

Unitarian Society of Ridgewood Virtual Platforms (Zoom) Safety Procedures for Children, Youth, and Adults

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Safe Congregation Response Team

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Covenant of the Unitarian Society of Ridgewood (draft version 11/2020):

Led by our shared Unitarian Universalist values, committed to the search for truth, meaning, and justice, and determined to create a community of trust, warmth, and joy, together with love we covenant:

- to support this congregation with our presence, gifts, and service and to care for each other and the long-term well-being of our community
- to listen deeply to one another in a spirit of openness, acceptance, and trust
- to speak and act with forethought, honesty and compassion, considering not only the intent but also the impact of our words and behaviors
- to speak directly, whenever safe, to those with whom we have disagreements and to encourage others to do the same; seeking assistance from leadership as needed
- to include all people with gratitude for the differences among us, celebrating the richness of varied perspectives
- to attend intentionally to dynamics of oppression and prejudice in our interactions with each other and in our congregational system
- to participate in congregational votes and decisions, engaging in thoughtful dissent and respecting our democratic processes
- to ask for and to extend forgiveness to each other if we break these promises

This covenant is a living document to which we can refer in our interactions with each other, reminding ourselves of our shared promises. It invites ongoing learning and courageous acts of love and reconciliation.

Guidelines for All

- Whether we are together in person or virtually our actions should be governed by our congregational covenant and common sense.
- Whether we are together in person or online, participating in services, meetings, social events, or other interactions, USR's safety guidelines and procedures remain in place and will be interpreted by the Safe Congregation Response Team (SCRT) as needed to cover virtual interactions. USR's complete safety guidelines are available at <https://uuridgewood.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Safe-Congregation-Policy-2016.pdf>.
- Online attendees must be dressed appropriately at all times.
- Online attendees must ensure that the portion of their surroundings that is visible to other participants is free from any potentially offensive material.
- Entries made using the chat function must be appropriate and should relate directly to the current topic unless otherwise specified by the person(s) leading the interaction.
- Any inappropriate behavior witnessed or experienced virtually or in person at a USR event should be reported immediately to the SCRT, Rev. Sarah, the USR office (201-444-6225), and/or the appropriate authorities. Even if you are not sure the behavior rises to the level of "inappropriate", the SCRT urges you to reach out to them for a confidential conversation. Especially while we are meeting virtually

none of us should assume that others are aware of or dealing with inappropriate behavior. Please speak up!

Additional Procedures for Children and Youth

- **Two Adult Rule:** Safety procedures dictate 2 adults in every RE class or outside youth activity. This also applies to virtual activities using platforms such as Zoom. In addition, if there are breakout rooms, there must be 2 adults in every breakout room. Live sessions should have a co-host without facilitation responsibility able to turn off microphones and cameras of any participant as well as remove any participant whose behavior and/or appearance appears to be deliberately offensive.
- **For Soul Matters Circles (RE classes):** an RE staff should be present in the room. Since we are currently collaborating with two other congregations, this includes professional religious educators from other congregations.
- **Visibility onscreen:** Children and youth should be encouraged to use the video to be onscreen in the Zoom room. Sometimes, the only way children and youth feel comfortable participating is audio only. If that is the case, we should encourage them to be onscreen for the check in and chalice lighting.
- **Appropriate attire:** This includes all ages appearing in clothing appropriate for the public. It is the parent's responsibility for their child's appropriate appearance, and what is visible on the camera.
- **Re-Naming:** Upon entering the Zoom room, children/youth or parents should rename participant with first name and name of congregation for security and attendance purposes.
- **Admit Function of Zoom:** Use "admit" function to admit all participants and teachers to ensure that no uninvited participants enter the room.
- **No Personal Information Shared via Zoom:** No emails or phone numbers should be exchanged verbally or in the chat.
- **No Screen Shots Permitted:** Participants are not allowed to take screen shots in RE/Youth gatherings. "A particular concern with appropriate attire by minors includes the possibility of another participant taking a screenshot on their computer and generating an image that could be seen by authorities as child pornography. In this instance, the person capturing the image and the parents/guardians may be at risk of investigation." (from UUA's "Keeping Our Children and Youth Safe in Online Programs.")
- **Background Checks for all RE Volunteers:** Background checks (Sexual Offender Register) on all RE volunteers (teachers, RE Council, Special Projects, other RE activities) should be completed bi-annually by November 1 and February 1. (Any volunteers driving children/youth must have a DMV background check)
- **Covenant and Behavior:** Appropriate behavior is outlined in the creation of the class covenant. "Parents and guardians need to understand that it is impossible to fully and effectively supervise across the internet and therefore parents and guardians must understand they are responsible for the health and well-being of their child while their child participates in any online space." (from UUA's "Keeping Our Children and Youth Safe in Online Programs.")

Reference Resource: UUA's "Keeping Our Children and Youth Safe in Online Programs."
<https://www.uua.org/leadership/library/re-distance/child-safety-online-programs>