will be used

At the sound of the alarm, all ushers and worship leaders will assist in directing people out of the church building. A knotted rope will be used to guide the children in nursery care.

All people evacuating the church will assemble in parking lot across Summer Street (Yellow House) at 67 Winthrop Street.

The worship associate will proceed to the Judd House and Drew House to inform the director of religious exploration and classroom leaders of the situation.

Do not reenter the building until an “all clear” is issued by the Fire Department.

IMMEDIATELY inform the Minister, Board President and Building and Grounds Chair of the situation, injuries and necessary follow-up.

### **EVACUATION PROCEDURE for Judd House at 71 Winthrop Street:**

In the case of a fire, smoke, fire alarm or other announced emergency situations, blow the whistle, **call 911 immediately**, and evacuate the building. For fire drills the same evacuation procedure will be used

III. At the sound of the whistle, all classroom teachers will assist in directing people out of the church building. The knotted rope will be used to safely guide the chalice children.

IV. All people evacuating the church will assemble in parking lot across Summer Street (yellow house) at 67 Winthrop Street.

V. One teacher will proceed to the Church and Drew House to inform the director of religious exploration and classroom leaders of the situation.

VI. Do not reenter the building until an “all clear” is issued by the Fire Department of Minister, Director of Religious Exploration or Church Leader.

IMMEDIATELY inform the Minister, Board President and Building and Grounds Chair of the situation, injuries and necessary follow-up.

### **EVACUATION PROCEDURE for Drew House at 6 Summer Street:**

In the case of a fire, smoke, fire alarm or other announced emergency situations, blow the whistle, **call 911 immediately**, and evacuate the building. For fire drills the same evacuation procedure will be used

1. At the sound of the whistle, all classroom teachers will assist in directing people out of the church building.

2. All people evacuating the church will assemble in the parking lot across Summer Street (yellow house) at 67 Winthrop St.

3. One classroom teacher will proceed to the Judd House and the Church to inform the director of religious exploration and classroom leaders of the situation.

4. Do not reenter the building until an “all clear” is issued by the Fire Department of Minister, Director of Religious Exploration or Church Leader.

IMMEDIATELY inform the Minister, Board President and Building and Grounds Chair of the situation, injuries and necessary follow-up.

### **USE OF THE FIRE EXTINGUISHERS**

Portable fire extinguishers are available at the main entrance of the Judd and Drew House and The Church.

Sound the alarm, evacuate the buildings and **call 911 prior to using a fire extinguisher.**

To use the fire extinguisher:

- \* pull the pin
- \* Aim the extinguisher nozzle at the base of the fire
- \* Squeeze the handles of the extinguisher together.
- \* Sweep from side to side at the base (bottom) of the fire
- \* Use the portable fire extinguisher for small fires that are contained ONLY.

**ALWAYS CALL 911 First**