

Anti Harassment

Approved by the Board April 2002

First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto

Anti-Harassment Policy

February, 2002

1. Preamble

The First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto endeavours to provide a safe and welcoming environment, free from harassment, for worship, work and spiritual growth. This aspiration is based on our seven Guiding Principles adopted in 1984:

We covenant to affirm and promote:

- the inherent worth and dignity of every person;
- justice, equity and compassion in human relations;
- acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth;
- a free and responsible search for truth and meaning;
- the right to conscience and the use of the democratic process;
- the goal of world community with peace, liberty and justice for all;
- respect for the interdependent web of all existence, of which we are a part.

The purpose of this policy is to define harassment and establish the parameters by which to prevent it and/or resolve problems within the congregation which arise from it.

2. The Definition of Harassment

Harassment is defined as an incident or series of vexatious or disrespectful comments or displays that demean, belittle, humiliate, embarrass, degrade or attempt to exclude; that is known or ought reasonably to be known to be unwelcome and/or offensive; or that is aimed at a certain individual or group based on a prohibited ground. Harassment is prohibited on both personal grounds and human rights grounds as included in the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Ontario Human Rights Code.

Human rights grounds include: race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion or creed, age, sex, marital status, family status, physical or mental disability (including dependence on alcohol or drugs), sexual orientation, pardoned conviction, ancestry, citizenship, record of offenses, recipient of public assistance.

Personal grounds include: accent, physical characteristics, clothing, habits, customs, beliefs, opinions or mannerisms, financial status.

Harassing behavior may include, but is not limited to: persistent name calling, unwelcome remarks, innuendoes, jokes, slurs, taunting, and displays of offensive materials.

However, according to the principle of free and responsible search for truth and meaning, and the right of conscience, the Congregation affirms that harassment does not include honest, respectfully-expressed disagreement with beliefs of others or statements made by others. Disagreement with the beliefs, lifestyle or sexual orientation becomes harassment when it is repeated over and over in various contexts in a self-initiating, repetitious and persistent manner.

3. Policy Statement

Pursuant to its intention to provide a safe and welcoming environment, it is the policy of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto that discrimination and/or harassment, whether on personal or human rights grounds, will not be tolerated. The Congregation will not knowingly permit harassment, and will take reasonable steps to stop harassment and discrimination should it occur.

In approving this policy, the members of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto affirm that:

- harassment of any kind is unacceptable;
- all applicable human rights codes will be respected;
- members have the right to a harassment-free environment;
- members must ensure that they do not engage in harassing behavior;
- it is the right of anyone who feels harassed to make a complaint;
- no negative consequences will flow from making a complaint;
- the complaint process will attempt to resolve concerns so that unwanted behavior stops;
- those involved in the pursuit of a harassment complaint will be
- treated with fairness and respect;
- victims will not be blamed;
- respondents will be presumed innocent until the matter has been adjudicated;

4. Scope of Application

This policy will apply to all clergy, staff, volunteers, congregants, and other users of First Unitarian Congregation's facilities, and/or programs at the congregation's building and at all congregation-sponsored activities away from the building.

5. Procedure for Resolving Complaints

This policy suggests the following procedure for resolving complaints:

1. A plaintiff may make written representation to the Chair of the Conflict Resolution Committee (CRC), that an incident of harassment has taken
2. place;
3. This letter is forwarded by the Chair of the CRC to the respondent
4. (the person about whom the complaint is made);
5. The respondent then responds in writing to the plaintiff's letter through the CRC Chair;

6. The Chair of the CRC appoints a Mediator and an ad hoc committee to meet with the plaintiff and the respondent to mediate a resolution. The ad hoc committee will be composed of the appointed mediator plus two members in good standing from the congregation. A meeting will be arranged between the Committee, the plaintiff and the respondent to come to some resolution of the complaint.

If mediation does not resolve the complaint, the Board will appoint an arbitrator from outside the congregation who will make a binding decision. If no resolution is reached, then the arbitrator will report to the Board on the actions to be taken. These may include: censure, suspension or cancellation of membership in the congregation.

This procedure for resolving complaints is not meant to be rigid but provides a suggested mode for proceeding. If the parties can agree to meet collectively without the prior individual meetings, this may be warranted in some cases. If feelings are running high, it is recommended that interim individual meetings take place.

6. Records

Written records may be kept by all parties to the resolution process during investigation. It is recommended that these records be destroyed when the procedure is complete.

A written record of the proceedings should be kept by the Chair of the Conflict Resolution Committee outlining the nature of the complaint, the process followed and the resolution. The record is considered to be formal church property. Names will not be used. This record will serve to assist the Chair as a model process, should any future complaints arise.

7. Authority for this Policy

This policy is defined under the authority of the Board of Trustees of the First Unitarian Congregation of Toronto.