

*Blue = original language that Safety Net suggests revising
Red = Safety Net's suggested revision to the blue text above*

UU Safety Net's suggested revisions to excerpts from

The UUMA Guidelines for the Conduct of Ministry

Includes

the Code of Professional Practice

for the Unitarian Universalist ministry

Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association

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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

We, the members of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, give full assent to this code of professional life as a statement of our serious intent, and as an expression of the lines and directions that bind us in a life of common concern, shared hopes and firm loyalties.

1. SELF

Because the religious life is a growing life, I will respect and protect my own needs for spiritual growth, ethical integrity, and continuing education in order to deepen and strengthen myself and my ministry.

I commit myself to honest work, believing that the honor of my profession begins with the honest use of my own mind and skills.

I will sustain a respect for the ministry. Because my private life is woven into my practice of the ministry, I will refrain from private as well as public words or actions degrading to the ministry or destructive of congregational life.

As a sexual being, I will recognize the power that ministry gives me and refrain from practices which are harmful to others and which endanger my integrity or my professional effectiveness. Such practices include sexual activity with any child or with an unwilling adult, with a counselee, with the spouse or partner of a person in the congregation, with interns, or any other such exploitative relationship.

Because the demands of others upon me will be many and unceasing, I will try to keep especially aware of the rights and needs of my family and my relation to them as spouse, parent and friend.

Suggested Revision

As a sexual being, I will recognize the power that ministry gives me and refrain from practices which are harmful to others and which endanger my integrity or my professional effectiveness. Such practices include, but are not limited to, sexual advances to, or sexual activity with, a minor, an unwilling adult, a counselee, a member, friend, or visitor of my congregation, a spouse or partner of a person in the congregation, a person under my supervision, or any other such relationship in which my power as a minister may be a factor. Because the demands of others upon me will be many and unceasing, I will try to keep especially aware of the rights and needs of my family and my relation to them as spouse, parent and friend.

Explanation of Suggestion

Although the first sentence mentions the power of a minister, the specifically mentioned relationships are ones which would be prohibited by ethical standards, if not legal standards, applicable to anyone.

By changing “exploitative” for the phrase about power, the rationale is made clearer and the negatively charged label is made explanatory.

2. COLLEAGUES

I will stand in a supportive relation to my colleagues and keep for them an open mind and heart.

I will strictly respect confidences given me by colleagues and expect them to keep mine.

Should I know that a colleague is engaged in practices that are damaging, as defined in our Code of Professional Practice, I will speak openly and frankly to her/him and endeavor to be of help. If necessary, I will bring such matters to the attention of the UUMA Executive Committee.

Suggested Revision

Except in matters involving conduct inconsistent with these guidelines, I will stand in a supportive relation to my colleagues; I will keep for them an open mind and heart; and I will strictly respect confidences given me by colleagues and expect them to keep mine.

Should I know that a colleague is engaged in practices that are inconsistent with our Code of Professional Practice, I will speak openly and frankly to her/him and endeavor to be of help. If necessary, I will bring such matters to the attention of the UUMA Executive Committee.

Explanation of Suggestion

The change in the first line is necessary to show the limits of supportiveness and confidentiality. It should be noted that this “confidence is not one recognized by Tennessee law, and we doubt by the law of other states.

The change in the second paragraph is necessary because there are very few places in the guidelines that define conduct as “damaging” and all three of those are addressing damage to ministers. Two of them are addressing actions of congregants (which we think might be outside the scope of the document), in the contexts of candidating and dismissal; and one in the context of multiple ministers serving a congregation.

I will not speak scornfully or in derogation of any colleague in public. In any private conversation critical of a colleague, I will speak responsibly and temperately.

The nurture of the relationship between a congregation and its called minister is of utmost importance to the strength of the movement and to the integrity of our ministry. For this reason, consultation among colleagues practicing the diverse forms of our ministry within the same geographic area is essential to promote healthy congregational life. The purpose of such consultation is to reach mutually acceptable understandings about the appropriate roles that ministers in the same geographic area should play. Irreconcilable disputes should be referred to the Chapter Good Offices Person for mediation.

I will defer accepting any requests for any ministerial services whatsoever from members of any congregation I am not now serving until I have consulted with the incumbent minister. In order to maintain my colleague’s free choice in this matter, I will inform the person requesting my services of the necessity to consult our professional Guidelines. If my colleague asks me to refrain from performing the service, I will comply. Should emergency circumstances make such a consultation impossible, I shall render only limited services and consult with my colleague at the earliest possible opportunity.

I will inform my colleague in advance of any public engagement I may accept in the church he or she serves, and I will inform my colleague in advance of any public engagement I may accept in his or her

community, which might bear upon congregational issues or policies. In a multi-staff situation I will see that all colleagues serving that church are informed. If approached by a member of any colleague's congregation for advice on matters affecting my colleague's ministry, I will consider carefully the circumstances of the request. If the advice sought indicates a possible violation of the Code of Professional Practice, I will listen carefully and explore appropriate ways of addressing the issue within the context of our Code and *Guidelines*. If the advice requested is not of this nature, I will inform the person of my professional obligations under this Code, and carefully consider whether it is appropriate for me to respond in any way. When in doubt I will err on the side of deference to the prerogatives of my colleagues call.

If I am to share the ministry of a congregation with (an) other minister(s), I will earnestly seek clear delineation of responsibility, accountability, and channels of communication before responsibilities are assumed. I will thereafter work in cooperation and consultation with them, taking care that changing roles and relations are re-negotiated with clarity, respect and honesty.

If I am a member of or a participant in a congregation served by a colleague, I will in all ways honor the priority of his or her call to the ministry of that congregation, and I will avoid influence which other members may tend to yield to me in the light of my experience, status and prestige. If I serve a congregation of which another minister is a member, I will be generous toward my colleague in word and spirit. I will extend these courtesies to all colleagues in multi-staff situations.

If I am a member of a congregation which I previously served, I will be welcoming to the settled minister, and seek to be useful in ways my successor may request. If I serve a congregation of which the retired minister is a member, I will recognize the continuing value of her or his presence in the congregation. I will extend these courtesies to all colleagues in multi-staff situations.

I will share and support the concerns of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association, especially as reflected in these *Guidelines*.

I will keep my collegial relationships alive by attending UUMA Chapter meetings whenever possible and by thoughtfully considering matters of mutual professional interest.

3. CONGREGATION

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I will not engage in sexual activities with a member of the congregation who is not my spouse or partner, if I am married or in a committed relationship. If I am single, before becoming sexually involved with a person in the congregation, I will take special care to examine my commitment, motives, intentionality, and the nature of such activity and its consequence for myself, the other person, and the congregation.

Suggested Revision

I will not engage in sexual activities with a member, friend or visitor of the congregation who is not my spouse or partner,

Explanation of Suggestion

This is to make this section consistent with the changes we suggest to the section on "Self."

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