

**FIRST UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH OF SAN ANTONIO  
DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR PROTOCOL**

While openness to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our faith's purposes and principles, we affirm the belief that our congregation must maintain a secure atmosphere where such openness can exist. When any person's physical and/or emotional well-being or freedom to safely express their beliefs or opinions is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly, even if this ultimately requires the expulsion of the offending person or persons.

**Definitions/Scope:** This policy applies to all adults while on First UU property or at an off-site First UU-sponsored event. We define disruptive behavior to be:

- perceived threats to the physical or emotional safety of any adult or child;
- sexual harassment\*;
- disruption of church activities; OR • diminishment of the church's appeal to its potential or existing membership.

Criminal and violent behaviors are beyond the scope of this policy. In the case of such behaviors, all staff members and congregants have the authority and duty to contact the police immediately.

**Actions:** A disruptive situation should be handled by the senior minister if they are available. However, all staff members and congregants have an interest and responsibility in the response to disruptive behavior. As such, any staff member or congregant who feels capable may handle a disruptive situation in a covenantal manner. Make an attempt to diffuse the situation. If the situation continues to escalate, the recommended actions are:

1. Request that the offending party cease the behavior.
2. Ask them to leave.
3. Contact police or security to calm the situation or remove the offending person.

If the senior minister does not handle the situation, the person who did so shall leave the senior minister a message immediately, followed by a detailed accident/incident report within 24 hours.

**Affected Parties:** The senior minister will offer pastoral care as needed to people negatively affected by the problematic behaviors.

If the offending party is not member or frequent of our congregation, the matter is considered closed unless the behavior is repeated by the same individual. If the offending party is a member or frequent attendee of our congregation, it is recommended that the senior minister follow the guidelines below.

**Investigation and Deliberation:** Leaders, members, and staff are responsible for bringing suspected serious covenant breaches to the attention of the senior minister, who has the authority to investigate and determine the severity of the reported incident. To aid in evaluating the problem, the following points will be considered:

- Dangerousness: Is the individual a source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property?
- Disruptiveness: How much interference with church functions is going on?
- Offensiveness: How likely is it that prospective or existing members will be driven away?

Possible outcomes are:

- 1) Not a breach, or a breach, but not serious – The incident needs a response involving some form of explanation, education, and/or reconciliation.
- 2) Serious breach – The incident is a serious covenant breach requiring intervention by the board president as specified below.

**Consequences of a Serious Covenant Breach:** When investigation identifies the behavior as disruptive, the president may implement one or more of the following steps. The president, in consultation with the minister, has flexibility in determining which steps and in what order the following will be implemented. The minister is not involved in implementation so that they can maintain a pastoral relationship with the offending party.

- 1) Warning – The board president shall send written notification to the offending party. The notification shall include a copy of the Disruptive Persons Policy. If the behavior is not repeated, the matter is considered closed.
- 2) Moratorium – If the offending party repeats the behavior or the behavior warrants a response more serious than a warning, the board president shall send an email to the offending party notifying them of a moratorium for a time period determined by the board president on attendance at church and church-sponsored activities. The email shall include a copy of the Disruptive Persons Policy.
- 3) Probation – The board president can choose to implement a probationary period that allows attendance under specified conditions, which shall be determined on a case-by-case basis. A copy of the president's letter to the offending party shall be stored in a locked location. At the end of the moratorium or probationary period, a conversation with the senior minister is recommended to review the covenant. If someone returns during their moratorium, they shall be asked to leave. If they refuse, a church leader or staff person shall decide on a course of action, which may include calling the police. .
- 4) For serious breaches, expulsion may be an option. See First UU SA bylaws, specifically paragraph B of Section 5, Article IV - Membership.

\* Sexual Harassment: behavior characterized by the making of unwelcome and inappropriate sexual remarks or physical advances in a workplace or other professional or social situation.