

First Congregational Church



United Church of Christ
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SAFE CHURCH POLICY

August 25, 2016

First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Crystal Lake, Illinois

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

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First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
Crystal Lake, IL

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

STATEMENT OF POLICY & PURPOSE

Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment

First Congregational Church (FCC) is a caring, nurturing faith community. We believe that all persons are to be treated with respect and dignity. We believe that we have special responsibilities to protect our children and youth (age 17 and under) by providing safe, healthy environments. One of our goals is to provide that safe environment for the children and youth who are entrusted to our care as they participate in our programs and use our facilities. We want to support each other so that adults and children alike can grow in the Christian faith.

All persons associated with FCC should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment, and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention and responsibility of the church to take whatever action necessary to prevent and correct behavior which is contrary to this policy, and if necessary, discipline those persons who violate this policy.

Risk Management Committee

The **Risk Management Committee** shall be composed of three or four people, including at least one female, one male, one member of Pastoral Relations, and the Senior Minister. It will be established by the governing board of First Congregational Church each year at its first meeting. This will be a standing committee. Its members will have staggered terms and may serve on other teams, committees, task forces, and ministries. The committee will designate a chairperson. All members of the Risk Management Committee shall maintain a strict code of confidentiality. They will familiarize themselves with the terms of this policy as well as the established procedures of FCC for dealing with complaints of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment against any employee or volunteer at FCC. The Risk Management Committee will maintain and revise as necessary the FCC Safe Church Policy and hear complaints as presented.

Conduct Policy

Abuse in any of its forms, including but not limited to emotional, sexual, physical, or verbal, is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Staff and volunteers who are ministering to youth are required to submit a *Permission to Obtain a Background Check* form. This form must be re-submitted at least every three years.

Any person known to have committed previous acts of sexual misconduct with children or youth shall be strictly prohibited from serving our children or youth.

Maintenance of Records

Records of all actions required by this policy and any material pertinent to it shall be kept in a secure and confidential place, the location and security measures to be determined by the Senior Minister and the Risk Management Committee.

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CODE OF BEHAVIOR

Staff and volunteers will receive training and orientation to this policy. They will sign the Safe Church Policy acknowledgement page indicating an understanding of the Safe Church Policy and the intent to adhere to it.

***The Two Person Guideline:** During FCC sponsored programs for minor children, including but not limited to church school, scheduled child care by nursery staff or volunteers and youth group outings, it is the church's recommendation that two unrelated adults supervise each group as much as possible. Avoid situations where one adult and one child/youth are alone unless they are parent and child. At all other times, including fellowship hour after church school and when nursery care has ended, the supervision of children is the responsibility of the parents.

***Bathroom Supervision:** Anyone who accompanies a child to the bathroom should remain outside the bathroom while the child is inside. If a child needs assistance using the restroom, it is recommended that two adults or one adult and a youth aide be present.

*** Parental Consent for Child and Youth Activities:** A completed, current-year *Child/Youth Registration/Permission Form* is required for all child and youth activities.

***Discipline:** No child shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any form of physical punishment. Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insult or shouting. Teachers and helpers in the classroom are encouraged to listen to the child and communicate expectations of appropriate behavior. If a child is continually disruptive, a teacher or helper from the class or a neighboring class may be sent to locate the Sunday School Superintendent, a Program Director, or a Minister on staff who will, if necessary, contact a parent.

***Child and Youth Group Activities:** No adult leader, staff or volunteer, should initiate or encourage inappropriate contact with children or youth. Setting boundaries is the responsibility of the adult. The youth groups fall under the Youth Ministry. All participants are expected to sign in with a group leader and remain with the group throughout the scheduled times (listed in FCC publications). No unauthorized pairing, or otherwise separating from the group to other parts of the building or grounds is permitted. Parents, or their designated representative, must pick up youth promptly at the end of any event. Avoid situations where one adult and one child or youth are left at the facility waiting to be picked up. Adults in charge must stay until all children and youth have been picked up.

***Overnight Rule:** All adult chaperones supervising overnight stays at our facilities or on FCC-sponsored trips will have completed a Background Check and the Safe Church Policy acknowledgement. Each child or youth will have a completed, current-year *Child/Youth Registration/Permission Form* on file. Parents will be notified of the names and contact numbers of all advisors who will be present.

***Youth Members of Boards and Committees:** No youth member of a Board, Committee, Subcommittee, or Task Force, shall be in attendance at a meeting with less than two adult members present. The exception being the youth's parent attending said meeting.

***Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol, or Weapons:** The use of any drugs, tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol, or weapons on or in FCC facilities or at FCC-sponsored youth events is strictly prohibited.

***Key Assignment:** When a youth leader is issued a key, it is understood that said key will not be loaned to anyone else, nor will a duplicate key be made. The assigned person shall take full responsibility for the security of the key(s) and will return it to the church office manager when he/she no longer has the responsibility which required the use of said key.

***Transportation:** Transportation for off-site activities must be provided by staff or adult leaders with a minimum age of 21. Each driver must have with them copies of the completed, current-year *Child/Youth Registration/Permission Forms* of those under their supervision. It is highly recommended that each vehicle have some form of communication (cell phone, two-way radio, etc.) in order to stay in contact with other adults on the trip.

***Visitor Awareness:** All volunteers and staff shall be aware of who is in and around their activities and shall bring any concerns to the attention of the program leader.

***Reporting Responsibilities:** Any known or suspected inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker and a child or youth shall be immediately reported to the Senior Minister. In the event that the Senior Minister is unavailable, report should be made to the Associate Minister. If the alleged abuser is the Senior Minister, the allegation will be reported to the chairperson of the Risk Management Committee, the chairperson of Pastoral Relations ministry and the chairperson of the Church Council.

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RESPONSE PLAN

Procedures for handling allegations of misconduct by employees and volunteers

Remember...

- * All allegations will be taken seriously.
- * Response to allegations must be handled with due respect for EVERYONE'S privacy and confidentiality. In all areas of an investigation, confidentiality will be maintained by all parties involved.
- * Care and safety of all parties involved are the first priority. Extend whatever pastoral resources needed.
- * Do not prejudge the situation, as the accusations may or may not prove to be true.
- * Document everything.

Steps for First Respondent:

- > Immediately document all activity involved in handling the incident on an Incident Report Form: note date, time, persons involved as well as the content of what was done. All documentation will be held confidential.
- > Immediately notify the Senior Minister and the chair of Risk Management, who will then notify the Risk Management committee of any suspected misconduct or allegations of misconduct. If the alleged abuser is the Senior Minister the allegation is to be reported to the chairperson of the Risk Management Committee, the chairperson of the Pastoral Relations ministry and the chairperson of the Church Council. The parent(s) of the complaint will be notified of the allegations.
- > Notify proper authorities as necessary.
- > Inform the accused of the accusation and provide an escort off of church property. Ensure that no potential incriminating evidence is removed from the property or taken by the accused.

Steps for Risk Management Committee:

- > **Document everything.**
- > Gather statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged misconduct and from others who may have pertinent information. Ensure that other adults and children, if questioned, are accorded privacy and confidentiality to ensure their safety and comfort.
- > If, after the above step, the charges are deemed valid, steps will be taken to immediately comply with all state laws.

- > Obtain legal counsel and notify the proper authorities.
- > Give full cooperation to authorities with the guidance of legal counsel. It is suggested an attorney be present while any investigative questions from the police or applicable agencies are being answered by anyone.
- > Meet as soon as possible to determine a short-term course of action regarding either administrative leave, temporary suspension of duties, and/or temporary relief from volunteer responsibilities until the allegations are dismissed or substantiated. In the event this cannot take place in a timely fashion, the Senior Minister (or in his or her absence an Associate Minister or Church Council Moderator) may act immediately.
- > Consider the need to inform other parents of children with whom the accused may have had contact after authorities have been notified and after obtaining the advice of legal counsel.
- > No interviews or statements should be made to any media outlets or representatives without the guidance and direction of legal counsel.
- > Consult with legal counsel and church leaders as to possible disclosure of events and persons to the congregation.
- > If the accused employee or volunteer is an authorized minister (i.e., holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ) the Risk Management Committee shall inform the appropriate body of the wider United Church of Christ (i.e., conference minister, association committee on the ministry) of the allegation. First Congregational Church will cooperate fully in any procedures of the United Church of Christ related to the person's ministerial authorization while retaining the right and responsibility to employ or designate leadership within First Congregational Church as it determines best.

**SEXUAL HARASSMENT POLICY STATEMENT
FOR
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF CRYSTAL LAKE**

SUPERSEDES: New

Originator: Pastoral Relations Ministry

Issue Date: 2/1/01

It is the policy of FCC to maintain a work environment free of unlawful discrimination for all employees. Sexual harassment is unacceptable conduct which violates this policy.

Sexual harassment encompasses a wide range of unwanted, sexually directed behavior and has been defined in the following manner:

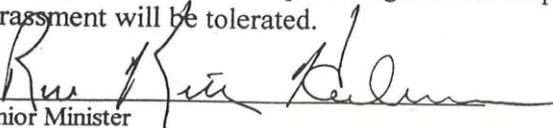
Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- 1) Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment.
- 2) Submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or
- 3) Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonable interference with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile or offensive working environment.

Sexual harassment applies to the conduct of a supervisor toward a subordinate, an employee toward another employee, a non employee toward an employee, or an employee toward an applicant for employment. Sexual harassment can apply to conduct outside the workplace as well as on the work site.

Employees who wish to register a complaint may do so through the Senior Minister or the Pastoral Relations Ministry.

Allegations of sexual harassment will be investigated thoroughly. The facts will determine the response to each allegation. Substantiated acts of sexual harassment will be met with appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination. All information regarding any specific incident will be kept confidential within the necessary boundaries of the fact finding process, and no reprisals against the employee reporting the allegation of sexual harassment will be tolerated.


Senior Minister

Date 2-13-01

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INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Name of Person Reporting Incident: _____

Phone Number: _____ Relationship to Congregation: _____

Date of Incident: _____ Time of Incident: _____

Date of Notification: _____ Time of Notification: _____

In what manner was the incident reported? _____

Name of person(s) involved in incident: (Name, address, phone number)

_____ Minor _____ Adult _____

(A separate report must be made for each minor involved.)

Location of the incident: _____

Witnesses to incident: (Name, Address, Phone) _____

Witnesses to incident: (Name, Address, Phone) _____

Witnesses to incident: (Name, Address, Phone) _____

Description of Incident: _____



Dear Youth/Child-Care Worker Applicant,

One of the great joys of being a part of a faith community is learning from children and youth about what it means to be a child of God, no matter what the age. They give adults the precious gifts of innocence, enthusiasm, curiosity, and are visible signs that God is not yet through with Creation. They give so much to us. So, as adults we are asked to give to them.

As part of our Safe Church Policy, our congregation requires a background check of all of our staff and all of our youth volunteers. .

This represents our congregation's firm commitment to give children and youth the chance to spiritually learn and grow in the safest and most secure environment we can provide and to ensure they are safe, honored, loved and respected at FCC. As well, we want parents to have full confidence in the adults that care for their children.

Please be assured that background investigation information will be used only for the purpose of application for employment or volunteer work with FCC.

Thank you for your willingness to serve, and for making this effort to protect our congregation's children.

In Christ,

Risk Management Committee

I HAVE READ AND ACKNOWLEDGE THAT I WILL ADHERE TO ALL THE POLICIES, PROCEDURES AND GUIDELINES IN THE SAFE CHURCH POLICY.

NAME

DATE