

# **Abraham Lincoln Unitarian Universalist Congregation**

## **Policy on Disruptive Behavior**

**2015**

As a covenanted religious community, we honor the inherent worth and dignity of all persons; we also recognize that some behaviors are harmful and disruptive. We offer the following policy as a framework for addressing certain behaviors when they arise.

A Disruptive Behavior Committee, hereinafter referred to as the "Committee," shall be appointed by the President of the Board at the beginning of the church year and shall consist of three members of the Congregation, one of whom shall be a member of the Board. The committee will investigate allegations of disruptive behavior made to it and determine an appropriate response.

Disruptive behavior shall be defined as: (a) behavior which is perceived to be a threat to the safety of an adult or child; (b) offensive behavior or language communicated orally, in writing, or electronically that unduly undermines the inherent worth and dignity of an individual or group; (c) behavior that disrupts church activities; (d) inappropriate sexual behavior or innuendo toward an adult or child.

A person engaging in disruptive behavior involving an ALUUC member or friend may be subject to censure and asked to leave the Congregation for a limited or indefinite period of time.

If an immediate response is required, it may be made by the Minister or member(s) of the Committee present or leader of activity involved. Action might include asking the offending person to leave or suspending the activity until such time that it can be safely resumed. If further assistance is necessary, the Police Department may be called.

Anytime any of these responses are undertaken, the Minister and Board President must be notified.

A referral to the Committee is a matter of last resort. Attempts at informal resolution which may include review by the Committee on Ministry should normally occur before a referral. In the case of police involvement or other circumstances which make an informal resolution unsafe or futile, a direct referral to the Committee may be made. In making such a direct referral, the reasons for making the referral without an attempt at informal resolution shall be stated.

Situations not requiring immediate response may be referred to the Disruptive Behavior Committee by an individual or group. When referrals are made to the Committee, the committee will respond as determined by its judgment and observing the following:

1. The committee will respond to problems as they arise. There will be no attempt to define “acceptable behavior” in advance.
2. Persons whose behavior is identified as disruptive will be dealt with as individuals; stereotypes will be avoided.
3. The committee will collect all pertinent information.
4. To aid in evaluating the problem, the following points will be considered:
  - a. Dangerousness – Is the individual the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property?
  - b. Disruptiveness -- How much interference with church functions is occurring?
  - c. Offensiveness – How likely is it that prospective or existing members or friends will be driven away or discouraged from participating in church activities by said behavior?
5. To determine the appropriate response, the following points will be considered:
  - a. Causes -- Why is the disruption occurring? Is it a conflict between individuals, between an individual and others? Is the disruption due to illness?
  - b. History -- What are the frequency and the degree of disruptions involving said individual or group in the past?
  - c. Recurrent Patterns -- How likely is it that the problem behavior will reoccur?
6. The Committee shall, following a thorough consideration of the situation, offer a summary of the facts, and take one of three levels of action.
  - a. *Level One* -- The committee shall inform the Minister and Board President of the results of its investigation and analysis and the Minister alone or with one or more of the committee members will meet with the offending person or persons to discuss the situation and attempt to negotiate a method of resolving the conflict and eliminating further disruptive behavior.

b. *Level Two* -- The offending person(s) is informed by the Minister and Committee that he/she is excluded from specific church activities for a limited period of time with reasons given and the conditions of return clearly indicated.

c. *Level Three* -- The offender is notified by the Minister and Committee that he/she is permanently excluded from church activities and the church premises.

7. A level One action may be appealed to the Executive Committee consisting of officers of the Board. A level Two or Three action will be automatically referred to the Board and shall not become final until approved by the Board by a majority vote. However, the offending party may be excluded until the Board makes its decision.