

# Unitarian Universalist Community Church

## Pastoral Ministry Team

### ***Ethics and Boundaries***

*The Pastoral Associate is present to listen deeply and bear witness to the events and stories in a person's life in such a way that provides spiritual care and comfort during times of loss, grief, stress and life transitions. The Pastoral Care Associate is there to support the exploration of personal values, morals and ethics and help find meaning and purpose in all of life's complexity.*

*Members of the community bring deeply personal issues and concerns to us with an expectation of trust and respect for what is shared. As such it is vitally important to provide professional care grounded in the wisdom of good ethics and the practice of good boundaries.*

First and foremost, enjoy your visit. Settle into a practice of deep listening. This is the gift you bring when you walk through the door. You need not bring anything else. A compassionate heart ready to listen deeply is all that is required of you.

We are not here to save anybody, rescue them or fix their life. We are meant to accompany people during times of loss, grief, and stress and not be overwhelmed by it.

Frequency of congregant visits: about one time per month up to two if person is in crisis or hospice. In situations of higher need, care may be shared by two Pastoral Associates.

All Pastoral Associates must attend regular Pastoral Ministry Team meetings and check-in with minister in interim when necessary.

Pastoral Associates are members or friends of UUCC who have not experienced a major life stressor (i.e., death of significant family member or friend, divorce, job loss, etc.) within the past year.

The Minister or the chair of the Pastoral Ministry Team will check in with the person receiving pastoral visits a couple times a year to see how things are working out. This is good practice in creating a professional and effective pastoral ministry. It is good practice for the safety and concern of all involved. If things are not working out, do not take this personally. Sometimes matches just don't quite fit.

*Given it is in our nature to care deeply about other people, we need also to watch closely the level of care and interaction. Good boundaries help us to be present to each other without taking on what belongs to another person. Yet, we are human and becoming enmeshed or overwhelmed by another person's suffering will happen.*

How do you know you are getting over involved or too enmeshed?

- Obsessive concern

- Acting on our natural human Inclination to fix another person's problem

Having something being triggered in you – talk to the team chair. Bring it to the meeting.

- Taking on a “case” without it being in the context of the Pastoral Ministry Team.

- Attaching yourself to someone in need.

How do you know you are getting overwhelmed?

- You make excuses why you can't visit

- You avoid particular conversations

- You experience a heightened anxiety before, during or after a visit

- Your own emotions and places of vulnerability (we all have them) are being triggered.

What to do when you recognize you are enmeshed or overwhelmed?

First recognize your humanity. You care deeply and this will happen to all of us.

Then call your minister or the chair of the Pastoral Ministry Team to discuss and come up with plan to reestablish good practices and boundaries which may include backing up or disengaging.

**Do not carry worry or concern alone.** If you are feeling overwhelmed by your pastoral role, contact the minister or Pastoral Ministry Team Chair for support and guidance.

**Avoid sexually inappropriate behavior.** This includes but is not limited to sexual jokes and sexual overtones in conversation. At no time should one engage in romantic or sexual relations with someone in their care. Human sexuality is a precious and vulnerable gift. As a Pastoral Associate committed to the ministry of caring for another person, if you experience sexual feelings or strong emotions, discuss it with the Minister before your next visit. It is natural to care and sometimes we do develop romantic feelings, at the same time our commitment to being a lay Pastoral Associate includes a responsibility to neutral and bounded relationships. Do not return to visit until you have discussed this with the Minister. If you witness or experience situations of sexually inappropriate behavior, you should contact the minister immediately.

**Respond to inappropriate behavior.** Naming behavior as inappropriate is best. By simply saying, "(behavior) makes me uncomfortable, I ask you to please not do that" provides a clear message without judgment. Be clear when naming behavior, i.e., swearing, sexual jokes, comments about race, etc. If the situations of inappropriate behavior continues, discuss your concern with minister or Pastoral Ministry Team chair.

**Issues of Confidentiality.** Generally speaking what is shared during pastoral visits remains private and there are times when sharing concerns are important. Issues of health and safety will be shared as necessary. Do not promise to keep secrets from your minister or the chair of the Pastoral Ministry Team. It is not okay to share private information with other pastoral associates.

Pastoral Associates leading the caring community will share information regarding member and friends situations to the extent they have given been permission to do so by person in care or their family.

**What do you share with the Minister or chair of the Pastoral Ministry Team?**

Issues of health and safety  
Issues of abuse  
Change in medical status or hospice care  
The death of a member or friend  
Inappropriate behavior (sexual or other)

**When do you share?**

Immediate if there is any level of risk noted  
as soon as possible  
Before you return for your next visit

**Who do you tell?**

Your Minister or the chair of the Pastoral Ministry Team

**\*\* If there is an immediate risk of injury or harm, place a call to 911. \*\***  
**THEN CALL YOUR MINISTER!!**

**\*\* SEE PAGE 3 \*\***

## **Mandated Reporting in Maine**

### **When do you share beyond the Minister or Chair of the Pastoral Ministry Team?**

Immediate threat of injury to self or others  
Physical, Emotional, Sexual, Abuse or neglect  
Financial exploitation of an incapacitated Adult

### **Mandated reporting laws in Maine**

Maine law states that certain people must report suspected abuse, neglect or exploitation of an adult if they believe the adult is incapacitated or dependent. Maine law also states that certain people must report to the Department Health and Human Services if they know or have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been or is likely to be abused or neglected. Self paced training covering all aspects of mandatory reporting in Maine for children and adults may be found at <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/ocfs/cps/index.htm>

### **What do you Share**

Reports regarding abuse, neglect or exploitation must be made immediately by telephone to the Department of Health and Human Services and must be followed by a written report within 48 hours if requested by the department. The reports must contain the name and address of the person involved; information regarding the nature and extent of the abuse, neglect or exploitation; the source of the report; the person making the report; that person's occupation; and where that person can be contacted. The report may contain any other information that the reporter believes may be helpful.

### **Who do you tell?**

First tell your Minister **and** the chair of the Pastoral Ministry Team unless an immediate call to 911 is indicated. The Minister will inform the Committee on Ministry and the President of the Board of Trustees that a call has been placed and will relay circumstances using non-indentifying information.

### **24/7 numbers for reporting and assistance**

For Abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child call: 1-800-452-1999 TTY only 1-800-963-9490

For Abuse, neglect, or exploitation of an adult call: 1-800-624-8404 TTY only 1-800-963-9490

For someone who is suicidal call: 1-888-568-1112

### **Other important support numbers:**

Family Violence Project 207-623-3569

Rape Crisis Hotline 207-626-0660

**\*\* In the unfortunate event there is a need to place a call to a hotline or engage the process of mandated reporting, the minister must be informed and will assist and support you in the process. This is not your work to carry alone. It is only your responsibility to bring this information to the attention of the Minister immediately. The minister will share non-indentifying information with the Committee on Ministry and the President of the Board of Trustees.**