

First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC Suffield, CT

Safe Church Policy Version 1.4

(Revised of January 28, 2010)

Adopted: January 31, 2010

Mission:

God intends for a church community to be a sanctuary – a safe place for all of God’s people. At First Church of Christ Congregational, Suffield, CT (henceforth referred to as First Church) we seek to be diligent and faithful to this call by striving to create and maintain a safe environment for all of our members, friends, staff, and visitors. A *safe environment* has many facets, including providing a safe physical space for our activities and programs, ensuring that abusive and offensive behavior is prohibited and avoided, and creating an environment of mutual respect and compassion for all. Our goal of maintaining our church as a sanctuary extends to those places where we are actively engaged as a church, such as mission trips, home visits, retreats and other similar church sponsored activities.

We must all be responsible for and committed to, the common goal of maintaining a safe and healthy environment for our church community. The church will provide knowledge, focus, and resources. The congregation and staff will provide skill, alertness, and caring. We share a legal, economic, and most of all, moral obligation.

Thank you for helping care for our church!

Definitions:

- *Adult*: a person eighteen years of age or older.
- *Lay Minister*: a person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. Lay Minister includes church elected or appointed leaders and volunteers.
- *Authorized Minister*: a person who holds an ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an Association of the United Church of Christ or region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- *Ministerial Relationship*: the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the Church and the one being served by that ministry.
- *Safety Officer*: the Chairperson of the Safe Church Committee.

Safe Church Committee:

The responsibility of maintaining a safe church rests with the congregation of the First Church. All volunteers and committees must take active steps to educate, inspect, and document safety procedures as outlined in this policy.

The Safe Church Committee is delegated the authority and responsibility for building protection and safety. The committee shall consist of three members:

- Chairperson, whose responsibility will also include the role of Safety Officer, Vice Chairperson and member. The Safe Church Committee will have no fewer than two members, one male and one female.

The goals of the Safe Church Committee are to:

- assure that all lay ministers working with vulnerable populations i.e. (children, youth and elderly) have completed a disclosure form;

- assure background checks of employees are performed;
- review of web sites that pertain to the safety or care of minors;
- oversee training, educational presentations, and publications regarding safety;
- present an annual report to the congregation;
- keep current on information about safe church issues on a denominational level;
- hearing concerns or complaints brought under the Safe Church Policy.

Employed Lay People

Employed lay people of the church will complete an application/disclosure form before beginning their duties. (See Appendix A)

Before an offer of employment is made to any individual, a comprehensive background check, including criminal records, will be completed. The scope of check will include the counties of residence and counties of work over the past seven years. Other resources such as state's web sites will be screened for sexual offense and motor vehicle violations.

The Safety Officer will contact a background-screening vendor to perform the necessary check and report to the Executive Committee of the Church Council. The background check should be done in a timely fashion. If the reporting process reveals any question about the applicant's ability to serve at First Church, the Executive Committee will make a decision on how to proceed.

Furthermore, the Safety Officer will conduct an annual review of the sex offender registry and Department of Motor Vehicles for each authorized minister and all employees by searching their names on appropriate websites. In the case of a discovery this information will be reported to the Executive Committee of the Church Council.

Lay Ministers

All lay ministers working with children and youth in any capacity will complete a volunteer disclosure form once every four years to be on file with the church.

The Safety Officer will be responsible for distributing and collecting and keeping them in a locked cabinet.

Adult volunteers working with children and youth will be screened for criminal offenses every three years by a licensed outside screening organization. If a lay minister has proof of a background check related to their employment, this may count as a background check.

Ministerial Conduct

All authorized ministers are responsible for understanding the ways in which their words or actions may affect others. It is also important that every authorized minister of the church be adequately prepared and educated for the ministry in which they serve others, and to understand the ways in which their actions may impact those who may be vulnerable to their use or misuse of power.

Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Harassment, of parishioners or others, by anyone engaged in the ministry of First Church is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

All authorized ministers of the church may deal with individuals who are emotionally or personally vulnerable in some way. It is the policy of First Church to encourage its ministers to demonstrate healthy boundaries within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

Authorized ministers of First Church will attend boundary workshops suggested or required by The Hartford Association and the Connecticut Conference of the UCC.

Sexual Exploitation and Harassment

Definitions

Sexual Exploitation: Sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.

Sexual Harassment: Repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity; Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.
- Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:
- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, e-mails, text messages, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, or sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, or coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the church. It is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

Reporting

When information is received regarding alleged abuse or mistreatment of a child, the Safe Church Committee will immediately notify the pastor who will as a mandated reporter notify secular authorities and will cooperate fully in the investigation. These procedures will also be followed to determine whether the person under investigation will continue in their present position.

When concerns are raised about an authorized minister of the United Church of Christ (ordained, commissioned or licensed), whether an employee or volunteer, the Safe Church Committee will notify the Committee on Ministry of the Hartford Association, the Regional Minister and the Associate Conference Minister for Clergy Concern for the Connecticut Conference. First Church of Christ will

cooperate fully in any procedures of the United Church of Christ related to ministerial authorization, while retaining the right and responsibility to make decisions regarding employment and volunteer ministries within First Church of Christ as it determines best.

Reports of misconduct of the Senior Pastor should be reported to either the Safety Officer or the Moderator of the Church. A meeting of the Executive Committee of the Church Council with the Safety Officer in attendance shall convene without the presence of the accused.

Several options may be taken in addressing incidents of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment:

1. If the concern does not involve a child, the person reporting concerns may decide to resolve the matter directly with the person accused.
2. The person raising concerns may report the incident to the pastor, if they wish, in an effort to resolve the matter.
3. If an informal resolution of the concern or complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the person raising concerns may institute formal proceedings. At this point First Church will offer pastoral care and concern to all those included in the investigation. The proceedings will include the following steps:
 - a. The Safe Church Committee will gather statements or other information from individuals involved in the harassment or exploitation or other incident of concern, and from others who may have pertinent information.
 - b. The Safe Church Committee will present information gathered to the supervisor of the employee or volunteer about whom a concern has been raised, and to the Executive Committee.

All involved parties should fill out the Safe Church Reporting Form, Appendix E.

Child and Youth Protection Policies

First Church is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love.

In order to ensure this, we have established the following guidelines.

- We expect that those who volunteer to work with minors will have been members of First Church for at least six months, or if not members, regularly and frequently associated with First Church for at least a year.
- It is the policy of this church to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for all youth activities. In any situation where participants are not readily visible to other church members, there will not be fewer than two unrelated adults present with children.
- All new volunteers who work with children and youth will complete and submit a Volunteer Disclosure form. (See Appendix B)
- All ministers who work with children and youth will receive orientation to the overall policy.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian will be required for all activities off the church property, and any overnight activities. (See Appendix C).
- The Church School program must have at least one adult who is currently certified in both first aid and child CPR and in attendance during Sunday classes.

Children Ministries

A completed medical form is required before a child may enroll in any program offered by First Church. This does not include one day events. A medical form (Appendix D) is required for any overnight trips.

A Parent/Guardian permission form is required to be completed prior to a child attending a church offered trip that involves transportation and/or lodging. (See Appendix C.)

Emergency Plans

The Safe Church Committee in conjunction with Asset Management will review and update First Church's emergency plan. The plan will address the following points:

- Communication and notification of the emergency
- Posting of emergency phone numbers and procedures
- Evacuation procedures
- Protection of the Facility
- Readiness of emergency equipment
- Availability of medical assistance
- Control of utilities
- Record keeping and drills

Has a civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct ever resulted in a judgment being entered against you, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, give a short explanation of the lawsuit. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the lawsuit; where the lawsuit was filed; and the precise disposition of the lawsuit.) Please attach extra sheets or use the back this form.

Have you ever terminated your employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had your employment, professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, give a short explanation. (Please indicate the date of termination; name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination.) Please attach extra sheets or use the back this form.

Do you have a valid drivers' license? ____ Yes ____ No

With respect to your driving record, have you had your license suspended or revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance? ____ Yes ____ No

Are there any facts or circumstances in your background that would call into question your serving in this position? ____ Yes ____ No

If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

The covenants between the church and persons seeking employee positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC in Suffield, CT, and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC's in Suffield, CT, authorized employee involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in. To that end, I authorize First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC in Suffield, CT, and its agents to circulate distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that

First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC in Suffield, CT, will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

Printed Name and Signature

Date

Printed Name and Signature of Parent or Guardian for Applicants Under 18

Date

Appendix B:

**First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC
Suffield, CT**

Volunteer Disclosure Form

Name: *Last* *First* *Middle*

Address: *Street* *City* *State* *Zip*

Day Time Phone Evening Phone Preferred E-Mail Address

Volunteers applying to work with children/minors please two references. Only one reference can be related to you.

Name: *Last* *First* *Middle*

Address: *Street* *City* *State* *Zip*

Day Time Phone Evening Phone

Name: *Last* *First* *Middle*

Address: *Street* *City* *State* *Zip*

Day Time Phone Evening Phone

How long have you been a Member of this church? _____

How long have you been a Friend of this church? _____

Have you ever been convicted of or plead guilty or no contest to a crime? (Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state) ___ Yes
 ___ No

If yes, please briefly describe the nature of the offense(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. (The church will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The church, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.) Attached additional sheets or use the back of this form to elaborate.

Are there any facts or circumstances in your background that would call into question your serving this position? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, please provide a brief description by attaching sheets or use the back of this form.

The covenants between the church and persons seeking authorized volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC in Suffield, CT, and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC in Suffield, CT authorized volunteer recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in. To that end, I authorize First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC in Suffield, CT and its agents to circulate distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC in Suffield, CT will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

Printed Name and Signature Date

Printed Name and Signature of Parent or Guardian for Applicants Under 18 Date

This form will be kept in a confidential manner.

Appendix C:

First Church of Christ, Congregational UCC

Suffield, CT

Parent or Legal Guardian Permission Slip

Student Name: _____

Age: _____

Email: _____

Parents Name(s): _____

Parents Contact Information

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Business Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Allergies: _____

Any special needs: _____

It is agreed and understood that my son/daughter may participate and attend the youth group Trip to _____ from _____. Transportation will be by _____ . Lodging will be _____.

I will not hold the First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC in Suffield, CT or the Connecticut Conference UCC or the chaperones present liable for any accidents or injury incurred during this trip. All participants participate at their own risk.

In case of accident or serious illness, I request the church to contact me. If the church is unable to reach me, I hereby authorize the church to make whatever arrangements seem necessary to secure emergency medical care for my child.

Name (please print)

Signature

Date

Appendix D:

**First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC
Suffield, CT**

Medical Release & Health Form

To Be Completed by a Parent or Guardian

Child's Name _____

Birth Date _____

Address _____

Emergency Information

1. Contact Name & Relationship _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

2. Contact Name & Relationship _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

I give permission to the adult leaders in charge to take emergency action in the event my child sustains an injury or becomes ill while attending this event. _____ (initial)

I give my consent to emergency medical treatment, to include an x-ray examination, anesthetic, medical, dental, or surgical diagnosis, treatment and hospital care, and the administration of drugs or medicine that is deemed necessary for my child under general or specific supervision and upon the advice of a duly licensed physician and/or/surgeon. I also agree to assume liability for any resulting expense, which is not covered by my/my child's medical insurance. _____ (initial)

I give permission to the supervising adults to administer appropriate non-prescription medication, as needed.

I prefer _____ Tylenol _____ Ibuprofen. _____ (initial)

Health History

Operations/Injuries/Special Restrictions, if any – please give explanation and dates.

Please list any allergies including those to food/drugs, stings, asthma, etc. as well as the antidote for this allergy.

Current Medications – Please give name and explain what they are for.

Date of Last Tetanus Shot _____

(Insurance Provider) *(Policy #)*

(Subscriber Name)

(Parent/Guardian Signature) *(Date)*

Appendix E

**First Church of Christ, Congregational, UCC
Suffield, CT**

Safe Church Reporting Form

Today's Date: _____

Your full name: _____

Your current address: _____

Your home phone: _____ Cell phone: _____

Please provide in writing the sequence of events as you believe them to have occurred:

Parties Involved:

1. Complainant _____

2. Complaint filed Against _____

(Return this form to Safe Church Officer)

Safety Officer received on:

Date: _____

Initial: _____