

SAFE CHURCH POLICIES AND FORMS
Approved by unanimous vote Special Church Meeting 3/21/04

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Our Covenant for Working Together

1. We will be respectful and honest with one another.
2. We will support any decisions we make while realizing that we can disagree and still work together.
3. We will not say anything about anyone that we would not say to the person’s face
4. We will recognize and identify merit in another person’s idea before we note any weakness.
5. We will clarify any issue when asked and ask for clarification when necessary.

GUIDELINES FOR CARE OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULT SUPERVISORS

Definitions (for all church policies):

- Children – ages 0 to 12 or up through 6th grade.
- Youth – ages 13 to 18 or Junior and Senior High
- Minor – person under 18 years old

1. The Children/Adult Rule

All children and youth in Church School shall be under adult supervision. No teacher, advisor, or aide or anyone else working with our children or youth should place him/herself in a compromising situation by being alone with a child out of view of other teachers, advisors, aides or parents.

When there are only two adults present at an event with children they may not be a married couple (since a spouse cannot be forced to testify against his/her spouse).

On Sunday morning, no windows will be covered. No locked doors will be allowed. Parents are responsible for the activity and control of their children prior to and after scheduled Church School classes.

Nursery children will be accompanied at all times by a teacher or helper.

Nursery children will not be released to anyone other than the child's parent/guardian without written parental permission.

There shall be a one year waiting period for anyone new to the congregation before they work in a leadership capacity with children or youth in the congregation. All teachers are to be approved by the Board of Worship and Education.

When one-on-one interactions between an adult and a child are appropriate and/or necessary, care shall be taken that they are conducted in an environment that provides visibility to others. If at all possible, another adult should have knowledge of who is meeting and where.

Under no circumstance is any staff member or volunteer to make secret deals or exchange secret gifts with children or young people.

2. Parental Consent

Those working with children and youth on special projects, such as confirmation, shall have a signed, written consent of a parent or guardian before being alone with a child or youth.

3. Reporting Responsibilities

Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult and a minor or between two minors shall be promptly reported to the Minister who shall report it to the Board of Worship and Education.

4. Overnight Rule

Any and all adult chaperones supervising overnight stays of children or youth shall have been cleared to do so by the Board of Worship and Education. At least one male will dorm with boys and one female with girls. A signed parental consent form is required which lists the names of the advisors to be present.

5. Discipline

The purpose of discipline with children and youth is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of Christian responsibility, respect and cooperation.

No child shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any other form of physical punishment.

Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insult or shouting.

Teachers, advisors and aides and others helping in the classroom are encouraged to listen to the child, communicating expectations of appropriate behavior, use time-outs or give alternative choices.

If a child is disruptive, a teacher or aide from the class or a neighboring class may be sent to locate the lead teacher. This person may contact the parent.

Children with serious disciplinary problems shall be referred to their parents during Church School. Where discipline is called for in children and youth ministry settings, it shall be limited to appropriate reprimands and/or quiet time apart from the class or group until parents are notified.

6. Youth Activities

The Board of Worship and Education is responsible for implementing and enforcing appropriate boundaries through education and training for youth, parents and adult leadership.

7. Drugs and Alcohol

The use of any drugs or alcoholic products on or in church facilities or at church sponsored events is not permitted.

8. Transportation

Written parental permission is required for staff, adult leaders or teachers to transport children or youth between church and home or to field trips of other church activities. No child or youth should be dropped off or left alone at the church at any time. All drivers must be at least 18 years old.

9. Bathroom Policy

No child shall be admonished for soiling, wetting, or not using the toilet.

Children in Grades K and up do not need to be escorted to the bathroom. If a child does not return in a reasonable time frame, send *another child* to find out where the child is. If assistance is needed in the bathroom, request help from another adult *and* prop the door open.

Nursery teachers will not change diapers, but will locate the parent to do so if needed.

10. Emergency Procedures

The Board of Worship and Education is responsible for periodic test of appropriate emergency procedures relating to Church School.

11. Confirmation

The Board of Membership and Ministry is responsible to oversee the process of those (eighth grade and above) joining the church through Confirmation. One common practice is to assign mentors to confirmands. While this can be extremely meaningful for both parties, care must be taken to observe all the above policies in the process. Simply put, a confirmand should never meet privately with a mentor. The “two adult” rule can be observed by mentors meeting with confirmands in small groups or in settings where other adults are present, provided that the second adult is not the spouse of the first.

Sexual Exploitation, Ministerial Conduct, and Youth Protection Policy

STATEMENT OF POLICY

A. Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment (See definitions.)

First Congregational Church of Brimfield is committed to creating and maintaining a worship and work community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Specifically, all persons associated with First Congregational Church of Brimfield 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 may be needed to prevent and correct behavior which is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

B. Ministerial Conduct (See definitions.)

All persons engaged in the ministry of First Congregational Church of Brimfield (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of parishioner(s) or other individual(s) by anyone engaged in the ministry of First Congregational Church of Brimfield is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Because ministers (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) often deal with individuals who are emotionally and psychologically fragile or otherwise personally vulnerable, it is imperative that those engaged in the ministry of this church maintain their own psychological, emotional, and spiritual health and that they have adequate preparation and education for helping those individuals they seek to serve in ministry. It is the policy of First Congregational Church of Brimfield to encourage its leaders, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers to nurture safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources. It is also expected that those engaged in providing ministry will complete and submit a disclosure document in a form substantially similar to that of the one accompanying this policy.

C. Youth Protection Policy

First Congregational Church of Brimfield is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, we expect that all people applying to be volunteers who work with minors will have been members or friends of First Congregational Church of Brimfield for at least one year. It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all youth activities. We also expect all employees or volunteers who work with minors to complete and submit a disclosure document in a form substantially similar to the one accompanying this policy.

DEFINITIONS

Minister: a person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. Minister includes elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, and volunteers, as well as authorized ministers.

Authorized minister: a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ.

Ministerial relationship: the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.

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's sexuality or sexual orientation 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, or invitations;

Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;

Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, 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. For example, 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.

Key Policy

Individuals who receive a key from First Congregational Church shall sign a key receipt form that clearly states the purpose(s) for receiving the key and indicates the person's understanding and compliance with the conditions set forth by this policy.

When a person receives a key from the church, he/she:

- May not lend the key to anyone else
- May not duplicate the key for any reason
- May not tag or otherwise identify the key as providing access to First Congregational Church
- Is entirely responsible for the security of the key
- Will return the key when he/she no longer has the responsibility for the stated purpose or when it is requested by the Board of Finance and Property or its representative.

Key holders become agents of First Congregational Church and must abide by all policies and procedures regarding the use of all church buildings and properties. Key holders are required to report child abuse and neglect. If a key holder has reasonable cause to believe, or has been told, that abuse and/or neglect of a child or youth has occurred in any of the church's buildings and/or properties, that person is required to file an Incident Report form with the Minister and Board of Worship and Education. Failure to do so may result in the loss of privilege to be a key holder.

Confidentiality Policy

Some information about church members kept in church records is confidential in nature. Information that may be gathered about a member either through self-disclosure or by request of others is confidential. This may include disclosure statements regarding criminal charges, civil lawsuits or background information. Written records of disciplinary actions would also be kept in confidential records.

All confidential records will be secured in a locked file in the church office. Access to the record is limited to those church leaders who require the information in the course of performing their duties. A record of access will be kept with each file listing the date of access, the person accessing the file and the person granting the access. Access can be granted only by the pastor, the moderator, the administrator, or the person named in the record.

Financial information (including pledges) is also considered confidential, but is to be handled differently. Only the treasurer, assistant treasurer and financial secretary shall have access to the financial information of members. Summary reports of this data that is not confidential (i.e. without names) may be distributed within the church.

Confidential information will not be shared with other organizations without written permission from the individual, except in the case of legal mandatory reporting regulations. An individual always has a right to view his or her confidential record.

Background Checks and Disclosures

- All paid employees of the church shall submit to a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) check as condition of employment.
- All persons who serve as a board member or officer with fiscal responsibilities shall complete a volunteer application.

All employment and volunteer applications shall include self-disclosure information designed to assure the church that prior misconduct in the area of concern does not exist. The supervising body has the power to deny employment or a volunteer position to anyone with unsatisfactory self-disclosure or CORI.

The First Congregational Church, U.C.C, Brimfield, Massachusetts
20 Main Street, P.O. Box 203, Brimfield, Ma 01010-0230
413 245 7162

Employment/Authorized Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form

This Application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. Information will be held confidential and will be used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for the children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. If the person reviewing this application has a concern about any information you submit, he or she will contact you first for clarification prior to further investigation.

Name

Last

First

Middle

Address _____

P. O. Box

Street

Apt #

City/Town

State

Zip Code

Daytime Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

Current Place of Employment _____ Length of Employment _____

Address _____

Street

Town

State

Zip Code

Name of immediate supervisor _____ Phone Number _____

Previous Employer (begin with most recent)

Employer	Address	Phone	Employed From/To
_____	_____	_____	_____/_____ /
_____	_____	_____	_____/_____ /
_____	_____	_____	_____/_____ /

Personal References (Not former employers or a relative)

Name	Address	Phone	Length of time known
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Name of church where I am currently a friend or member _____

I have been a member of this church since _____ I have been a friend of this church since _____

Please list all previous church work involving youth (identify church and length of service)

List any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for children/youth work.

Do you have a valid driver's license? Yes No State Issued _____ Driver's License Number _____

With respect to my driving record, I have not had my 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 True Not True

I have a safe driving record with the following vehicles. Automobile Van Bus Other

I have never been found guilty, or pled guilty or no contest, to a criminal charge. True Not True

If not true, give a short explanation of the charge. Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the charge; where the charge was filed; and the precise disposition of the charge below.

No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settle out of court or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired. True Not True If not true 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 below

Is there any fact of circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying? Yes No If yes, please provide a brief explanation below.

The covenants between persons seeking employment or sanctioned volunteer positions in the church require honest, 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 response and information I have provided if I

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come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, through 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 employees or volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize The First Congregational Church U.C.C of Brimfield Massachusetts and /or its agents to make inquiries regarding 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 the state opinions regarding my background and character. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their response comment and statement made in good faith and without malice.

The First Congregational Church U.C.C of Brimfield Massachusetts' hiring and authorized volunteer recruitment process involves the distribution of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure and supervise the position I am seeking to fill. To that end, I authorize The First Congregational Church U.C.C of Brimfield Massachusetts and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these stated purposes. I understand that The First Congregational Church U.C.C of Brimfield Massachusetts will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

Signature _____

(Parent/guardian's signature for applicants under 18) _____

Date _____

I understand that if I am applying for employment a request for Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI Report) will be submitted on me as part of this application.

(initial here)

Incident Report Form

This form is to be used to register all injuries or mishaps that take place during church programs or events on or off church premises. It is also to be used for all suspicious child abuse or neglect.

Name: _____ **Male:** _____ **Female:** _____

Home Address: _____

Town, State: _____ Zip code: _____ Phone: _____

_____ Date of Birth: _____

Name of Reporter: _____

Home Address: _____

Town, State: _____ Zip code: _____ Phone: _____

_____ Date of Birth: _____

1. Briefly describe the nature and extent of the injury, accident or abuse. Include specifics such as date, time, and location. _____

2. Describe the circumstances under which you became aware of the incident include the name of any witnesses.

3. Indicate action taken by Staff and/or Authorized Volunteers. Include the names of Staff and/or Authorized Volunteers.

4. Please give any other information, which you think might be helpful in establishing the cause of the incident(s) and/or the person(s) responsible for it. If known, please provide the name(s) of the alleged perpetrator(s).

Signature of Reporter

Date

Role/function/position of Reporter: _____

For Office Use only

Date Report Received: _____ Report Received by: _____

_____ (If injured Person is a child) Copy Submitted to Parents/Guardian

Date Submitted: _____

Submitted by: _____

_____ Copy Submitted to Reporter:

Date Submitted: _____

Submitted by: _____

Further Action: _____

Comments: _____

Key Receipt Form

Name: _____ Member Non-member

I am receiving a key for the following purpose(s):

I acknowledge receipt of key # _____ and agree that:

- I will not lend the key to anyone else
- I will not duplicate the key for any reason
- I will not tag or otherwise identify the key as providing access to First Congregational Church
- I will be entirely responsible for the security of the key and I will return it when I no longer have the responsibility for the above named purpose or when it is requested by the Board of Finance and Property or its representative.

In receiving this key, I acknowledge that I am an agent of First Congregational Church and agree to abide by all policies and procedures regarding the use of all church buildings and properties.

I understand that as a key holder I am required to report child abuse and neglect. If I have reasonable cause to believe, or have been told, that abuse and/or neglect of a child or youth has occurred in any of the church's buildings and/or properties, I am required to file an Incident Report form with the Minister and Board of Worship and Education. Failure to do so may result in my loss of privilege to be a key holder.

I understand that, as a key holder, I am responsible for the Policies and Procedures of First Congregational Church while any properties and/or facilities of the church are unlocked by the key that I hold. I will not be alone in any rooms of the First Congregational Church's buildings and/or properties with a child or youth other than my own at anytime.

I will check when I am leaving the building and if I am the last person present I will be sure that all the exterior doors are locked.

I know where the Policies and Procedures for a Safe Church are kept and I will familiarize myself with those documents. I also understand that I may contact the Board of Worship and Education for any clarifications I need.

I understand that failure to comply with any of the provisions set forth in this document may result in my loss of privilege to be a key holder.

Signature

Finance & Property Board Member

Deposit received _____ *(for non-church members)*

Statement of Compliance

Printed name

I acknowledge that I have read and understand the “Policies and Procedures for a Safe Church” and I agree to follow that document in my activities involving youth and children. I have been approved as (check one):

Authorized Volunteer
 Authorized Supervisor

Non-Church Leader
 Elected Church Volunteer

I understand that I am required to report child abuse and neglect. If I have reasonable cause to believe, or have been told, that abuse and/or neglect of a child or youth has occurred in any of the church’s buildings and/or properties, I am required to file an Incident Report form with the Minister and Board of Worship and Education within 24 hours.

In compliance with the Policies and Procedures for a Safe Church, I will not be alone in any rooms of the First Congregational Church’s buildings and/or properties with a child or youth other than my own at anytime.

When the activity for which I am responsible is concluded, I will check the building and if I am the last person present I will be sure that all the exterior doors are locked.

I acknowledge that I am an agent of First Congregational Church and agree to abide by all policies and procedures regarding the use of all church buildings and properties. I understand that failure to comply with any of the provisions set forth in this document may result in the loss of my standing as an Authorized Volunteer or Authorized Supervisor.

I understand that there are copies of the Policies and Procedures for a Safe Church available at the church and that I have both the right and the responsibility to familiarize myself with those documents. I also understand that I may contact a member of the Board of Worship and Education for any clarifications I need.

Signature

Date