

## APPENDIX

### SAFE CHURCH POLICY

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.

**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 an individual exhibits behavior(s) as defined above, the following four factors will be considered in order to determine an appropriate response:

**SEVERITY** – How serious is this issue or situation?

**CAUSES** – Why is this situation occurring? Is it a conflict between an individual and others in the church? What other factors need to be considered (mental health, drugs/alcohol)?

**HISTORY** – What has been the frequency and severity of this behavior in the past? Has this situation been addressed previously, and if so, how was it handled?

**PROBABILITY OF CHANGE** – How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish or cease if the individual is offered feedback and the opportunity to demonstrate changed behavior?

The Board shall endeavor to treat any individual who is found to have engaged dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful behavior with love and respect as it determines how to respond to that person's behavior. All efforts to maintain confidentiality will be observed. The following process provides guidelines to deal with dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful behavior. The appropriate level of intervention will be determined by the severity of the situation. Reasonable efforts will be made to resolve any perceived conflict or differences using available church resources.

**STEP 1:** Dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful behavior will not be tolerated. When it is observed, the minister, program director, committee chair, or other church leader will initiate necessary action.

If the behavior is threatening or dangerous, the individual will be asked to stop immediately or leave the area. The police may be called if the individual does not comply with the request. If the minister, program director, committee chair or church leader believes that the behavior is so dangerous that further action is required, the minister, program director, committee chair, or church leader shall move to Step 2.

If the behavior is disruptive or disrespectful but not dangerous, the minister, program director, chair or church leader may ask the individual to immediately stop the behavior and/or will speak with the individual privately following the incident or complaint. The individual will be given feedback about the disruptive or disrespectful behavior and its effect on the meeting, event, gathering, or church community. The individual will be informed that the behavior is unacceptable and must stop; they will be offered appropriate support to make these changes.

STEP 2: If the above interventions are not effective in stopping the dangerous, disruptive or disrespectful behavior, the program director, committee chair, or church leader will seek counsel from the senior or associate minister. The individual will be offered feedback and assistance as needed to help with understanding the issue and changing the offensive behavior.

STEP 3: If the interventions under Steps 1 and 2 above do not resolve the problem, the minister, program director, chair, or church leader will report the situation to the Moderator of the Board. The Moderator will consider available options for dealing with the situation and may appoint an Ombuds group, comprised of three or four objective and unbiased congregants, able to maintain confidentiality, devoted to the well-being of the church, and who would advocate for reason and kindness. These individuals would have particular skills or knowledge useful in the assessment of the current situation. They would interview the individual, gather data in a non-judgmental way and offer support as needed (for example, referring the individual to the lay ministers or appropriate counselors or other professionals as indicated). Called by the Moderator only when needed for a specific incident or situation, they would be provided a brief training in their role including such areas as confidentiality, data gathering process, and available resources. They would be instructed by the Moderator with clear delineation of their charge. Their task would be completed after their deliberations and presentation of information to the Board Officers Committee offering suggestions for resolution. The Moderator will set forth a timeframe for the Ombuds findings when they are appointed.

STEP 4: Based on the Ombuds findings, the Board Officers Committee may refer the issue to the Board of Trustees for consideration. The Board may deny the individual access to Board or committee meetings, events, congregational gatherings, and/or the church property for a period of time. The Board may exclude the individual from membership in the church in accordance with church bylaws or may take other appropriate action to remedy the problem. The Board shall clearly communicate their concern for the individual as a person of worth and dignity and offer ongoing community support consistent with the individual's preference.

STEP 5: If the individual requests reinstatement as a church member at a later date, a meeting with the ministers and Board Officers Committee shall be necessary to determine that changes in behavior have occurred. If satisfactory changes have occurred, the BOC and ministers will offer support for the individual's efforts to rejoin the church and shall outline conditions for reinstatement of the individual.