

## UUFB Congregational Policy on Disruptive Behavior

The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bozeman strives to be an inclusive community, celebrating diversity and individual freedom of belief as stated in our Association's purposes and principles. We encourage the free expression of ideas and opinions consistent with our Covenant of Right Relations.

We also recognize that situations may arise which threaten the well-being of a person or the Fellowship, or the safe expression of beliefs or opinions. These situations must be dealt with firmly and promptly. Respecting the worth and dignity of each individual includes compassionately holding individuals responsible and accountable for their behavior.

In the spirit of love and reason we have developed the following policy to help frame behavioral limits for members of the UUFB. Accordingly,

1. The Board believes that behavior that is dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful fails to respect the worth, dignity and safety of the members of our Fellowship and results in a community that does not feel welcoming or healthy. We define these terms as follows:
  - a. DANGEROUS – an individual threatens, through words or actions, the safety of a person, persons, church property or property of a member or friend.
  - b. DISRUPTIVE –actions or speech of an individual which significantly interfere with a worship service, meeting, Fellowship event or similar Fellowship gathering.
  - c. DISRESPECTFUL –behavior and speech that fails in a significant way to recognize the inherent worth and dignity of each individual, for example is harmful or abusive to others or to the Fellowship, including but not limited to racist, sexist, or homophobic comments or actions, or the malicious spreading of untruths, or comments or actions whose purpose is to create dissension or discord within the Fellowship.
2. The content of one's beliefs and the exercise of the right of responsible dissent shall not be considered dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful.
3. If an individual exhibits behavior(s) as defined above, the following four factors will be considered in order to determine an appropriate response:
  - a. SEVERITY –How serious is this situation or issue?
  - b. CAUSES –Why is this situation occurring? Is it a conflict between an individual and others in the Fellowship? What other factors need to be considered (mental health, drugs/alcohol)?
  - c. HISTORY –What has been the frequency and severity of this behavior in the past? Has this situation been addressed previously, and if so, how was it handled?
  - d. PROBABILITY OF CHANGE –How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish or cease if the individual is offered feedback and the opportunity to demonstrate changed behavior?
4. We shall endeavor to treat any individual who is found to have engaged in dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful behavior with love and respect as we determine how to respond to that person's behavior. All efforts to maintain confidentiality will be made. The following process provides guidelines to deal with dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful behavior. The appropriate level of intervention will be determined by the severity of the situation. Reasonable efforts will be made to resolve any perceived conflict or differences using available Fellowship resources.

**STEP 1:** Dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. When it is observed, the minister, committee chair, or other Fellowship leader will initiate necessary action.

- (1) If the behavior is threatening or dangerous, the individual will be asked to stop immediately or leave the area. The police may be called if the individual does not comply with the request. If the minister, committee chair or Fellowship leader believes that the behavior is so dangerous that further action is required, and that said behavior is likely to be repeated, the minister, committee chair or Fellowship leader shall move to Step 2.

- (2) If the behavior is disruptive or disrespectful but not dangerous, the minister, committee chair or Fellowship leader may ask the individual to immediately stop the behavior and/or will speak with the individual privately following the incident or complaint. The individual will be given feedback about the disruptive or disrespectful behavior and its effect on the meeting, event, gathering, or Fellowship community. The individual will be informed that the behavior is unacceptable and must stop; he/she will be offered appropriate support to make these changes.

**STEP 2:** If the above interventions are not effective in stopping the dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful behavior, the minister, committee chair or Fellowship leader will seek counsel from the minister (if the minister is not already involved in the situation). The individual will be offered feedback and assistance as needed to help with understanding the issue and changing the offensive behavior.

**STEP 3:** If the interventions under Steps 1 and 2 above do not resolve the problem, the minister, committee chair or Fellowship leader will report the situation to the Board and/or the Committee on Ministry. The Board and/or the Committee on Ministry will gather data in a non-judgmental way, and when appropriate, offer support as needed (for example, referring the individual to the minister or appropriate counselors or other professional as indicated).

**STEP 4:** Based on the findings of the Board and/or the Committee on Ministry, the issue may be referred to the Board for official consideration and action. If official action is deemed necessary, the Board shall clearly communicate their concern for the individual as a person of worth and dignity and meet with the individual to share their findings and explain the action taken by the Board. The Board may deny the individual access to Board or committee meetings, events, congregational gatherings, and/or the Fellowship property for a period of time or permanently. The Board may exclude the individual from membership in the Fellowship or may take other appropriate action to remedy the problem. Reasons for the action will be given and the conditions (if any) for return specified. In the case where official action is taken, the member(s) in question will be provided written notice in person or by certified mail.

**STEP 5:** If the individual requests reinstatement as a Fellowship member after a 12 month period, a meeting with the minister, the Board and the Committee on Ministry shall be necessary to determine that changes have occurred. If satisfactory changes have occurred, the Board, the minister, and the Committee on Ministry will offer support for the individual's effort to rejoin the Fellowship and shall outline conditions for reinstatement of the individual.

A written report of any action(s) official or not, taken by the Board, the COM, the minister, committee chair or other Fellowship leader(s) relating to a specific individual and topic, falling within the scope of this Policy on Disruptive Behavior, including a statement of response by the individual in question if he or she wishes, will be kept on file in the Fellowship office (accessible only to the minister, the BOD, the COM, or on an as-needed basis).

- The Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bozeman expresses its appreciation to the First Unitarian Church of Portland, Oregon for their work in the development of such policies.
- Approved by the Board of Directors of the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Bozeman, February 2008