

Non-Covenantal Behavior Policy

Overview

Our [covenant](#) expresses our commitments to each other. In the covenant we promise “to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all our members ... assist those among us who have urgent needs for care and support; and provide opportunities for personal and spiritual growth” and “to speak with each other directly and honestly from a position of respect, kindness and love”.

This policy provides a path for ensuring these promises, so that we provide responsive, responsible, identifiable, and accessible structures which reflect fairness and shared stewardship for the health of our congregation.

Applicability

This policy applies to all members and friends of OUUC as well as any guest participating in OUUC-sponsored activities regardless of the location, including online, or anyone using OUUC facilities or grounds.

Definitions of Types of Behavior

- Concerning behavior is defined as conduct which a reasonable person would find undermining or impacting another person’s sense of belonging, well-being, or inclusion in the congregation or OUUC-sponsored activities.
- Disruptive behavior is defined as conduct which a reasonable person would deem to be an interruption or an impediment to the regular operations and ministry of the congregation. This includes and is not limited to conduct that is: counter to our principles and values; prevents a congregant, friend, guest, volunteer, or employee from fully participating in OUUC-sponsored activities or engaging in their responsibilities. Disruptive behavior may occur one time and be severe or be less severe and occur repeatedly. Concerning behavior that has been addressed directly and which persists may be considered disruptive behavior.
- Imminent threat is defined as an action or communicated intent to harm self or others.

Guidance for Addressing Imminent Threats to Harm Self or Others

If you observe an individual engaging in behavior which puts or could put someone else’s physical safety and well-being at risk, immediately intervene if you feel safe to do so or seek appropriate assistance from emergency response personnel.

Following an emergent response to an imminent threat, a report of disruptive behavior should be submitted to the Chair of the Board, and the protocol outlined below followed.

Guidance for Addressing Concerning Behavior

If any congregant observes or experiences behavior that they believe is concerning, our covenant calls on each of us to speak directly with the individual involved. Addressing a congregant, or a guest, with an orientation to the covenant and with compassion, care, and curiosity is the ideal way in which to understand the behavior and express concerns about the experience or potential impacts of the person's behavior.

Addressing individuals lovingly and directly can be difficult; if a congregant needs help engaging in or preparing for this type of conversation they are encouraged to explore the resources provided below or seek assistance from the Board/ Committee of the Congregation. Members of the Board/Committee are equipped to help those reporting concerns directly or refer them to resources for assistance.

While every member of our community is responsible for directly addressing concerning behavior, Board members and other congregational leaders are even more responsible for directly addressing concerning behavior which they directly observe or experience.

Guidance for Addressing Disruptive Behavior

The Board takes reports of disruptive behavior seriously. Behavior that is determined to be disruptive must be addressed to observe our covenant and be a healthy, safe, friendly, and inclusive community.

Protocol for Addressing Reports of Disruptive Behavior

1. Reports of disruptive behavior should be made to the Board President, or designee/Chair, Committee. A written report with specific details is preferred. If such a written report is not possible, the Board President or designee should generate a written report based on the information provided.
 - a. The person who is purported to have engaged in disruptive behavior will be referred to as the Respondent, the person making the report will be referred to as the Reporter for the purposes of this policy.
2. Upon receipt of a report of disruptive behavior the Board President, or designee, will interview the person making the report to pursue as complete an understanding as possible of the circumstances and the behavior of concern.
3. The Board President, or designee, will determine if the report meets the definition of disruptive or concerning behavior and take the next appropriate action. The actions may include and are not limited to the following:
 - a. Advise the Reporter that the behavior does not meet the definition of disruptive behavior and/or the circumstances do not rise to the level of disruptive behavior as defined and encourage the reporter to address the concerning behavior

- directly. The Board President, or designee, could also refer the reporter to resources for assistance with this recommendation.
- b. Advise the Respondent of a report of disruptive behavior and interview the Respondent to pursue as complete an understanding as possible of the circumstances in question from the perspective of the Respondent. As a result of this interview, the Board President, or designee, could determine to seek additional information from the Reporter and/or additional people to have a more complete understanding of the circumstances and behavior in question.
4. The Board President, or designee, will consider all the information available and determine next steps. The next steps could include one or more of the following options:
- a. The Board President, or designee, could determine that one or both parties is in need of care and support for extenuating circumstances or conditions and seek to refer individuals to appropriate resources.
 - b. The Board President, or designee, could determine that an informal direct conversation or facilitated conversation between the Reporter and Respondent could result in resolution, if both parties are amenable. The Board President, or designee, will request both parties to consider this option and assist in coordinating this informal resolution. The Board may seek additional outside mediation support and expend reasonable funds to support such activities.
 - c. The Board President, or designee, may determine that, given all the information available, the Respondent did engage in disruptive behavior and will communicate this determination in writing to the Respondent. In communicating this determination, the Board President, or designee, will seek to work with the Respondent to identify an appropriate action to address impacts of the disruptive behavior and afford remedy, restoration, and/or prevention of future disruptive behavior.
 - i. If the Board President, or designee, and the Respondent are unable to agree, the Board President, in consultation with the Minister, will recommend an appropriate action to the full Board of Trustees.
 - ii. Any such action should match the circumstances. Each situation will be decided on a case-by-case basis. Motivation, frequency, and severity of behaviors must be considered as well as scope of impact. Less severe disruptive behavior with high frequency, may require the same action as a very severe single incident may warrant.
 - iii. Any such action may include recommending counseling for the Respondent, formal mediation, limiting participation in church activities for a specified period of time, or immediate temporary or permanent expulsion from the congregation.

- iv. The Board shall consider the matter and the recommendation in a closed session and communicate its decision to the Respondent verbally and in writing with an explanation of the basis for the action.
- v. In the case of exclusion or expulsion, this communication should also outline any steps that the Respondent must take in order to be considered for return to active participation in church activities or membership, such as acknowledging the disruption and plans for a resolution.
- vi. The Respondent will have an opportunity to respond to the Board in writing or in person regarding the Board's proposed action, and may take advantage of any other procedures as specified in the church by-laws.
- vii. All aspects of this process and the final decision will be documented in writing for the Board records.
- viii. The Minister and the full Board of Trustees will be consulted and kept informed throughout this process.

Principles of Care

- Reports should be addressed with timeliness.
- All communication and outcomes of addressing a report of disruptive behavior will be kept as confidential as possible.
- Lessons Learned will be captured as feasible.
- All parties should be kept informed of the progress of responding to the report.
- The covenant should guide the response to the report.
- The wellbeing of the community must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of an individual whose behavior is dangerous or destructive.
- A concerted effort will be made to understand power imbalances and cultural differences that may be at play.
- All persons involved in these processes will behave in a non-violent manner and will treat each other as individuals of dignity and worth.

Communication and Conflict Resolution Resources

- <https://www.uua.org/safe/conflict>
- <https://www.mediatethurston.org/>
- <https://virtualspeech.com/blog/crucial-conversations>

Sources

- <https://www.uua.org/safe/destructive-behavior-policies>

