

## Unitarian Universalist Code of Professional Practice & Guidelines for Implementation

### Outline

#### UUMA Code of Professional Practice

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#### Guidelines for Implementation

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- ministers Emeriti/ae
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### Selected Provisions

#### Minister

1. I will sustain respect for the ministry. Because my private life is interwoven 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.

2. 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.

3. I will inform my colleague in advance of any public engagement I may accept in his or her community or church, which might bear upon congregational issues or policies. .... When in doubt I will err on the side of deference to the prerogatives of my colleague's call.

4. If I am a member of a colleague's congregation I will in all ways honor the priority of his or her call to the ministry of that congregation, and I will carefully shun inappropriate influence which other members may tend to yield to me. I will be generous toward a colleague who is a member of my congregation.

5. I will respect the traditions of the congregation. enriching and improving these in consultation with the members.

### **Ministers Emeriti/ae**

6. The relationship between a church and its minister emeritus is personal and unique .....

7. Although customs vary, ministers emeriti/ae in general should have no official role in the life of the church. The title should be honorific, being merely recognition of a significant past and of the affection and esteem in which this former minister is held.

8. The relationship between a settled minister and a minister emeritus/a should be one of mutual honor, respect and caring. The incumbent minister should endeavor to make the other feel welcome and valued when there are church occasions appropriate for the minister emeritus/a to attend. The minister emeritus/a should be supportive of the incumbent and should not offer

solicited or unsolicited advice or criticism to the members of the congregation.

9. Where they are welcomed and constructive the services of ministers emeriti/ae have proved of great value to the minister and to the congregation. In these instances, the transition has been effectively achieved, a new and complimentary ministry begun.

10. If the minister emeritus/a cannot make the transition, it is his or her responsibility to sense this fact. Ultimately, she or he may have to move to another community and sever all ties to avoid damaging the ministry of a successor,

### **Former Ministers**

11. The minister must play no role and express no opinions concerning the internal or external workings of the church.

# The Code of Professional Practice *for the Unitarian Universalist Ministry*

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE  
As Revised at the UUMA Annual Meetings  
1987, 1988, 1992, 1996, and 1998

## 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.

## 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.

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 Officer 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**

I will uphold the practices of congregational polity including both those of local self-government and those of counsel and cooperation within our Association. I will only serve regularly a congregation(s) issuing a call in the manner prescribed by the Bylaws of the congregation(s) or under a program instituted by the UUA or its member groups. Throughout my ministry I will teach the history, meaning and methods of congregational polity, recognizing informed and faithful adherence to these practices as the bond preserving and reforming our free corporate religious life.

I will respect the traditions of the congregation, enriching and improving these in consultation with the members.

I will hold to a single standard of respect and help for all members of the congregational community of whatever age or position.

I will respect absolutely the confidentiality of private communications of members.

I will remember that a congregation places special trust in its professional leadership and that the members of the congregation allow a minister to become a part of their lives on the basis of that trust. I will not abuse or exploit that trust for my own gratification.

I will not invade the private and intimate bonds of others' lives, nor will I trespass on those bonds for my own advantage or need when they are disturbed. In any relationship of intimate confidentiality, I will not exploit the needs of another person for my own.

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.

I will exercise a responsible freedom of the pulpit with respect for all persons, including those who may disagree with me.

I will encourage by my example an inclusive, loyal, generous, and critical spiritual leadership.

I will take responsibility for encouraging clear delineation of responsibility, accountability and channels of communication for the minister(s) and other staff.

I will take responsibility for encouraging adequate and sensible standards of financial and other support for minister and staff.

Prior to sabbatical or other leave, I will clearly negotiate a minimum amount of time to serve as minister to the congregation upon my return before making myself available as a candidate for another pulpit.

I will inform the Board of the congregation immediately when I have accepted a call to another position.

#### **4. MOVEMENT AND ASSOCIATION**

I will encourage the growth of our congregations and the spread of the ideals of the Unitarian Universalist tradition and fellowship.

I will participate and encourage lay participation in meetings and activities of our Association.

I will encourage financial support of the Unitarian Universalist Association and its associated programs.

I will inform myself of the established candidating procedures of the Unitarian Universalist Association and I will strictly observe them.

I will make myself a candidate for a pulpit only with serious intent.

Because respect for the worth and dignity of every person is fundamental to our Unitarian Universalist ministry, I will work to confront attitudes and practices of unjust discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, sexual orientation, gender expression, age, disability, or ethnicity; within myself and in individuals, congregations, and groups I serve.

#### **5. COMMUNITY**

In word and deed I will live and speak in ways representing the best Unitarian Universalist tradition and leadership in the larger community.

I will maintain a prophetic pulpit, offering to the community religious and ethical leadership. I will encourage members' participation in efforts to solve community problems.

I will offer sympathetic support to neighboring ministers of other religious bodies.