

**First Parish Brewster Unitarian Universalist Policy (Template)**

**Policy Title:** Disruptive Behavior Policy

**Revisions:** *New*

**Policy Number:** 3.2

**Board Review Date:** 19 October 2017

**Purpose:** To maintain a safe environment for all members of the community by addressing behavior that may be unsafe or may unduly inhibit spiritual growth.

**Congregations' Review Period:**

**Effective Date:**

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**POLICY STATEMENT**

When any person's physical and/or emotional well-being or freedom to safely and appropriately express his or her beliefs or opinions is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly. Disruptive behavior of an individual within the church includes the following:

- A. Perceived threats to the safety of any adult or child;
- B. Perceived threats to the buildings or grounds;
- C. The disruption of church activities;
- D. Actions that are inconsistent with UU values which diminish the overall appeal of First Parish Brewster to its potential and existing membership. This might include actions like spreading false rumors about FPB, writing letters to the editor that allege the individual's opinion is the opinion of the church, or holding a sign in front of the church that takes a position that is opposed to UU values.”

**PROCEDURES**

The following procedures will be used to address situations where an immediate response is required.

- If an immediate response is required at a church meeting or activity, this will be undertaken by the Minister(s), if available, and/or the leader of the meeting or activity. 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. If a person is disruptive during worship, members of the Right Relations Team or members of the Board of Trustees shall be responsible for immediately responding to the person and/or situation.
  - a. Any time any one of these actions is undertaken without the Minister(s) being present, the Minister(s) will be notified.
  - b. A follow-up letter detailing what steps must be taken before returning to the

activities involved will be sent by the Minister(s), in consultation with the Right Relations Team, to the offending party or parties.

- A prompt response may also be required if any alleged criminal activity by a church member or person attending church presents a perceived threat to the safety of an adult or child, or to the congregation at large. Such alleged criminal activity may include, but is not limited to, allegations of pedophilia, sexual harassment, assault, theft or illegal use of alcohol or other drugs on church property. It shall be the responsibility of the Minister(s) to take whatever steps are necessary (or to delegate this responsibility in their absence) to address such concerns, using his/her discretion to balance the protection of church members with the rights of the offender(s). Safety of church members, however, shall be the Minister's primary concern.

For situations not requiring immediate response, the process begins with a written and signed letter or email by any congregant to the Minister(s) explaining the disruptive behavior and its impact. The Minister(s) will determine whether he/she wishes to handle the matter privately, or request the involvement of the Right Relations Team (RRT) appointed by the Board of Trustees. The RRT may act as an advisory body responsible for investigating the facts and recommending a course of action to the Minister(s) and the Board (per paragraph #5 below). When the minister(s) deem it appropriate and possible, the Minister(s) will inform the person that a complaint has been filed and that an investigation is beginning.

The RRT, when requested by the minister, will respond to the identified situation following these procedures.

- a. The RRT will collect all necessary information.
- b. To aid in evaluating the behavior, the following points will be considered:
  - i. DANGEROUSNESS - Is the individual the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property?
  - ii. DISRUPTIVENESS - How much interference with church functions is going on?
  - iii. OFFENSIVENESS - How likely is it that prospective or existing members will be driven away?
- c. To determine the necessary response, the following points are among those that be considered:
  - i. 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?
  - ii. HISTORY - What is the frequency and degree of disruption caused in the past?
  - iii. PROBABILITY OF CHANGE - How likely is it that the disruptive behavior will diminish in the future?
- d. Together, the RRT and the Minister(s) will determine the final recommendation to the Board of Trustees. The following levels of response are suggested:
  - i. NO ACTION - It may be determined that the complaint is not warranted, and the Minister(s) will explain and discuss this with the person who filed

- the complaint.
- ii. LEVEL ONE - The RRT shall inform the Minister(s) of their work and collaborate with the Minister(s) to meet with the offending individual to communicate the concern and expectations for future behavior.
  - iii. 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 and in writing from the RRT and the Minister(s). In lieu of temporary exclusion, the RRT and Ministers may impose conditions on the individual's participation in any or all church activities.
  - iv. LEVEL THREE - The offending individual is permanently excluded from the church premises and all church activities. Before this is carried out, the RRT will consult with the Minister(s) and with the Board of Trustees. If it is decided that expulsion will take place, a letter will be sent by the Minister(s) explaining the expulsion and the individual's rights and possible recourse.
- e. Any action taken under Level II and III of item (d) (above) may be appealed to the full Board of Trustees at the written request of the offending individual within thirty days of a receipt of notification of Minister's letter. The request will be reviewed and responded to in writing at the next scheduled meeting of the Board of Trustees.
  - f. If the offending individual is removed from membership and participation in church activities, the Board of Trustees will reconsider membership and/or participation at First Parish Brewster, should circumstances change, on a case-by-case basis.

In the event an individual seeking to join or attend First Parish is understood to have been charged with criminal behavior that might pose a threat to the safety of an adult or child, or to the health of the congregation at large, or has been the focus of a Disruptive Behavior investigation, or has exhibited a pattern of disruptive, threatening or abusive behavior at another religious community or other community context, this information will be handled by the Minister(s), who may, at their discretion, impose conditions on the individual's participation. Should this occur the Minister(s) will inform the Right Relations Team, and, at the minister(s)' discretion, work with the RRT to develop appropriate conditions or covenants for the individual's participation.

## **GUIDELINES**

- In any situation contemplated in this policy, congregational leaders including the minister(s), board members, committee chairs, RRT members and staff may be invited to participate in the conflict resolution, as determined by the RRT and minister(s).
- Persons identified as having displayed possible disruptive behavior will be dealt with as individuals; stereotypes will be avoided.
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**STANDARDS**

No standards are recommended at this time.

**DEFINITIONS**

No definitions are recommended at this time.