

# Netherlands Unitarian Universalist Fellowship

## Safe Congregation Policy

Adopted September 5, 2021

### 1. Introduction

The Netherlands Unitarian Universalist Fellowship (NUUF) is a religious and spiritual community grounded in love, integrity, mutual respect, and a commitment to enhancing the spiritual growth of all members, friends, and visitors. Spiritual growth requires a safe and welcoming space where we can allow ourselves to be emotionally open and vulnerable. The NUUF considers creating this kind of safe and welcoming space to be a religious and moral obligation. This Policy is intended to provide a framework for furthering these commitments.

### 2. Values and expectations

Members and friends aspire to be in right relationship with each other and with the Fellowship. They are expected to respect the inherent worth and dignity of all, to treat each other with kindness and mutual respect, to take seriously the spiritual, emotional and physical wellbeing of all, to be attentive to and considerate of each other's personal boundaries, to ground personal interactions in integrity and mutual consent, and to uphold the Unitarian Universalist Principles.

We are a small and highly interconnected community. What happens to one of us, to some extent, affects all of us. Damage to one person can be a threat to the sense of safety and trust for the entire group or for part of the group.

### 3. Areas of specific concern

The behaviors discussed in this section are forms of interpersonal violence and often constitute abuses of power. They inherently violate another person's dignity and are inappropriate in all circumstances.

Power is created and expressed in complex networks of human relationships. Power imbalances may be created in many ways. People in positions of leadership and responsibility have certain kinds of power by virtue of their status. Power imbalances can also be created by social and cultural realities such as racial, gender, or age differences, by cultural norms, or by physical characteristics such as size. Members and friends are encouraged to be aware of these power imbalances in their interactions and relationships.

These definitions are intended to be comprehensive but not necessarily all-inclusive; other forms of behavior not specifically identified here may also be inappropriate.

#### A. Harassment, including sexual harassment

Harassment can include offensive, belittling, threatening, abusive, hostile or otherwise unwelcome conduct or language directed at another person, whether made directly to that person, to third parties, online, or through social media. This includes physical, psychological, and sexual harassment.

Sexual harassment includes unwanted touching; repeated sexual comments or questions; the use of crude, sexually-oriented language which is offensive, demeaning, and inappropriate; or any other

behavior in which someone uses sexual language, behavior, or threats in unwanted and intimidating ways. Unwelcome physical touch with sexual overtones would be considered sexual harassment. There are also less clear situations of sexual harassment, sometimes caused by miscommunication rather than misconduct, but unacceptable whether intentional or not, and therefore require response under this policy.

#### **B. Disruptive behavior**

Openness to diversity, theological and otherwise, is a central value of our religious principles. The Fellowship strives to maintain a safe and welcoming atmosphere where such diversity can exist. Disruptive behavior interferes with this aspiration and is inappropriate. Disruptive behavior includes disruption of Fellowship activities, the use or threatened use of physical violence, bullying, or threats or implied threats to the safety of members, friends or visitors.

#### **C. Discriminatory treatment**

Equality and nondiscrimination are core principles of our Fellowship. Unequal or discriminatory treatment of members, friends or visitors on the basis of, among other factors, their religious or philosophical belief, political affiliation, nationality, race, age, gender or gender identity, sexual orientation, or marital status, is inappropriate and constitutes a violation of this code of conduct.

#### **4. Special duty of care**

All members of the Fellowship have a duty to care for children and members and friends with disabilities or special needs. However, some members, because of their role, may have a heightened duty of care regarding minor children or members with disabilities or special needs. A violation of the duty of care that constitutes an offence against the criminal code will be reported to the authorities. It will also constitute cause for termination of membership.

#### **5. Special provisions for leaders and other members in positions of responsibility**

Leaders and other members in positions of responsibility include elected board members, clergy, chairs of committees, directors and other members so designated by the board. These persons constitute the public face of the Fellowship and have heightened responsibilities. They should therefore strive at all times:

- To model the Unitarian Universalist Principles and the values named in this Policy;
- To actively create and maintain a safe and welcoming environment for all members, friends and visitors, especially for the more vulnerable by virtue of age, psychological condition, personal history, physical challenges or other circumstances;
- To refrain from racism, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, ableism and any other attitudes of privilege on whatever grounds, and to be willing to accept and act on appropriate feedback;
- To resolve issues between themselves in an open, honest and direct manner, giving compassionate but honest feedback when necessary;
- To protect the confidentiality of sensitive or personal information acquired in the course of their official duties, unless given explicit permission by the person about whom the information relates or where required by law to disclose such information.

By accepting their role, leaders and other members in positions of responsibility acknowledge that they understand and agree to these special responsibilities.