

Instructions for Ushers: Dealing with Disruptive Behavior

(SEE "QUICK GUIDE" ON LAST PAGE)

(Variations of procedure or allowances may be made for known persons.)

While openness to diversity is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in the values of who we are as Unitarian Universalists, we affirm the belief that our congregation must maintain a secure atmosphere where such openness can exist. Concern for the congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of the individual.

The following policy shall guide us in actively and promptly addressing situations in which individuals' behavior threatens the emotional and/or physical security of our members and friends. Our church will follow all applicable state laws and reporting procedures for physical abuse.

During Sunday service, the Ushers will monitor the worship service for intentional disruption or other disturbance (medical, etc.). The Minister(s), Worship Associate, Parish Committee Members, and Ushers are responsible for responding to disruptive behavior. Although these procedures are written based on the person's being in the Meeting House, the same procedures apply to other spaces in the church except that those responsible for following these procedures would be the leaders of the activity that has drawn people to the church and any church officers, Parish Committee members or lay leaders present.

The Minister/Worship Associate is responsible for maintaining the atmosphere of the service and may choose to call for a song to drown out and/or distract from disruptive behavior. If necessary, the Minister should also ask congregation members not to provoke or respond to the disruptive behavior thereby causing further issues. (In the case of a Guest Minister or speaker, a Parish Committee Member may need to prompt, instruct, or facilitate this.)

The responsible person/people present will address the cause of the disruption.

Suggested steps in addressing an individual causing disruption may include:

- 1) In a calm and even tone, ask the person to stop being disruptive and return to participating in the service in a way that allows others to benefit from the service.
- 2) In a calm and even tone, ask the person to step out into the hallway to discuss his/her concerns, cause of disruption, etc. Two people should always accompany him/her.
- 3) If the person is unwilling to leave the Meeting House, inform the person that if s/he continues to be disruptive, law enforcement will be called to escort them off of church property.

- 4) If the person at any time displays physical or verbal aggression, displays or implies they have a weapon, or threatens the safety of others, one of the responding individuals should immediately contact law enforcement by calling 911.
- 5) If the person continues to refuse to leave, the Minister will have to continue to "wing it" from the pulpit until law enforcement arrives while the responding Church person/people try to convince him/her to leave.
- 6) If the person is willing to leave the Meeting House, the church responders should go with them (always at least two people). Once outside the Meeting House, a discussion can be had about the nature of the issue and the expectations of non-disruptive behavior in service (if appropriate).
- 7) If the person is unwilling to engage in a calm and/or meaningful discussion, they may be asked to leave and informed that they can call back to the church office to set up a time for such a discussion with the Minister and/or lay leaders (depending on the issue).
- 8) The same as in #4 above, law enforcement should be notified if the person becomes aggressive or refuses to leave after leaving the Meeting House.
- 9) If the person leaves, the church responders should walk to the parking lot with the person to ensure they actually leave the church property and make a note of his/her vehicle and license plate number, if possible.
- 10) Although this policy uses the terms "Meeting House" and "Usher", the same procedures would apply to a disruptive incident anywhere on church property. Those responsible for following these procedures would be the leaders of the activity that has drawn people to the church and any church officers or Parish Committee members present.

11. Post-Incident Procedure

Afterwards, the Usher (or primary person handling the issue if not an Usher) should document the details of the incident, including any identifying information about the person (including vehicle, license plate, etc.), nature of the disruption (include details about the issue - theological, criminal, mental health, personal, etc.), and who was involved in the incident. This should then be sent to the Chair of the Parish Committee, and the Minister (copies to persons involved are encouraged to ensure accuracy).

SEE "QUICK-GUIDE" BELOW.

Quick Guide: Disruptive Behavior

1. Ushers monitor service for and respond to disruptive behavior.
2. Calmly ask the disruptive person to calm down so that others can enjoy the service.
3. Ask the person to leave the Meeting House to discuss his/her concerns.
4. If the person refuses to leave the room or calm down, explain that law enforcement will be called.
5. CALL THE POLICE if the person at any time displays physical or verbal aggression, displays or implies they have a weapon, or threatens the safety of others.
6. If the person is willing to leave the Meeting House, TWO ushers or church representatives should accompany the person and discuss his/her concerns.
7. If the person refuses to talk in a calm manner, s/he should be asked to leave church property and told to call the church office to schedule a time to discuss his/her issue(s) with the Minister and church leadership.
8. CALL THE POLICE if the person becomes aggressive or refuses to leave church property.
9. If the person leaves, TWO people should walk to the parking lot with the person to ensure that s/he actually leaves church property and to make a note of the vehicle type, color, and license plate number.
10. Document the incident according to description in #11 of the long guide.