



UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, FEDERATED

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SAFE CHURCH POLICY

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Introduction

“Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.” Luke 10:27

To follow this commandment is to pursue love, safety, peace and security for all who come within the reaches of our ministries. As a part of this commitment, this Safe Church Policy is set forth herein, to guide us in our efforts to make God’s home at UCC, Fed a safe and welcoming place for children and adults alike. UCC, Fed encourages its lay leaders, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers, to nurture safety within the relationships developed during ministerial work, by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to any appropriate medical, mental health or social service resources. UCC, Fed has no tolerance for child/vulnerable adult abuse and neglect, sexual harassment and sexual misconduct. UCC, Fed will take allegations of such behavior seriously, will promptly respond to all such allegations, and will take action to address behavior contrary to this policy and to ensure that a safe environment is restored and maintained in all church activities.

1. GENERAL POLICIES and PROCEDURES

1.1. BUILDING SECURITY COMMITTEE

1.1.1. The Security Committee is an ad-hoc task force comprised of members of the Church, including but not limited to members of the Council, Trustees, Building & Grounds, Finance, and Pastoral staff. The Security Committee will implement the Safe Church policy and procedures regarding building safety including without limitation: preparing a fire evacuation plan for the entire church building and maintaining maps with floor plans on bulletin boards indicating the location of exits, fire extinguishers, emergency telephone numbers, fire pull stations, and first aid kits. The Security Committee, along with the office staff will create guidelines for church use by outside groups. The Church Council will approve these guidelines.

1.1.2. The Security Committee will:

- 1.1.2.1. conduct an annual inspection of the church building and equipment to determine if they comply with the Safe Church Policy, and relevant municipal, state and federal laws and recommend any necessary corrective action to the Council;
- 1.1.2.2. the Council will schedule a review of the Safe Church Policy every three years by the Security Committee, which will recommend any necessary revisions to the Council who shall accept, reject or refer any recommendation back to the Security Committee for further study;
- 1.1.2.3. verify that the current policy is readily available to all members and friends via the church website (www.websteruccfed.org) and via hardcopy readily available in the church office, and ensure that all documents related to the Policy are stored in a safe manner, including but not limited to: employment applications, disclosure forms, incident reports, reports of suspected abuse or neglect, fire evacuation plans, insurance policies and criminal record reports, as described below.

1.2. SAFE CHURCH TEAM

1.2.1. The Safe Church Team will be appointed by the Council and will consist of no less than three and no more than five persons and will only include church members. Criminal Record checks will be run on all members of the Safe Church Team. If a nominee for the Safe Church Team has been convicted of a crime, the Chair of the Safe Church Team shall discuss the circumstances with the Council Chair, who will then discuss the situation with the nominee, and may recommend the replacement of the nominee.

1.2.2. The Safe Church Team will follow appropriate procedures for responding to all allegations of abuse, neglect, sexual misconduct or sexual harassment alleged to have been committed by or against members of the UCC, Fed community at church

or at activities scheduled by the UCC, Fed. Such procedures include the procedures in Section III A below, “Response Policy and Procedures”. The appropriate procedures for responding to a case of alleged sexual misconduct or harassment not involving children may be very different from the procedures to be followed in a case of alleged child/vulnerable person abuse or neglect. To protect the confidentiality of any involved children or adults, the sharing of any information about the work of the Safe Church Team will be limited to those who ‘need to know’. In the event that a family member of the Safe Church Team is involved in said allegations, that Team member will recuse themselves from the response process.

1.3. TRUSTEES AND FINANCE COMMITTEES

1.3.1.1. The Trustees and Finance Committees will conduct an annual review of the liability insurance maintained by the UCC, Fed, including all coverage provided by the **(name of the insurance)**.

1.4. PARENTS AND GUARDIANS

1.4.1.1. A complete copy of this policy will be available for review at all times on the church website and will be readily available in hard copy in the church office. A summary of the policy will be provided to all parents and guardians at the outset of the Christian year, and to new families upon registration to activities.

1.5. APPLICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION

1.5.1.1. The Safe Church Policy applies to all activities, which take place within the building and on the property of the UCC, Fed and at any programs, activities or events scheduled as part of the ministry of UCC, Fed that take place off church property. The policy will be available to those groups using or renting UCC, Fed premises for review. All groups using or renting facilities at the UCC, Fed shall be provided with the UCC, Fed Safe Church Policy and shall acknowledge having read the information about the Safe Church Policy and shall agree to comply with its provisions as they pertain to their use of the building, by signing an acknowledgement form. See Section V for additional information about outside groups using UCC, Fed facilities.

1.6. ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND TOBACCO

1.6.1.1. The use of tobacco, alcoholic beverages, recreational marijuana, and illegal drugs, is prohibited on church property (building and grounds) at any time.

1.7. SCREENING PROCEDURES

1.7.1. Criminal & Sexual Offender Record Check

- 1.7.1.1. All applicants for employment with the UCC, Fed, as well as all youth workers, chaperones and volunteers who attend overnight events with any youth group, all mentors who work with confirmands, and anyone else deemed appropriate by the Security Committee shall be required to comply with a criminal & sexual offender record check either via CORI check and via national background check, according to the current requirements of our insurer.
- 1.7.1.2. The Office Administrator will coordinate the obtaining of these request or release forms. The Office Administrator is the only one authorized to initiate a criminal & sexual offender records check. Requests shall be made to the Office Administrator.
- 1.7.1.3. When a CORI and national background check request is completed, the results will be reviewed by the Office Administrator and shared with the person that requested the check. If the CORI and national background request were filed regarding a Pastor, it will be initiated by the Office Administrator who will provide the resulting report to the Chair of the Council for review. If a criminal conviction is shown on the record, the Chair of the Council will consult with the members of the Safe Church Team to consider the offense and any necessary appropriate action.
- 1.7.1.4. The criminal and sexual offender record reports themselves are the property of the person requesting their criminal record check. All such reports (as well as disclosure forms) will be kept in a securely locked file cabinet in a locked office at the church with restricted access.

1.7.1.5. Paid Employees and Contracted Childcare Providers

- 1.7.1.5.1. All applicants for employment will go through a regular application procedure, which will include the submission of references and a personal interview.
- 1.7.1.5.2. All applicants for employment and employees will complete a disclosure form as well as a criminal and sexual offender record check. Criminal record checks for applicants for employment will only be conducted after a candidate has been interviewed and determined otherwise appropriate for employment. Failure to fully disclose conviction for a crime or the commission of a violent crime, a sex crime, or a crime against children will be grounds for dismissal.
- 1.7.1.5.3. Screening of criminal record reports will be done by the pastor and Council.

1.7.1.5.4. All screening records will be kept in a securely locked confidential file at the church with restricted access, or in the event the records are received electronically, will be left on the secure Massachusetts CORI website and will not be downloaded to an insecure site.

1.7.1.5.5. If the congregation contracts with a company for childcare services, the pastor and/or Office Administrator will verify that the company requests CORI reports for all childcare providers assigned to UCC, Fed.

1.7.1.6. Volunteers involved in any activity with children and youth under the age of eighteen (18):

1.7.1.6.1. Volunteers will complete a disclosure form.

1.7.1.6.2. Screening of volunteers' disclosure forms will be done by the pastor or Office Administrator, in consultation with the whole Safe Church Team when deemed necessary by the Chair.

1.7.1.6.3. All screening records will be kept in a securely locked confidential file at the church with restricted access.

1.8. TRAINING AND SUPERVISION OF EMPLOYEES AND VOLUNTEERS

1.8.1. A complete copy of this policy will be provided to employees and volunteers who work with children or youth. They will be required to:

- 1.8.1.1.1. sign an acknowledgment of receipt of the policy;
- 1.8.1.1.2. familiarize themselves with the policy;
- 1.8.1.1.3. and abide by the policy.

1.8.2. Teacher training sessions will include information regarding the prevention and reporting of child abuse and the maintenance of a safe church environment.

2. PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The UCC, Fed will maintain a safe and nurturing environment as we provide religious education in a setting that fosters spiritual development.

2.1. CARE AND SUPERVISION

2.1.1. Two Unrelated Adults Rule

No adult will be alone in the Church, or at a church scheduled activity, with a child/youth that is not his or her own, or a relative, without written permission of the child's or children's parent or guardian. Mentors and Confirmands will follow the procedures outlined in the Safe Church Considerations for Confirmation Mentors.

2.1.2. Six Month Rule and References

Individuals will be known to the UCC, Fed community for six months or more before volunteering with children or youth. Individuals new to the UCC, Fed community interested in volunteering with children or youth will also be asked to provide two phone references from prior volunteer settings.

2.1.3. Classroom

- 2.1.3.1. Two unrelated adults will be present to care for and supervise all children and youth in the Sunday school.
- 2.1.3.2. No teacher, assistant or person working with children or youth will place him or herself in a compromising situation by being alone with a child, or children out of view of another teacher, assistant or parent.
- 2.1.3.3. A pastor or team member will be present each Sunday and will visit classrooms to assist with additional supervision.

2.1.4. Bathroom

- 2.1.4.1. Teachers or persons working with children or youth shall avoid being left alone with a child in a bathroom for the purposes of toileting, clean up, the care of illness or injury, or for any other reason.
- 2.1.4.2. Under normal circumstances, teachers, or assistants who accompany a child to the bathroom should remain outside the bathroom while the child is inside.
- 2.1.4.3. If a child needs assistance with zipping, buttoning, buckling, cleanup, wiping, etc., two adults will be present whenever possible.
- 2.1.4.4. Diapering of infants and toddlers is not allowed unless specifically authorized by the parents in a signed document. In this particular case, two volunteers need to be present during the toileting. Preferably, a parent or guardian should be located to do the changing. In the event that there are too many children for a childcare provider to leave briefly to find a parent, if a diaper bag for the infant is present, one of the childcare providers should change the diaper in the classroom, in the presence of the other childcare provider. An infant or toddler should not be left in a soiled diaper for more than 10 minutes. Childcare providers should not wait for the end of the worship service to address a soiled diaper.

2.2. BEHAVIOR AND DISCIPLINE

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

2.2.2. Teachers are encouraged to set high standards for behavior. Teachers will communicate expectations for behavior clearly, and will make every effort to apply standards consistently, and to listen to children and youth while doing so. Children are requested not to run in hallways or any common space because of the danger presented to toddlers and the elderly. All children are expected to behave in a considerate manner during social events, coffee hour, meetings, functions, etc.

2.2.3. The use of any form of physical punishment is prohibited. Interfering with daily functions of living such as eating, toileting and sleeping is prohibited as a method of discipline. Punishing, ridiculing, scapegoating, terrorizing, ignoring or isolating a child is prohibited.

2.2.4. If a child's behavior is unacceptable the following steps are recommended. First, the child will be warned that the behavior is unacceptable. If the behavior continues, the child will be given an opportunity to get his/her behavior under control by taking a few moments alone within the classroom. If inappropriate behavior continues, a pastor and another adult will meet with the child outside the classroom to discuss the behavior and attempt to enable the child to return to the classroom.

2.2.5. Parents will be notified of a pattern of disruptive behavior.

2.3. HEALTH AND SAFETY

2.3.1. Parents and guardians of each child attending Sunday school will provide UCC, Fed with a completed registration form that describes all of the child's behavioral and medical conditions, (including allergies), special needs and special accommodations required for participation in Sunday school.

2.3.2. Children who have had a fever of 100 degrees or more in the preceding 24 hours are not permitted to attend Sunday school, except when the fever is the result of a non-contagious illness.

2.3.3. All children grades 3 and under will be picked up at their classroom by a parent unless other arrangements have been made with the teachers.

2.3.4. Parents are expected to pick their children up promptly at the conclusion of the service from their classroom.

2.3.5. At the conclusion of class, teachers will inform parents or guardians about any injuries, cuts, falls or incidents of inappropriate behavior, including hitting or

biting, involving their child. Teachers will report all such incidents to a pastor or Christian Education team member.

2.3.6. First aid kits are available in classrooms and the church office.

2.4. EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Please see evacuation plan in Appendix A.

2.5. YOUTH ACTIVITIES

2.6. All youth group activities will be attended by at least two leaders or chaperones, both of whom will be at least 5 years older than the oldest member of the group. One leader from each gender will attend all youth group activities, when possible. Leaders are responsible for setting the boundaries of appropriate behavior.

2.7. Youth group leaders, staff and volunteers may not initiate or encourage physical or intimate contact with youth or allow inappropriate contact between the youth.

2.8. Senior and Junior Youth Groups are group ministries. All participants are expected to remain with the group throughout the activity times listed in church publications. No pairing or otherwise separating off from the group to other parts of the building or grounds is permitted except with the permission of a group leader.

2.9. A youth member of a church commission, committee, sub-committee, or task force should not be in attendance at a meeting with less than two adults or the youth's parent present.

2.9.1.1. Parental Consent

2.9.1.2. All those working with youth and children will obtain signed, written consents of a parent or guardian, before chaperoning or supervising activities or programs away from the Church.

2.9.1.3. Overnight Activities

2.10. Transportation, lodging and activities during overnight events will be reviewed in advance by the Christian Education Committee. All adult chaperones supervising overnight stays of church youth, whether in the church or outside the church, will be cleared in advance to do so by the Pastor or other designated church official.

2.11. There will be at least one male and one female chaperone present throughout overnight activities, and the ratio mentioned below will be followed. Boys and girls will sleep in separate areas during all overnight trips or activities. If circumstances require that boys and girls sleep in one area, chaperones will maintain and oversee separation.

Staff from the UCC, Fed or partner service organizations may meet the requirements of this policy for chaperones at overnight activities.

2.12. There will be a ratio of at least one chaperone for every five youths attending an overnight event. For overnight events longer than weekend events a ratio of one chaperone for every four youths is recommended to ensure that there are two chaperones present during times when the group splits up. There will be at least one chaperone for every four children attending an overnight event.

2.13. A signed parental consent form which lists the names of the chaperones to be present is required.

2.14. All attendees will be required to sign and abide by a covenant that will include a code of conduct.

2.14.1.1. Transportation

2.15. Staff, youth group leaders, teachers and assistants may not transport children or youth between church and home, without the written consent of a parent or guardian. When a parent is unable to pick up a child due to unforeseen circumstances, UCC, Fed staff and volunteers may in their discretion accept verbal consent. A record will be kept including day and time of the verbal consent, name and contact information, and a summary of the instructions.

2.16. All vehicles used to transport children and youth to field trips, activities or other events will be properly insured.

2.17. All vehicles used for field trips, activities or other events will include properly working seatbelts to accommodate one youth per seatbelt. No child under the age of 12 will be seated in the front seat of a vehicle.

2.18. All drivers of vehicles used for field trips, activities or other events will be a minimum age of 21 and will have at least 3 years driving experience. Drivers will submit a copy of their valid driver's license, and a Vehicle Operator's Application.

2.19. Whenever possible there will be two adults in each car carrying children or youth. If it is not possible to have two adults in each car, then there will be more than one child or youth in the car. If transportation of one child by one unrelated adult is unavoidable, the adult will contact the child's parent at the beginning and end of the trip. Confirmation mentors should follow the procedures outlined under Confirmation.

2.19.1.1. Activity Dismissal for all children and youth related activities:

2.20. At the close of a youth activity or a meeting at which youth are in attendance, two adults will leave with youth. No child or youth under the age of eighteen (18) may

remain alone with only one adult. Two unrelated adults must be present at all times if any children or youth under the age of eighteen (18) are on church premises or grounds.

2.21. Parents will respect concluding times and arrange to pick up children and youth accordingly.

2.22. Situations where one adult and one youth or child is left at church waiting for pickup by a parent or guardian are prohibited.

2.23. DIGITAL AND SOCIAL MEDIA

2.24. Please See Appendix B.

2.25. PROTECTION OF VULNERABLE ADULTS

2.26. VULNERABLE ADULT:

2.26.1.1. Any adult at or older than the age designated as an elder by applicable state law, age 60 in Massachusetts;

2.26.1.2. Any adult who is infirm or diminished in capacity due to age, illness, or disability;

2.26.1.3. Any adult who is ministered to in their home (by parishioners, Pastor, or others);

2.26.1.4. Any adult who is wholly or partially dependent upon one or more other persons for emotional, psychological, or physical care or support, such dependency may be temporary as in the case of an accident, illness, or birth of a child;

2.26.1.5. Any adult who by virtue of a crisis, experiences vulnerability leading to dependency on another or lacks agency in a pastoral relationship as in the wake of death of a family member or job loss.

2.26.1.6. Any member of the LGBTQ community as they might have experience discrimination and trauma from churches and communities.

2.27. BEST PRACTICES

2.27.1.1. It is best practice for those ministering to vulnerable adults to document their visits, including time, place, and any observations or concerns. Confidentiality is required and all documentation is kept confidential. This documentation promotes continuity of care and transparency in ministry.

- 2.27.1.2. All persons involved in ministry to vulnerable adults are to ensure appropriate behavior and healthy boundaries.
- 2.27.1.3. While not required, it is best practice for those ministering to vulnerable adults, or in the homes of others, to do so with another person. Those engaged in such ministries should minister in pairs.
- 2.28. INCLUSIVENESS
- 2.29. No one shall be denied rights, status, or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, socio-economic class, or age. To the extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities and ministry shall be accessible.
- 2.30. The Episcopal Church seeks to support all persons by providing reasonable alternative arrangements regardless of state law to address safety and comfort.
- 2.31. Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary adults who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single-stall restroom. Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the adult's ability to keep their transgender status confidential, if they so desire.
- 2.32. Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary adults should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity. Safe bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned for the use of a single facility).
- 2.33. Violence
- 2.33.1.1. No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time.
- 2.33.1.2. No one is to control or attempt to control another by bullying, intimidation, threats, verbal/emotional abuse, or isolation from others. Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited.
- 2.33.1.3. Report suspected violations immediately. See Suspected Violations of this Policy (Section VII, B).
- 2.34. Behavioral Standards for Ministry with Vulnerable Adults

2.35. All who work with vulnerable adults are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships. To this end, lay, and ordained ministers working with vulnerable adults shall:

2.35.1.1. Take care not to unduly influence a person to whom they minister;

2.35.1.2. Accept only token gifts from those to whom they minister. Ministers given gifts shall report those gifts in writing to their Supervisor or Responsible Person;

2.35.1.3. Decline to accept loans of any kind from those to whom they minister;

2.35.1.4. Decline to agree to be named as a beneficiary or to act as an administrator or executor in a will of anyone to whom they minister; and

2.35.1.5. Inform Supervisor or Responsible Person of anything that causes concern for the safety or wellbeing of those to whom they minister.

2.36. DO's

2.37. All who minister to vulnerable adults are encouraged to:

2.37.1.1. Have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study;

2.37.1.2. Spend time with and listen to vulnerable adults, and advocate for their ministry within the Body of Christ;

2.37.1.3. Offer appropriate physical expressions of affection, as long as they are welcomed by the recipient. These may include:

2.37.1.4. brief hugs;

2.37.1.5. pats on the shoulder or back;

2.37.1.6. kisses on the cheek;

2.37.1.7. handshakes;

2.37.1.8. holding hands during prayer; and

2.37.1.9. Maintain healthy boundaries when sharing personal information.

2.38. DON'Ts

2.39. Adults shall not under any circumstances:

- 2.39.1.1. Provide vulnerable adults with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, illegal drugs, cigarettes, e-cigarettes, vapes, or pornography;
 - 2.39.1.2. Arrive under the influence of alcohol, marijuana (even though consumption is legal in some cases in Massachusetts), illegal drugs, or misused legal drugs when they are responsible for, or ministering to, a vulnerable adult;
 - 2.39.1.3. Consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs when they are responsible for, or ministering to, a vulnerable adult;
 - 2.39.1.4. Engage in illegal behavior or permit others to engage in illegal behavior;
or
 - 2.39.1.5. Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any vulnerable adult.
- 2.40. Visits to Private Residences
- 2.41. The safety of all persons and healthy boundaries are essential when visiting a vulnerable adult in a private home.
- 2.41.1.1. Avoid situations that might compromise privacy; common examples include:
 - 2.41.1.2. Visiting behind closed bedroom doors;
 - 2.41.1.3. Sitting on the bed of the person being visited; or
 - 2.41.1.4. Visiting a person while they are not fully clothed.
 - 2.41.1.5. The best practice is to visit in teams of two or more. If it is not possible for another adult minister to be present, a member of the vulnerable adult's household should be present. If neither is possible, documentation of the time, duration of visit, general matters discussed, and any pastoral concerns shall be provided to the Supervisor or Responsible Person as soon as possible after the visit.
- 2.42. Visits to Residential Facilities
- 2.43. The safety of all persons and healthy boundaries are also essential when visiting a vulnerable adult in a Residential Facility. Best practices include:
- 2.43.1.1. Facility staff should be informed of the visitor's presence;

- 2.43.1.2. If a visit takes place out of sight of staff, they should be notified in advance and informed when such meeting is concluded;
- 2.43.1.3. The door to a resident’s private room must remain open during visits;
- 2.43.1.4. Visitors should be mindful that LGBTQ+ residents may not be safe to express their sexual identity or orientation, as staff members may not yet have been trained; and
- 2.43.1.5. In the event of uncertainty about application of this policy, the visitor is encouraged to contact their Supervisor with the relevant queries.

2.44. Off-Site Visits, Events, and Programs

2.45. Off-site programs, trips, and events are a welcome and often necessary means for spiritual, social, and emotional wellbeing of vulnerable adults. They also present additional challenges for maintaining best practices for safe and healthy ministry. The expectations for safe space, as described above, should be observed off-site.

2.46. In the event of uncertainty about application of this policy, the Responsible Person should contact their Supervisor with the relevant queries.

2.47. Because of the unique risks that can’t always be anticipated, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below.

2.47.1.1.1.1.1. Prior Approvals

2.47.1.2. Prior approval by the Rector and Wardens is required, and that approval shall be reflected in writing.

2.47.1.3. These same prior approvals are required when the site is a private residence, hosting such events as cook outs, progressive dinners, etc.

2.48. In the event of uncertainty, the Responsible Person should contact the Office of the Bishop with the relevant information.

3. Registration, Waivers, and Release Forms

3.1. Due to the unique risks of off-site visits, events, and programs that cannot always be anticipated, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below:

3.1.1.1. All participants shall complete and sign a registration, waiver, and release before participating in any program. Confidentiality must be preserved with respect to medical information.

- 3.1.1.2. There must be a signature on all release and waiver forms. If a person is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency, then the signature of that person's guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member is required. A digital signature is acceptable.
- 3.1.1.3. Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site. Such forms may be saved electronically and shall be saved for a minimum of seven years.
- 3.1.1.4. Permission slips shall be provided for each event and shall be signed by the vulnerable adult, guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member.
- 3.1.1.5. Prior permission for an individual to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required.

4. First Aid and Medications

4.1. Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is strongly encouraged for those who work with vulnerable adults.

- 4.1.1.1. A first aid kit, appropriately stocked for the event and participants, shall be available in an easily accessible location.
- 4.1.1.2. If a vulnerable adult requires assistance with medications of any type, then a record must be kept for all medication or first aid given to a participant. This record shall include the participant's name, the date and time of service, the name of the person administering medication or treatment, and a description of the medication, dosage and/or treatment given.
- 4.1.1.3. All medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to vulnerable adults requiring assistance with medications shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon.
- 4.1.1.4. Only the Responsible Person, or their adult designee, shall administer medications.

4.2. Transportation

4.3. For the health and safety of all participants, the following practices shall be followed:

- 4.3.1.1. For events that originate and/or terminate at the diocesan facilities, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age and provide proof of insurance and a current driver's license, a completed volunteer driver information form, and have a satisfactory RMV records check;

- 4.3.1.2. A list of those approved to provide transportation to vulnerable adults shall be maintained in the diocesan office;
 - 4.3.1.3. Anyone being transported must consent to such transportation beforehand. If a person is unable to consent due to impairment or lack of agency, then prior approval by that person’s guardian, spouse, or other trusted family member is required; and
 - 4.3.1.4. All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.
- 4.4. Insurance for Overseas Pilgrimages and Mission Trips · Short-term trip or supplemental insurance, available through The Church Insurance Companies as an added rider, must be secured at-least one month prior to travel.
- 4.4.1.1. It is recommended that all travelers carry evidence of personal health insurance by virtue of a copy of the actual card provided to the insured person.
 - 4.4.1.2. Because not all individuals have access to affordable and adequate health insurance, it is recommended that health insurance be added to trip insurance.
- 4.5. International Considerations
- 4.5.1.1. Check in with the U.S. Department of State on travel requirements, including visas.
 - 4.5.1.2. Make certain that every traveler’s passport is valid for at least six months beyond your return date.
 - 4.5.1.3. Determine whether or not vaccinations are required and/or recommended for entry into specific countries.
 - 4.5.1.4. Arrange to have at least two cell phones with the group that will have active coverage in your destination(s). Make a back-up plan for communication with your Responsible Person at home.
- 4.6. RESPONSE POLICY AND PROCEDURES
- 4.6.1.1. NOTIFY THE SAFE CHURCH TEAM PROMPTLY
 - 4.6.1.1.1. All allegations of child abuse or neglect, sexual harassment or sexual misconduct will be reported as soon as possible to the Chairperson of the Safe Church Team both verbally and by using the Incident Report Form. If the chair is not immediately available, the allegation should be reported to any member of the Safe Church

Team. If no member of the Team is available, then the allegation should be reported to the Chair of the Council. The pastor should also be notified of all allegations.

4.6.1.1.1.2. The chair of the Safe Church Team, or if the chair is unavailable, then the member of the Team first notified will promptly appoint two members of the Team to assess the allegation, and will promptly notify them of the known facts of the allegation

4.6.1.1.1.3. The Safe Church Team will assess the allegations guided by the Safe Church Team Guidelines.

4.6.1.2. 2. CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

4.7. Ensure the Child's Safety

4.7.1.1. When the abuse or neglect of a child is suspected, the first response must be to take care of the injured person and to obtain any necessary professional medical attention as soon as possible. Call an ambulance if the injury is severe.

4.8. Observe and Record

4.9. Anyone present should carefully observe and record events and any indications of an injury.

4.10. Report Mandated by Massachusetts Law

4.11. Unless the Safe Church Team determines that there is no reasonable cause to believe that an incident of child abuse or neglect has occurred, the Pastor or chair of the Safe Church Team or his or her designee will notify the Department of Children and Families of the allegation of child abuse or neglect:

4.12. STEP1: Immediately telephone the 24-hour DCF Child Protection Hotline at 1-(800)-792-5200 or local DCF office. You will find a directory of the DCF Area Offices at www.mass.gov/dcf. Offices are staffed between 9 AM and 5 PM weekdays.

4.13. STEP2: All Mandated Reporters are required by law to mail or fax a written report using the following template to the Department within 48 hours after making the oral report. (<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dcf/child-abuse-neglect/reporting-abuse.html>, retrieved September 28, 2016)

4.14. The person originally reporting the abuse or neglect need not be identified in the mandated report

4.15. If it is determined that there is not reasonable cause to believe that an incident of child abuse or neglect has occurred, that determination will be documented and a report of the determination given to the Chair of the Council.

4.16. If the person originally reporting the abuse or neglect disagrees with a decision not to file a mandated report, that person may contact DCF directly and file a report.

4.17. Anyone may file a report of suspected child abuse or neglect. In order to avoid duplicate reports, it is recommended that the Safe Church Team file mandated reports.

4.18. C. PROCEDURES FOR SAFE CHURCH TEAM

4.18.1.1.1.1.1. In addition to steps outlined in Section B above, the Safe Church Team will take the following steps:

4.19. Discuss the allegation with the accused in either of the following two ways:

4.20. If an allegation of child abuse or neglect has been made, the accused may be informed that there has been an allegation, but the details should remain confidential, and the child's identity should also be protected. In all other cases, the Team should inform the accused of the complaint, and if appropriate, discuss the allegation with him or her, making sure to protect the safety and confidentiality of the accuser.

4.21. Either obtain a written statement from the accused or make a written record of the meeting signed by the members of the Safe Church Team present;

4.22. Make written findings and promptly submit them to the Chair of the Council.

4.23. Inform the pastor.

4.24. Notify relevant insurance carriers of the allegation in a timely manner.

4.25. If an allegation is made against pastoral or other paid staff, the chair of the Safe Church Team will confer with the Council to decide whether to notify the Associate Conference Minister for the UCC Conference and the Commonwealth West District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church of New England, and appropriate law enforcement authorities.

4.26. 2. UCC, Fed will:

4.27. Immediately remove the accused from all contact with children and youth. Paid employees will be suspended with pay or have their ministry restricted to exclude contact with children and youth; and

4.28. Cooperate with all investigations of abuse or neglect, by public authorities and church insurance companies.

5. Corrective Action

5.1. Depending on the nature of the allegation and the finding of the Safe Church Team (and/or the Department of Social Services) the Safe Church Team may recommend or initiate a variety of corrective actions. These might include, but are not limited to, one or more of the following:

5.2. Issue a formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior, including possible public notification; or

- 5.3. Recommend or require a program of growth that may include education and counseling;
or
- 5.4. Place an employee or volunteer on probation with the terms of probation clearly defined;
or
- 5.5. Dismiss from employment or volunteer leadership position, and, in extreme cases
affiliation with, or membership in the Church.

- 5.6. If a determination is made that the allegations are unfounded, the Safe Church Team will
notify the accused, the complainant, and the alleged victim if other than the complainant.
The Safe Church Team will convey this information to the Chair of the Council.

- 6. Continuing the Ministry of the Church Pastoral support will be offered to all parties involved,
including those who have made the complaint, the accused, the families of both and the
congregation. Pastoral staff will make decisions about how this support will be given.
Information disclosed in pastoral care settings will be kept confidential except when
disclosure is required as a matter of law.

6.1. RESPONDING TO CONCERNS

6.2. SEXUAL MISCONDUCT AND HARASSMENT

- 6.3. Sexual misconduct and harassment are prohibited. All employees, members, and friends
of UCC, Fed, whether male or female are responsible for ensuring that their behavior is
free of sexual misconduct and sexual harassment. Complaints alleging sexual
misconduct or harassment may be resolved informally or formally in accordance with
the Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Misconduct or Harassment by
Employees and Volunteer Leaders of the UCC, Fed, Appendix P.

6.4. USE OF CHURCH FACILITIES BY OUTSIDE GROUPS

- 6.5. UCC, Fed allows the use of its facilities by several outside groups. UCC, Fed will enter
into a written contract with each outside renting group that clearly defines the limits of
the Church's liability, and the group's responsibilities. Generally, each outside group
renting the facility will provide their own certificate of liability insurance naming the
church as additional insured.

- 6.6. UCC, Fed requires that each group's policies shall substantially align with church's
policy and in no circumstances should be in conflict with the Safe Church Policy.

6.7. DEFINITIONS

- 6.8. Adult: A person over the age of 18.

- 6.9. Chaperones: Adults who attend a church sponsored event to help drive supervise, or participate along with children or youth. Couples volunteering or serving together are considered to be one person for the purpose of defining a chaperone.
- 6.10. Child: A person from birth through grade 5.
- 6.11. Child Abuse: Means the non-accidental commission of any act by a caretaker upon a person under age 18, which causes, or creates a substantial risk of, physical or emotional injury or constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth; or any sexual contact between a caretaker and a child under the care of that individual. Physical injury means death; or fracture of a bone, a subdural hematoma, burns, impairment of any organ, and any other nontrivial injury or soft tissue swelling or skin bruising; or addiction to a drug or drugs at birth; or failure to thrive.
- 6.12. Emotional injury means: an impairment to or disorder of the intellectual or psychological capacity of a child as evidenced by observable and substantial reduction in the child's ability to function within a normal range of performance or behavior.
- 6.13. Child Neglect: Means failure by a caretaker, either deliberately or through negligence or inability, to take those actions necessary to provide a child with minimally adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, supervision, emotional stability and growth, or other essential care; provided however that such inability is not due solely to inadequate economic resources or solely to the existence of a handicapping condition.
- 6.14. Council: The governing body of the Church
- 6.15. CORI: Stands for Criminal Offender Record Information. Information regulated by the Department of Criminal Justice Information Systems of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Similar criminal records are kept by appropriate agencies in other states, and can be obtained with a criminal record release request form.
- 6.16. Christian Education Team: The group who are responsible for planning and coordinating the education classes and related activities for all children and youth. This body consists of members, a Chairperson and the pastor.
- 6.17. Trustees: A group within the UCC, Fed, which has oversight of building and grounds.
- 6.18. Guidelines: These are norms of behavior and expectations that should be adhered to as guidelines rather than hard and fast rules. They allow for exceptions when common sense and the best interest of the children and others concerned are taken into account on a case by case basis.
- 6.19. Mandated Reporter: Includes: (a) a clergy member, ordained or licensed minister, or leader of any church, or person performing official duties on behalf of a church or religious body that are recognized as the duties of clergy, ordained or licensed minister

or leader of any church; and (b) a person employed by a church or religious body to supervise, educate, coach, train or counsel a child on a regular basis.(See M.G.L. c. 119 s. 51A; visit [mass.gov](http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dcf/can-mandated-reporters-guide.pdf) for more information.<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/docs/dcf/can-mandated-reporters-guide.pdf>).

- 6.20. Mentor: An adult who supports a youth through the confirmation process, an 18 month program.
- 6.21. Minister: An ordained or licensed person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry.
- 6.22. Chair of the Council: The elected lay person, who presides over all meetings of the Council and congregaton, and acts as counselor and advisor to the pastor in matters pertaining to the life of the church.
- 6.23. Parent/Guardian: The legal caretaker of a minor.
- 6.24. Safe Church: A friendly, open, safe and loving environment where all guidelines and policies are clearly known by staff, parishioners and children.
- 6.25. Safe Church Team: A group of three to five members of the UCC, Fed, appointed by the Council to assess and respond to allegations of child abuse, child neglect, sexual misconduct and sexual harassment alleged to have been committed by or against members of the UCC, Fed at church or at activities scheduled by the UCC, Fed.
- 6.26. Security Committee: A group consisting of members and chairperson to administer oversee and ensure the UCC, Fed building and grounds are in compliance with all Safe Sanctuary and overall security and general safety requirements, in conjunction with the Council.
- 6.27. Sexual Harassment: Means 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 discrimination. Sexual harassment 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.
- 6.28. Sexual Misconduct: Means any sexualized behavior within a ministerial relationship. A ministerial relationship exists between a person providing ministry and the recipients of that ministry. Clergy, ministry team members, Music Director, all provide ministry whether volunteer or paid.
- 6.29. Sexualized Behavior: Means sexual intercourse and caressing, unwelcome hugging, kissing or caressing, and inappropriate touching.

6.30. Teacher/Teacher's Assistant: A person who is present in the classroom for leading Sunday School classes.

6.31. Youth: A person in grades 6 to 12, (or if not enrolled in school) until age 18.

6.32. Youth Worker: An adult who works with youth groups (grades 6 through 12) on a regular basis. Includes those who support the youth groups, mentors, chaperones, or anyone else who assists with youth in a non-classroom church related activity.

6.33. UPDATED AND REVISED BY VOTE OF THE COUNCIL OF UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, FEDERATED,

6.34. On: _____

6.35. Signature: _____

6.36. Chair of the Council / Print Name:

6.37. Appendix B: Recommended Practices and Guidelines for Social Media and Electronic Communications for Vulnerable Adults

6.38. Social media shapes the lives of all of us and has the potential to empower ministry. Behavior in the digital sphere is never private. Posted content may be used out of context and out of the control of the originating individuals and organizations, putting them at risk. In addition, these powerfully connective tools are subject to the same dynamic of unequal power and potential for abuse that present a risk in all ministry relationships. Churches face the challenge of identifying and proactively addressing areas of potential risk in social media use in the midst of rapidly evolving technology. The Diocese of Massachusetts' recommended practices and guidelines in Digital Communication & Social Media: Good Use Guidelines for Clergy & Congregations, (and here in Appendix B-1) are designed to be a flexible template for developing policies and covenants governing the safe use of social media and digital communication in ministry settings.

6.39. Good use guidelines for social and other digital communications media

6.40. Commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries and safe church practices apply to all interactions, in person and online, and include:

6.41. Disparity of power precludes mutuality in friendship.

6.42. Adults have more power than children and youth.

6.43. Clergy have more power than people with whom they have a pastoral relationship.

6.44. Mechanisms should be in place to allow transparency and accountability in interactions with children, youth and adults who may be vulnerable.

6.45. Secret deals between adults and children or young people are never permissible.

6.46. Some general considerations:

6.47. Healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to online as well as in face-to-face interactions. Online interactions need to be as transparent as those conducted in person.

- 6.48. Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, harassment, bullying or exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the online world as they do in the physical world.
- 6.49. In social media networks, “friend” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In-person friendship can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self-disclosure, mutuality and expectations for relationship. Mindfulness of and respect for such distinctions help maintain healthy boundaries.
- 6.50. Confidentiality cannot be assumed in communication via social media and other digital/electronic means (including but not limited to e-mail, text messages, tweets, chats and messages via apps and social networking platforms). All such communication should be considered public in that it can be shared with and forwarded to others (intentionally or unintentionally) or reposted elsewhere. Content can have a long afterlife on the Internet even when specific posts have been deleted.
- 6.51. Community environment and experience can be enhanced by establishing and communicating guidelines around respectful and appropriate use of social media and electronic communication devices during worship and church meetings and activities. (One example: Please mute all devices during the service, but feel free to tweet the best of this morning’s sermon.)
- 6.52. Social media are dynamic and are most effectively used in organizational, leadership and ministry contexts where there is a commitment to regular monitoring and timely response Some guidelines & recommended practices for online interactions in ministry with youth:
- 6.53. (See also “Some additional guidelines...” on page 4.)
- 6.53.1.1.1.1.1. Adults who work with youth should maintain appropriately stringent privacy settings on any and all social media networks. Individual personal profiles are best for interacting with actual friends, family members, colleagues and peers; limited profile access or separate groups are more appropriate options for interacting with youth.
- 6.53.1.1.1.1.1.2. Adults should not submit “friend” requests to youth. Youth may submit “friend” requests to adults, and adults should discern the level of contact that is appropriate to maintain with all youth prior to responding to such requests. Adults should articulate their policy regarding “friend” requests from youth, and then practice that policy consistently.

6.53.1.1.1.1.3. If an adult chooses to accept “friend” requests from youth who are associated with their community of faith, it is recommended that other adult leaders have the same access to that adult’s profile and correspondence.

6.53.1.1.1.1.4. Adults interacting with youth via social media networks are encouraged to set up a closed group to which other adults have administrative access. Youth who submit “friend” requests to an adult can then be invited to join this group rather than be

6.53.1.1.1.1.5. admitted as a “friend” on the adult’s personal account. This is one way to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries.

6.53.1.1.1.1.6. Closed (but not “hidden”) online groups are recommended to insure membership is limited to those involved with the youth ministry.

6.53.1.1.1.1.7. Online groups should have at least two unrelated adult administrators.

6.53.1.1.1.1.8. Establish and clearly communicate norms for behavior and appropriate content for online youth groups, and moderate accordingly. Any content that details inappropriate behavior during a church-sponsored event or activity should be addressed by the clergy, adult youth leaders and parents.

6.53.1.1.1.1.9. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused, neglected or exploited should be

6.54. immediately reported to the clergy and/or the Department of Children and Families (DCF). If the material is on a church-affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with the DCF and/ or police.

6.55. 10. Adult leaders of youth groups and youth members who depart or are no longer eligible because they have aged out of a program should be removed immediately from church-sponsored or organized online communication with youth groups via social networking sites, list serves, etc.

6.56. 11. Some adults who work with youth secure signed release forms from parents or guardians before texting or e-mailing youth directly. Others inform parents or

- 6.57. 12. guardians in advance if they will be using e-mail or text messaging to communicate directly with youth, allowing parents or guardians an opt-out mechanism or an option of being copied on e-mails or texts sent to youth. A good practice is to include at least one other adult in text message or e-mail correspondence with youth, when appropriate. Platforms with no archive feature are not appropriate for communication between adult leaders and youth.
- 6.58. 13. Model and maintain healthy practices and boundaries when responding to youth via online and electronic means by doing it during appropriate hours (for example, not during school hours or late at night).
- 6.59. Some guidelines & recommended practices for online interactions in ministry with people of all ages:
- 6.59.1.1.1.1.1. In social media networks, clergy and other leaders should maintain appropriate privacy settings and should articulate and practice a consistent online policy and presence with members of their congregations or ministry groups. Clergy and other leaders may accept “friend” requests from members of the congregation or ministry group, but it is recommended that they not initiate those requests. Some choose to create separate personal and professional social networking accounts to maintain appropriate boundaries with members of their congregations or ministry groups; others choose limited profile access with members; still others use only their church’s or ministry’s public social media pages or accounts for social networking interaction with the congregation or ministry group.
 - 6.59.1.1.1.1.1.2. Clergy and other leaders should consider the content and nature of their online postings and presence, especially if their voice might be considered the voice of the church and their content understood to be church policy. Use disclaimers when appropriate and clearly identify personal opinion as such.
 - 6.59.1.1.1.1.1.3. Clergy and other leaders who have moved to another congregation or ministry setting should set and observe boundaries and limit correspondence with members of the former congregation or group, via any media, to information necessary to the transition. Maintain online connections in a way that is consistent with appropriate in-person leave-taking practices. When and where it isn’t appropriate to sever social network

connections, consider limited profile access or other boundary-setting practices.

6.59.1.1.1.1.4. Participants in video streams, chats or meetings should consider what will be shown in the video, such as their surroundings, state of dress, etc.

6.59.1.1.1.1.5. It is helpful to establish policies and guidelines for those administering church or ministry group social media accounts and online communication platforms. Don't delegate administration to people who aren't equipped to represent the church or group. Administrators of church or ministry group accounts and platforms should always consider voice and audience and post accordingly.

6.60. Some e-mail considerations:

6.60.1.1.1.1.1. E-mail can be an appropriate and effective means for communicating basic factual information but not matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged or extensive enough that they might better be addressed by phone or in person.

6.60.1.1.1.1.2. Consider the ramifications of clicking "Send" or "Reply All" before doing so. It is also courteous, before sending, to take a moment to re-read message content and to check address fields for accuracy and subject lines for clarity. Obtain permission, when appropriate, before forwarding other people's message content.

6.60.1.1.1.1.3. When sending group e-mails (particularly to large groups and groups whose recipients do not know one another), respect and protect recipients' privacy by placing their addresses in the "blind" BCC field (not the TO field, where they will be displayed and accessible to all).

6.60.1.1.1.1.4. Those who feel they are drowning in e-mail may like to adopt and propagate some of the tips found at www.emailcharter.org.

6.61. Some additional guidelines related to publishing and posting online content:

6.61.1.1.1.1.1. Common sense and common courtesy are two good guides.

- 6.61.1.1.1.1.2. Always cite sources and make sure content comes from credible ones before sharing or posting. Respect copyright and the intellectual/creative property of others and seek permission before using.
- 6.61.1.1.1.1.3. Make announcements and post signs when services or activities are being recorded for broadcast via the Web or other media.
- 6.61.1.1.1.1.4. Secure signed release forms from parents or guardians of minors participating in church activities that may be photographed or videoed for Web posting, broadcast or other online distribution.
- 6.61.1.1.1.1.5. Establish and practice a policy for identifying minors in photos published on church- sponsored sites and social networks; some choose to not include any names; others only first names. In all cases, do not post contact information for minors.

6.62. Sample release form:

6.63. I hereby give the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts [and/or: Fill in name of any affiliated organizations or projects, if applicable] permission to use my name and photo and/or video images of me in all forms and media for advertising, editorial and promotional usage.

6.64. PRINT NAME:

6.65. SIGNATURE:

6.66. DATE:

6.67. Contact phone number and/or e-mail address (for verification or reference purposes)

6.68. If subject is under 18:

6.69. Print full name of subject:

6.70. As the parent/legal guardian of the individual named above, I hereby give the Episcopal Diocese of Massachusetts [and/or: Fill in name of any affiliated organizations or projects, if applicable] permission to use photo and/or video images of her/him in all forms and media for advertising, editorial and promotional usage.

6.71. PRINT PARENT’S/GUARDIAN’S NAME: PARENT/GUARDIAN
SIGNATURE:

6.72. DATE:

6.73. Contact phone number and/or e-mail address (for verification or reference
purposes only):