LAKESHORE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CONREGATION

MEMBERSHIP POLICY

Revision #2

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MEMBERSHIP POLICY REVISION # 2

RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP.

1. The interested individual must have received, read and indicated he/she understands the Mission and Purposes of LUUC, and agrees with the Rights and Responsibilities of Members.

Rights of Membership:

- Voting privileges at all meetings of members with the exceptions detailed in Article IV section of the By-Laws,
- Immediate eligibility to serve on any ad hoc committee of the Congregation,
- Election to the Nominating Committees of the Congregation, described in Article IX of the By-Laws having attained the legal age of 16 and after one year of LUUC membership,
- Election to the Board of Directors and Responsible Membership Committee of the Congregation described in Article VI and Article VIII of the By-Laws having attained the legal age of 18 and after two years of LUUC membership,
- Eligible to receive services of LUUC, including Acts of Civil Status and after one year access to Mutual Aid Fund,
- Automatic membership in Canadian Unitarian Council,
- Receive newsletter of LUUC.

Responsibilities of Membership:

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- To participate in the activities and services of the congregation,
- To assume a responsible share of the financial support required through an annual contribution,
- To support one another's religious growth and help create a warm and welcoming environment,
- To demonstrate respect for the worth of every person and openness to diversity.
- 2. The procedure for becoming a member is described in Article IV, Section 1 of the LUUC By-Laws.

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RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERSHIP. (cont'd)

- 3. New members are recognised and welcome into the LUUC congregation in a special ceremony for New Members.
- 4. Conditions resulting in the designation of a member as Inactive or as having resigned from membership are described in the LUUC By-Laws Article IV, Sections 4 and 5.

RESPONSIBLE MEMBERSHIP BEHAVIOUR:

The Unitarian Universalist Association states:

"Unitarian Universalist congregations affirm and promote the inherent worth and dignity of every person. The goals of the Ethics in Congregational Life program are to support leaders in creating safe space within their congregations, encouraging right relations among persons who are part of the congregation, and encouraging just relations between the congregation and the larger community of which it is a part. Addressing disruptive behaviour calls upon us to create fair and sensitive policy in a less than perfect world."

One important aspect of membership in the Lakeshore Unitarian Universalist Congregation is the expression of respect within the relationship members have with each other and with the congregation at large. Openness to a wide variety of individual thoughts and actions is one of the values expressed as a fundamental principle of Unitarian Universalism.

We, the members and friends of the Lakeshore Unitarian Universalist Congregation, are a caring community wishing to uphold that mutual respect and are committed to maintaining a secure atmosphere where such openness can exist.

RESPONSIBLE MEMBERSHIP BEHAVIOUR (cont'd)

Actions that compromise the physical, mental, emotional or spiritual safety of the community or its members as well as those that are perceived as dangerous, disruptive or damaging are unacceptable. These included:

- criminal acts
- abuse of any kind
- perceived threats to the safety of any adult or child
- words or actions that diminish the appeal of the congregation to its existing or potential members
- words or action that run clearly counter to our expressed Unitarian Universalist values; that jeopardize the mental, physical, emotional or spiritual health of any congregants, or the reputation of the congregation, or
- the disruption of the congregational activities.

Such behaviour between members will be considered inappropriate if it occurs at any point in the conduct of LUUC services, social events or other business, including e-mails, social media and other forms of communication. The well-being, openness, safety and stability of the congregation as a whole must be maintained and this takes precedence over the needs or wishes of any individual.

PROBLEM RESOLUTION

The Membership Policy of the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton Ontario, contains the following statement about conflict;

"The most powerful skill that a church member can develop in the face of conflict is self-reflection. When we experience unease or distress, can we ask ourselves, 'What is this I am feeling? When have I experience if before? Why do I feel this way? Does the emotion fit the situation? Is my reaction proportionate? Am I reacting or responding, am I really listening to what is being said? Do I need to take time to think before I respond?'

Speaking skilfully is another valuable asset, again one in which most of us have not had good teaching. Speech that is direct and clear includes speaking to the right person at the right time and in the right way. Active listening and assuming that another's intentions are honourable add to helpful speech.

PROBLEM RESOLUTION (cont'd)

Many misunderstandings and conflicts could be avoided simply by speaking directly to the person involved rather than to a third party. This can also be described as speaking with, not about. In most instances this is the first appropriate step. Exceptions to this approach may occur when congregational health is threatened by unacceptable actions."

Since it is a serious business to file a formal complaint against a fellow member, doing so should never be taken lightly. Every attempt should be made to resolve disruptive situations by addressing them directly, with compassion and concern, before resorting to the uses of this policy.

A formal written complaint will be referred to the Lakeshore Unitarian Universalist Congregation's standing Responsible Membership Committee described in Article VIII of the By-Laws.

If a complaint or conflict involves a member of the Responsible Membership Committee, a member of a committee member's family, or concerns an issue on which a committee member has taken a position which is viewed as biased by one of the parties directly involved in the complaint, that committee member will recuse him/herself and be replaced by a person nominated by the Board until such time as the conflict or complaint is resolved.

The committee will respond to problems identified through a written complaint as they arise. A person identified as disruptive will be dealt with as an individual. Stereotypes will be avoided.

The committee will review the complaint and seek further information as needed. The committee will contact the person named as the source of the problem and ask for that person's written description of the situation under review.

PROBLEM RESOLUTION (cont')

After its review, deliberation and assessment of the information received the committee will decide on one of the following as the appropriate response:

- 1. **No action**. It may be determined that the complaint is not warranted and the committee will explain and discuss this with the person who filed the complaint.
- 2. **Mediation**: The committee will bring both parties together to review the complaint in the presence of a mediator agreed upon by both.
- 3. Warning: The committee will meet with the offending individual and communicate the concern and a written expectation for behavioural change is made.
- 4. Suspension: The committee will recommend to the Board that the offending individual is excluded from the congregation for a limited period of time. If approved, the committee will communicate this to the offending individual, with the reasons and the conditions of return made clear and in writing.
- 5. **Expulsion**: The committee recommends to the Board that the offending individual be expelled from membership in LUUC. This recommendation must be approved by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the members of the Board. The offending individual will be informed by the Board in writing of the decision.

When an individual formally resigns his/her membership in the Lakeshore Unitarian Universalist Congregation for unknown reasons, it is recommended that a member of the Responsible Membership Committee contact and interview that person to determine the cause.

LUUC Membership Policy Revision # 2. November 2014.