

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert

ANIMAL POLICY

Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert (UUCOD) endeavors to be welcoming and accommodating to all persons. The following guidelines indicate what is expected of a person bringing a service dog into the church, and what is expected of members of the congregation in helping to make the experience positive for everyone involved.

Only service dogs as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) are allowed in the UUCOD building. No other animals, including comfort or emotional support animals, are allowed in the building. If an individual with a service dog plans to bring the dog to the church for any event, a designated member of the Board shall meet with the owner to review the Animal Policy and request the owner sign indicating they have received a copy of the policy. Congregants should not leave animals unattended anywhere on church property, including vehicles.

Service dogs accompanied by their owner shall have free access to the building. The service dog shall remain adjacent to the owner and on the floor unless the service provided to the individual requires the dog to be physically closer to the person. The service dog shall be kept on a leash, off the furniture, and under control of the owner.

Members of the congregation should not seek verbal or physical contact with the dog. They should not beckon or call the dog, pet the dog or attempt to engage the dog in play.

The service dog owner shall be financially responsible for any damage caused by the animal. The service dog owner will inform the minister or church officers of any safety issues or special considerations so that these concerns can be addressed and shared with the congregation when appropriate.

A service dog owner may be asked remove the service dog from UUCOD and its grounds if the animal's behavior or presence poses a direct threat to the health or safety of others or is deemed to be a specific nuisance. For example, a service animal that displays vicious behavior (e.g. growling) towards people may be excluded as may a service animal whose presence or behavior (e.g. barking, whining) fundamentally alters the nature of a program or activity.

In the event of a specially organized occasion (i.e. blessing of the animals) specifically designed for congregants to include their pet animals (i.e. pet dogs, cats, birds, reptiles etc), the animals shall remain outside of the church buildings, restrained and in the owner's supervision. Any animal attending such a specialized event may be asked to leave if its presence or behavior is determined to be unsafe or is a disruption of the program.

Definition:

SERVICE DOG: As defined by the American Disabilities Act, a service animal is any dog individually trained to do work or perform tasks for a person with a disability. Service dogs directly assist their owners with daily tasks and are meant to be with their owners at all times. Types of service dogs include dogs for the blind, signal dogs for the deaf or hearing impaired,

assistance dogs that help by picking things up, pulling wheelchairs etc., and dogs who have been trained to help individuals with psychiatric and/or neurological disabilities.

In order to determine if an animal is a service animal, only two questions may be asked of the owner: A). Is this animal required because of a disability? B) What work or task has this animal been trained to perform? These may not be asked if the need for the service animal is obvious (guide dog for the blind). A public entity or private business may not ask about the nature or extent of an individual's disability or require any documentation or require the animal to wear an identifying vest.

Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA.

[In other laws The Fair Housing Act defines an "emotional assistance animal" and the Air Carrier Access Act defines a "service animal".]

*While the revised 2011 ADA regulations have a new provision allowing miniature horses to be service animals, the UUCOD Board of Directors will make an assessment on a case by case basis to determine if the horse meets the regulations.

Date of Board Approval: 6.18.19

Signed copy on file

Sarah Gonzales
Board President

Rod Belshee
Board Secretary

I have received a copy of this Animal Policy.

Service Dog Owner

Date