

10.0 DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR POLICY (Second Level)

While openness to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our denomination'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 is threatened, when the communal work of the church, its staff and/or its volunteers is needlessly over-burdened, or when the church's democratically determined decisions are continually interfered with, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly, even if this ultimately requires the expulsion of the offending person or persons.

There have been times when the disruptive behavior of an individual within the church building has led members to voice their concerns about one or more of the following:

1. Perceived threats to the safety of any adult or child;
2. Perceived threats to church property;
3. The disruption of church activities;
4. Diminishment of the appeal of the church and its activities to its potential and existing members.

The following shall be the policy of the First Parish in Concord in dealing with these issues:

1. If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister(s), if available, and/or the leader of the group involved. 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. Anytime any of these actions are undertaken without the Minister(s) being present, the Minister(s) must be notified. A follow-up letter detailing what steps must be taken before returning to the activities involved will be sent by the Minister(s) to the offending party or parties.
2. Situations not requiring immediate response will be referred to an ad hoc committee appointed by the Standing Committee (SC). The committee will respond in terms of their own judgment observing the following:
 - a. The committee will respond to problems as they arise. There will be no attempt to define "acceptable" behavior in advance.
 - b. Persons identified as disruptive will be dealt with as individuals; stereotypes will be avoided.
 - c. The committee will collect all necessary information and report to the Standing Committee with recommendations.
 - d. To aid in evaluating the problem, the following points will be considered:
 - DANGEROUSNESS - Is the individual the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property?
 - DISRUPTIVENESS - How much interference with church functions is going on? For example, does the individual abide by church policy and accept the decisions of the church at the collective congregation meetings?

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(Adopted by SC on May 22, 2006)

(Last update May 22, 2006)

- OFFENSIVENESS - How likely is it that prospective or existing members and volunteer staff and committee members will avoid attending church services and activities?
- e. To determine the necessary response, the following points will be considered:
 - CAUSES - Why is the disruption occurring?
 - HISTORY - What is the frequency and degree of disruption caused in the past?
 - PROBABILITY OF CHANGE - How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?
- f. The committee will decide on the necessary response on a case-by-case basis. However, the following three levels of response are recommended:
 - LEVEL ONE - The committee shall inform the Minister(s) of the problem and either the Minister(s) or a member of the Standing Committee shall meet with the offending individual to communicate the concern.
 - 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.
- g. Any action taken under item f. (above) may be appealed to the Standing Committee and/or the Minister(s).
 - LEVEL THREE - The offending individual is permanently excluded from the church premises and all church activities. Before this is carried out, the committee will consult with the Standing Committee and the Minister(s). 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.

First Parish in Concord strives to be an inclusive community, affirming our differences in beliefs, opinions and life experiences. However, concern for the safety and wellbeing of the congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of the individual. To the degree the disruptive behavior compromises the health of this congregation, our actions as people of faith must reflect this emphasis on security.