

Ethical Standards for Ordained Clergy and Interns

Preamble

Clergy who engage in the professional activities of preaching, teaching, social justice, counseling, spiritual guidance, consultation, leadership, and other ministry functions have carried out these services for centuries, believing that compassionate service is an expression of love. Characterized by an appreciation for the inherent worth and dignity of all people and for their diverse cultures, beliefs, and experiences, the work of professional ministry is founded on a commitment to ethical behavior. Although this is not a legal document, these standards establish the expectations of conduct by ordained clergy and interns who are in covenant with the congregation of the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville.

Ethical Standards

1. The purpose of the ministers' contacts with members and constituents of this congregation is to promote spiritual, mental, and interpersonal health.
2. Ministers treat all people with respect, acceptance, and dignity, and they do not intentionally say or do anything that would harm the individuals they serve, including taking unfair advantage of their positions or exploiting those they serve to further their personal, religious, political, or business interests.
3. Ministers discuss with individuals and groups that they serve the purpose, goals, and nature of their helping relationships, including limitations of those relationships.
4. Ministers inform the congregation and individuals within the congregation of their education, training, and areas of competency in their helping relationships. They inform individuals with whom they are entering a helping relationship of their background, training, and competency. They know the limit and scope of their professional knowledge and offer services only within their knowledge and skill base.
5. Ministers obtain annual training to increase their skills and to keep their education current, including in the areas of professional ethics and abuse prevention, and keep a record of their attendance at training events.
6. Ministers protect individuals they serve by maintaining records and conversations in a confidential manner. They respect each individual's right to privacy and confidentiality except when such confidentiality would cause harm to that person or others, when congregational or denominational policies state otherwise, in the context of supervision, or under stated conditions such as those covered by local, state, or federal laws. Ministers inform those they serve of the limitations of confidentiality before establishing a helping relationship.
7. Ministers are aware that in their relationships with members and constituents of the congregation, power and status are unequal. They acknowledge that they have power over others as they serve in a helping and/or leadership role.
8. Dual relationships or multiple relationships occur when the minister has more than one role relationship with a congregant (for example: pastor and friend, supervisor and spiritual director). Ministers recognize that dual or multiple relationships are inadvisable, because they increase the risk of harm to those who are served, including the possibility of exploitation and sexualized relationships. Ministers disclose dual relationships and seek consultation from their supervisor

and Advisory Committee as necessary to examine areas in which they may be compromised in their ability to provide services.

9. If for any reason the minister's level of functioning is impaired due to declining physical, emotional or spiritual well-being, they will seek consultation from their supervisor and, in the case of the senior minister, their Advisory Committee. The minister, along with the supervisor and/or Advisory Committee, will determine the level to which competency is impaired and may redirect or limit the current workload until full functioning is restored. This may include the referral of parishioners to other helping professionals.

10. Ministers do not make sexual advances or engage in sexual activity with any individual in which their power as a minister is a factor, including any counselee; member, friend or visitor of their congregation; or person under their supervision.

11. Ministers abide by all denominational and congregational policies and standards of their respective professional groups regarding sexual abuse and harassment and all local, state, and federal guidelines regarding the reporting of neglect and abuse. Ministers do not engage in sexual harassment of any kind with anyone.

12. Ministers do not engage in the use of pornography for their sexual gratification while in their professional role or while on church property.

13. Ministers are aware of the public nature of their profession and their responsibility to uphold the integrity of the congregation and denomination with the highest possible ethical standards in their work and in their personal lives.

14. Ministers refer members and constituents of the congregation to therapists and other professionals when the individual's issues are beyond the minister's level of education, training, or competency.

15. Ministers respond to unethical behavior of colleagues by talking directly with the colleague and, if no resolution occurs, report the colleague to a supervisor of the colleague.

16. Ministers obey all laws unless they are deliberately engaging in civil disobedience to uphold a larger ethical principle.

17. Ministers do not perform their church ministry role functions while impaired by alcohol or drugs.

Refer to the First Unitarian Universalist Church of Nashville Grievance Policy and Procedure for appropriate steps in resolving violations of the above.