

FPUU By-Law Modifications

Approved by Parish Committee Vote 2/12/25

SECTION III. Membership Category Clarifications

These are clarifications to and expansions on the category of being considered an active FPUU member per Article IV of the FPUU Constitution:

- Per paragraph 2 of Article IV, “expectations of involvement with the congregation” is deemed to mean regular attendance at worship services; or participation in the choir; or serving in a role on or coordinating a committee/task force/ministry group, including as an elected officer; or volunteering for or coordinating an event/activity, including a fundraiser; or serving in supportive roles in worship or at coffee hours; or any combination of these, including examples of involvement yet to be defined by the Parish Committee.
- Per paragraph 2 of Article IV, “encouragement to make an annual, unrestricted financial contribution” is deemed to mean a contribution that is formally recorded when made and may include in-kind donations.
- Per paragraph 2 of Article IV, a person who meets some of the criteria of membership but not all, or who chooses not to sign the membership book, may be considered an “Active Friend” of FPUU and may be included in the FPUU directory at the discretion of the Membership Ministry and Parish Committee in consultation.
- Per paragraph 5 of Article IV, “a long-standing Member who is no longer able to participate in the life of the Parish” can be invited after a majority vote of the Parish Committee to be deemed “Member Emeritus/Emerita.” A letter is to be sent to the member explaining that “Emeritus/Emerita” is considered to be a lifelong honor, similar to the category of “Minister Emeritus/Emerita,” and also is a nonvoting category of membership. It entirely is the choice of the Member, or a designated relative of the Member if they are unable to respond, to decide if they would like to be considered a Member Emeritus/Emerita. Additionally, by a majority vote of the Parish Committee, this honor category also can be extended to past Presidents of FPUU who remain concretely supportive of FPUU but who also can no longer participate as a full member in the life of the congregation. A similar letter is to be sent to the past FPUU President, who again may choose to accept or decline this honor with the understanding that their membership then is lifelong and nonvoting.
- Per paragraph 7 of Article IV, the FPUU Parish Committee recognizes that a Member may need to voluntarily absent themselves from involvement with the congregation for up to a year for a variety of reasons, including illness or family crisis or military service, etc. In these circumstances, the Member is asked to submit a letter explaining the circumstances giving rise to the need for their absence, including their expected date of return, with a request not to be deemed inactive during this period. If the absence from the requirements of FPUU membership is for a full congregational year, the Member will be unable to vote during the annual meeting for that year. The Parish Committee retains the right to deem the Member inactive if good faith communication of status and needs are not made by the Member, including if the absence extends beyond a year or more. A Member who has been

deemed inactive by the Parish Committee will need to meet with the Minister (or a designated member of the Parish Committee as needed) prior to seeking to reactivate their Membership to review the requirements of FPUU membership. The Minister (or designated member of the Parish Committee) will then make a recommendation to the Parish Committee for majority vote as to whether or not to reactivate their membership. If voted for reactivation of membership, the Member does not need to re-sign the membership book.

SECTION IV. FPUU Policy Regarding Disruptive Behavior

(Policy approved by the Parish Committee, December 29, 1998, included now in By-Laws as it is referred to in Article IV, paragraph 8 of the FPUU Constitution)

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 or freedom to safely express his or her beliefs or opinions is threatened, 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. The disruption of church activities;
3. Diminishment of the appeal of the church to its potential and existing membership.

The following shall be the policy of First Parish Unitarian Universalist of Canton in dealing with these issues:

1. If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister, and/or any member of the Parish Committee, 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 being present, the Minister 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 and the President to the offending party or parties.
2. Situations not requiring immediate response will be referred to an ad hoc committee of no less than three people appointed by the Parish Committee. 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 the necessary information.
- d. To aid in evaluating the problem, the following points will be considered:
 1. DANGEROUSNESS – Is the individual the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property?
 2. DISRUPTIVENESS – How much interference with church functions is going on?
 3. OFFENSIVENESS – How likely is it that prospective or existing members will be driven away?
- e. To determine the necessary response, the following points will be considered:
 1. CAUSES – Why is the disruption occurring? Is it a conflict between the individual and others in the church? Is it due to a professionally diagnosed condition of mental illness?
 2. HISTORY – What is the frequency and degree of disruption caused in the past?
 3. 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:
 1. LEVEL ONE – The committee shall inform the Minister of the problem and either the Minister or a member of the committee shall meet with the offending individual to communicate the concern.
 2. 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.
 3. LEVEL THREE – The offending individual is permanently excluded from the church premises and all church activities. Before this is carried out, the ad hoc committee will submit its recommendation to the Parish Committee. If it is decided that expulsion will take place by a two-thirds vote of the Parish Committee, a letter will be sent explaining the expulsion and the individual's rights.

g. Any action taken under item (f) above may be appealed to the Parish Committee. First Parish Unitarian Universalist Canton 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.