

SAFE CHURCH POLICY
Approved by the Board of Trustees 05/06/2026

Behavior that is dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful fails to respect the worth, dignity and safety of the members of our church community and results in a community that does not feel welcoming. The Board defines these terms as follows,

DANGEROUS – an individual threatens, through words or actions, the safety of a person, persons, church property or property of a church member or friend

DISRUPTIVE – actions of an individual which significantly interfere with a church activity

DISRESPECTFUL – behavior that fails in a significant way to recognize the inherent worth and dignity of each individual, for example, is harmful or abusive to others or to the community, including but not limited to racist, sexist, or homophobic comments or actions or the malicious spreading of untruths.

The content of one's beliefs and the exercise of the right of responsible dissent shall not be considered dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful.

The Board of Directors has established a Committee on Right Relations by adopting a Covenant, a Charter for the Committee and Right Relations Policy and Process. The Committee should be called on to resolve behavior described in this policy except in the case of immediate danger to individuals or to church property. (See Destructive Behavior/Imminent Danger Intervention below.)

SCOPE OF POLICY: The Safe Church Policy applies to:

- (a) All worship services on church premises
- (b) All ceremonies on church premises
- (c) All gatherings, meetings, or events of church-sponsored or church-related activities, whether held on or off church premises
- (d) All forms of communication via physical or electronic media which are created, published, or administered by the church or church-related entities. Examples of electronic media include, but are not limited to, mailing lists, blogs, social media groups, and chat rooms.

If a leader of a group encounters an individual who is exhibiting dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful behavior, and the situation poses a significant risk to individual or community safety but does not rise to the level of Immediate Danger as described below, the leader should refer the matter to the Committee on Right Relations. The CRR may, in their sole discretion convene a Healthy Congregations Team (HCT) Intervention and follow procedures in RR Policy and Process for assessing the situation and posing remedies.

Destructive Behavior/Imminent Danger Intervention

The procedures of First Unitarian Portland for dealing with alleged incidents of destructive behavior which require an immediate response are set forth below. Even in situations that

require the application of these procedures, all involved individuals should be treated with dignity and respect.

Acts of destructive behavior include acts or imminent threats of physical harm to persons or property (including financial harm). When it appears that an immediate response is needed to an unfolding, dangerous situation, a minister, if available, should initiate the response or, if a minister is not available, the leader of the group involved should act to protect all involved. The response may include:

1. Asking the offending person or persons to leave the premises;
2. Suspending the service, meeting, or activity until such time as it can be safely resumed; or
3. Taking other reasonable actions that are deemed necessary.

If the behavior poses an immediate threat of physical injury or death or damage to property, then the appropriate authorities shall be contacted, such as police, fire, ambulance. [See <https://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/alternatives-calling-police>]

Whenever any of these actions is undertaken without a minister present, notification must be given promptly to the sextons and church ministers or CRR. Complaints alleging dangerous, threatening, disruptive, or disrespectful behavior for situations not requiring an immediate response should be sent to the CRR. The CRR may convene a Healthy Congregations Team (HCT) Intervention and follow HCT or other procedures in the RR Policy and Process for assessing the situation and posing remedies.

Confidentiality

Communications with the CRR and their appointees are confidential, except where disclosure is reasonably believed to be necessary to avoid physical harm, property damage, or financial harm, or is required by law. Processes which involve Board approval may require sharing of certain otherwise confidential information. The confidentiality of these and other RR processes will follow guidance in the document, Right Relations Policy and Process.