



Westside Unitarian
Universalist Church
901 Page Ave.
Fort Worth, TX 76110

WUUC Policies and Procedures

Title	Public Witness Policy
Number	M.4
Purpose	To clarify the rights and responsibilities of members, groups and of the entire church when taking a public stance on an issue or cause.
Scope	This policy will apply to all church members.
Definitions	N/A
References	N/A
Appendices	None
Author	Westside UU Board of Directors
Approval Dates	Origination: 5/16/2018 Last Revision: Last Reviewed: Next Review Date: 7/1/2020

Public Witness Policy

Individual members, groups or committees, and the whole congregation of Westside Unitarian Universalist Church (Westside) have the right to take a stand on issues that affect them and the surrounding community, in accordance with the Unitarian Universalist Purposes and Principles.

I. Individual, Committee and Small Group Public Witness

Acts of public witness undertaken by individuals or small groups or committees may include protests and demonstrations, acts of civil disobedience, rallies, phone banking and letter-writing efforts, among others.

Letters to the editor should be presented as the opinions of an individual, not the church as a whole.

These acts do not require input or permission from the Board. However public acts of demonstration and protest should be in line with Unitarian Universalist Purposes and Principles and be undertaken responsibly and safely. This is especially important if those involved carry signs, wear shirts, or otherwise identify themselves as members of Westside.

As a church, Westside and its groups and committees cannot promote or campaign for any individual candidate for public office or for any political party. Westside members have the right to do so as private individuals.

However, Westside, its groups and committees, and individual members have the right to speak out in protest of or support of the actions of elected officials.

II. Congregational Public Witness

- A. On some occasions there may be an issue that compels the entire congregation to issue a statement. Members or groups wishing to propose that the congregation issue a statement will need to do the following:
 1. For non-time-critical statements:
 - a. Schedule and hold a meeting with congregational members in small groups such as cottage meetings, standing committee meetings and congregational conversations between services. As with becoming a Reproductive Justice congregation, interested groups can also request to hold a special service to discuss the issue and the statement they wish the congregation to make. At that service, they may ask members to sign a petition.
 - b. The group can then bring a petition to the Board signed by 10% or more of members about the issue and/or request to put the action or statement on the agenda of a regularly scheduled congregational meeting.
 - c. At the next congregational meeting, the Board will call for a discussion and a vote.
 - d. If the resolution passes, a designated group or representative shall perform any approved act of public witness or statement, speaking for the church as a whole.
 2. For time-critical statements or actions:
 - a. The Board can call an emergency meeting, inviting any involved groups, and decide on a statement to be communicated via the minister or other appropriate representative, and to alert church members to any recommended actions.

III. Designated Spokesperson

- A. In general, the Minister of Westside shall be the designated spokesperson for any public witness by the church, as well as for any statements needed to the press or the public after a crisis or other event. The minister may choose to delegate or share this responsibility with others. If the minister feels that events necessitate it, they may call an emergency meeting of the Board to craft a more nuanced response to the media or the public.