

Safe Church Policy
First Congregational United Church of Christ – Washington, DC
Adopted by the Congregation [January 2023]

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I. Purpose

As a community of Christian faith, First Congregational United Church of Christ (hereinafter, the “Church”) is committed to providing programs, facilities, and a community within which all participants—members, friends, guests, employees, adults and children—can worship, learn, play, and labor together, in a setting free from physical threats and all forms of discrimination, harassment, intimidation, or abuse. Consistent with our understanding of the priesthood of all believers, all professional pastors, staff, employees, lay leaders, and volunteers who carry out the programs and mission of the Church are ministers of the Church and subject to this Safe Church Policy. It is the policy of the Church to promote and nurture personal safety in all church activities and ministerial relationships by encouraging self-care and healthy boundaries, by providing education and awareness, and by providing access and referrals to supportive resources. Sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse, or any other misconduct by persons carrying out the ministry of the Church will not be tolerated. This Safe Church Policy sets out guidelines for meeting our commitments to safe conduct for all who come within our care.

II. General Principles

All persons engaged in carrying out the programs, work, and ministry of the Church, including professional pastors, staff, employees, lay leaders, and volunteers:

- A. shall be attentive to matters of building security and safety, taking due care, within their areas of responsibility, to facilitate and maintain access to persons of all physical abilities, to identify and minimize physical hazards, and to develop and follow plans for evacuation and sheltering in place in response to fire and external threats (as specified in Section III);
- B. shall treat all persons fairly and with respect, without regard to their race, age, ethnicity, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, or religion;
- C. shall not engage in sexual harassment, sexual abuse, physical abuse, mental abuse, verbal abuse, bullying, or other misconduct (as defined in Section VIII);
- D. shall take steps to prevent, interrupt, and report incidents of harassment, bullying, or abuse (as set out in Section VI);
- E. shall not consume or be under the influence of alcohol, recreational drugs, or illicit drugs while carrying out Church activities, excluding limited consumption of alcoholic beverages for ceremonial purposes (e.g., holy communion) or at social gatherings or special events;
- F. shall not date or become romantically involved with youth or vulnerable adults (as those persons are defined in Section VIII);

- G. as a condition of employment with the Church or for volunteer work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, shall consent to sex-offender registry and criminal-record checks (as specified in Section IV);
- H. when engaged in child care or youth programs, shall follow the policies for working with children and youth (as set out in Section III); and
- I. shall comply with applicable training requirements (as set out in Section IV), including awareness of this Safe Church Policy.

III. Facility Safety

The Church shall maintain safe spaces for all Church programs and ministries and shall give special attention to the safety needs of infants and children and other vulnerable persons. This includes minimizing and/or eliminating conditions that can present physical obstacles or hazards, developing plans for safe evacuation or sheltering in response to fire or external threats, and working with lessees to ensure the safety of leased and shared spaces.

A. General Protocols

1. The Facilities Commission in consultation with the Building Manager shall develop and implement a plan or protocol for the regular inspection of Church spaces, including leased spaces, to ensure: (a) that building systems (plumbing, mechanical, electric, and gas) remain in safe and working order; (b) that necessary and appropriate safety equipment (e.g., fire extinguishers and first aid kits) is in place, operable, and accessible; and (c) that fixtures (doors, windows, stairs, elevators, etc.) remain in a safe condition and present no hazards. Extra care shall be given to the kitchen and other spaces that present the greatest potential hazards.
2. The Building Manager, Facilities Commission, and Church Council shall endeavor to ensure that all maintenance, repairs, and improvements necessary to prevent or abate physical hazards are promptly accomplished. The Church shall restrict access to spaces that are not safe for occupancy and use, or implement protective barriers, until unsafe conditions are corrected.
3. The Facilities Commission in consultation with the Building Manager shall also develop and maintain plans for the safe evacuation of the Church in the event of fire or other emergencies and for safe sheltering within the building in response to external threats, and shall be responsible for ensuring that the plans are shared with Church leaders, members, tenants, and licensees and that appropriate information and signs are posted as necessary to implement the plans.

B. Protocols for Child Care and the Christian Education Suite

1. In developing the above general plans, the Facilities Commission shall work with the Christian Education (“CE”) Commission to identify issues of special concern for the CE Suite and for other spaces in the Church frequented by children. Among other things, the Facilities and CE Commissions shall consider the possible need to segregate equipment or materials not suited for infants or younger children.
2. The Church shall maintain first aid kits and fire extinguishers in the CE suite, in addition to at other locations. All child care employees and CE volunteers shall be advised of the location and content of this equipment.
3. The Church’s plans for safe evacuation and sheltering shall identify rendezvous points or make other provisions for reuniting children with their parents or guardians in the event an evacuation or sheltering is required during a worship service or at other times when children are separated from their parents or guardians. Evacuation routes, sheltering locations, and rendezvous points shall be prominently posted in the CE Suite. All child care employees and CE volunteers shall be familiar with and able to implement the evacuation and sheltering plans.
4. Access to the CE suite shall be limited to professional staff, child-care employees, volunteers working with the children, parents and guardians of the children, and invited guests.
5. The sanctuary overlook (enclosed room on balcony) is provided, during services, for priority use by nursing mothers and parents with infants.

IV. Child Care and Youth Programs

The following guidelines apply to the conduct of Church programs and activities involving children and youth. These policies are designed to clarify the norms for appropriate conduct, to establish safe boundaries, and to avoid situations that might place persons at risk.

A. Communication with Parents/Guardians

1. Before any child or youth begins participating in any Church program or as soon as practicable thereafter, the Church shall obtain basic identification information for the child or youth, contact information for parents or guardians, and information concerning any special medical needs or behavioral circumstances of the child or youth.

2. Christian Education leaders (“CE leaders”) should make efforts to communicate with parents or guardians about the curriculum and conduct of youth programs.
3. In the event any significant concern arises with respect to the health or behavior of any child or youth participating in a Church program—including concerns relating to the harassment, abuse of or bullying of other youth or children—CE leaders shall promptly bring such concern to the attention of the pastor in charge of Christian Education, who shall promptly reach out to the child’s parents or guardians, as circumstances warrant.

B. Team Work

Private (or one-on-one) meetings with youth and children occasionally may be warranted for teaching or counseling purposes, but most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a youth. To eliminate or minimize the risks of one-on-one interactions, the following guidelines apply.

1. As far as practicable, CE leaders shall work in teams of two or more unrelated adults. At least two adult supervisors shall be present in the CE Suite during Sunday services or other programs
2. CE leaders should maintain visibility when meeting with youth and children. Such meetings should occur in public settings, with doors open, or in rooms with windows on doors.
2. Before meeting alone with any child or youth, a CE leader should inform other CE leaders such meeting is occurring and invite them to drop in randomly on such meetings.

C. Physical Contact

Appropriate physical interactions with children and youth can promote a positive nurturing environment. Care must be taken to avoid crossing boundaries. Inappropriate physical contact is strictly prohibited and will result in disciplinary action.

1. Appropriate physical interactions include handshakes, pats on the back, supportive hugging to calm or console (touching only non-vulnerable body parts such as shoulders, back, arms, and hands), high-fives, fist-bumps, group handholding during prayer, and similar interactions.

2. Inappropriate physical interactions include sexualized hugging, kisses, lap sitting, tickling, touching buttocks, breasts, or genital areas, and similar interactions.

D. Verbal and Written Interactions

All communications with children and youth should be respectful, honest, and caring, and should aim to be spiritually uplifting. Language that is coercive, threatening, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating should be strictly avoided.

1. Appropriate communications include positive reinforcement, good-natured jokes, offering encouragement and praise, and clarifying expectations or rules.
2. Inappropriate communications include name-calling, discussing one's own sexual encounters or personal problems, and telling sexual jokes or jokes that belittle or demean others.

E. Electronic Communications

The following additional guidelines apply to electronic communications.

1. Private social media communication between CE leaders and youth is discouraged. Electronic communications (emails, texts, or instant messages) from Church leaders to children or youth participating in Church programs or activities should be limited to group messages or individual messages that copy a parent or guardian or a supervisor within the Church. Pastors may send private emails, texts, or similar messages to communicate with youth as part of crisis counseling or similar pastoral care, if the pastor reasonably determines that copying parents or guardians or another pastor on such correspondence would subject the youth to harm or substantially undermine the care.
2. Church youth leaders should not "friend" youth on social media platforms.
3. Any communications with children or youth containing coercive, demeaning, or sexually suggestive content are prohibited.

F. Use of Cell Phones and Electronic Devices

Cell phones and electronic devices also provide opportunities for sharing inappropriate content, intentionally or inadvertently. To prevent such sharing and to avoid the

distractions created by cell phones and other electronic devices, the following guidelines apply.

1. While engaged in child care or youth programming, Church youth leaders are not permitted to use cell phones or other personal electronic devices, except:
 - in support of a Church program (e.g., to display curriculum);
 - to contact Church supervisors, parents or guardians, or first responders during emergencies or other exigent circumstances, or
 - during approved breaks from on-site activities, or during down times on field trips or off-site programs.
2. Church leaders shall not access pornography or images of gratuitous violence on personal electronic devices at any time while engaged in child care or youth programming, including while on field trips or overnight programs.
3. The use of church equipment to download or display pornography or images of gratuitous violence is strictly prohibited.

G. Off-Site Activities and Transportation

Field trips and service programs, including overnight programs, provide valuable opportunities for spiritual and emotional growth. Such trips and other activities outside of regularly-scheduled Church programs also provide an opportunity for abuse. To eliminate or minimize such risks, the following guidelines apply.

1. Off-site interactions between Church youth leaders and youth participating in Church programs shall be limited to:
 - field trips and other public outings (e.g., visits to museums, sporting events, cultural events) approved by a parent or guardian;
 - functions at a youth's home with parents or guardians present; or
 - Church functions or gatherings at a private residence or similar space where multiple adults and youth will be present.
2. For any field trip, service trip, or similar outing (day or overnight) where parents or guardians are not present
 - the Church shall require written permission and medical release forms from parents or guardians;

- Church youth leaders shall take a roll of all participants when boarding or leaving vehicles and periodically throughout the trip;
- all overnight trips shall (and day trips generally should) include multiple adult leaders and multiple children;
- any person driving others shall have a valid driver's license that is not suspended; and
- Church youth leaders (drivers) should follow the "rule of 3," requiring at least two adults to transport a single unrelated youth or at least two youths to be transported by a single unrelated adult.

3. The following are prohibited:

- taking youth on an outing without a parent's permission;
- visiting youth at their home without a parent or guardian present; and
- entertaining a single youth at a private residence.

H. Gift Giving

Church youth leaders may provide gifts to children and youth as part of a programmatic ministry; e.g., to recognize baptism, confirmation, or similar occasions. Such gift giving should be done publicly, with the awareness of Church leaders, parents, and guardians. Private and selective gift giving can be part of predatory behavior and is prohibited.

V. Screening and Training for Pastors, Employees and Volunteers

The Church shall employ strategies to ensure that pastors, employees, and volunteers have suitable experience, training, and temperament for their positions and that persons who have exhibited any improper behavior or expressed improper intentions do not serve in positions of responsibility over others. Such strategies shall include the following.

A. Pastors

Pastors and Associate Pastors shall meet all professional requirements including training requirements, background checks, and other screening requirements that are required by the United Church of Christ (or other denomination as relevant) in order for them to remain in good standing. Pastors and Associate Pastors shall also meet all requirements under this Safe Church Policy applicable to employees, to the extent those requirements go beyond the requirements for good standing in ministry as imposed by the denomination. The Church need not duplicate background checks required (and actually conducted) by the denomination.

B. Employees

1. Applications

The relevant search committee for any open position for paid employment shall require any applicant to submit a ministerial profile, written application, or resume, before the applicant is hired. Among other requests, the search committee shall require each applicant to complete the Employee Disclosure (attached) or an equivalent form. Applicants shall provide at least two references, one personal and one professional. The search committee may require additional references of any applicant. Applicants must answer all questions truthfully and must consent to background checks. The search committee shall not recommend and the Church shall not hire any applicant who fails to provide all information requested. The Church shall retain all applications of hired employees in their personnel files.

2. Interviews

Prior to hiring or recommending any applicant for hiring, the search committee shall conduct a personal interview. The interview with each applicant shall include a discussion of the Church's commitments: (1) to being open and affirming, (2) to being anti-racist, and (3) to protecting children, youth, and vulnerable adults from abuse. The search committee shall not recommend and the Church shall not hire persons who fail to demonstrate a commitment to these policies. Interviewers shall take notes or make an audio recording of interviews to ensure that answers are available to all members of the search committee or others involved in the hiring process. Interviews should be conducted by at least two interviewers for the Church.

3. Reference Checks

Prior to hiring or recommending any applicant for hiring, the search committee shall complete at least two reference checks. For all ministerial positions and positions that provide or reasonably may provide responsibility for or enhanced access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults, the search committee shall make adequate inquiries of references to ensure that the applicant does not have a history suggesting unsuitability for the position. The Church shall retain a record of reference checks in the applicant's personnel file.

4. Background Checks & Self Reporting

Prior to hiring any applicant, the search committee shall also require the applicant to consent to criminal-history and sexual-offender background checks and shall conduct such background checks or ensure that such checks have been

completed. In addition, all current employees shall consent to such background checks (and to providing any personal information needed for conducting such checks) as a condition of employment. The Senior Pastor and Church Council shall collaborate to determine the extent and frequency of background checks for current employees.

All employees shall also self report to their supervisor if they are charged with or convicted of committing any offense. A criminal charge or conviction will not be treated as automatic grounds for suspension or termination. The Church is committed to making any termination or other disciplinary decisions fairly, in accordance with all relevant factors, as provided in the following section.

5. *Employment Decisions*

Prior to hiring or recommending the hiring of an applicant, at least three members of the relevant search committee shall review all relevant information compiled on the applicant—including reference checks and other background checks—and shall agree that the applicant is suited for employment in the subject position. In determining whether a criminal record renders an applicant unsuitable, the search committee shall consider:

- the nature of the position;
- the nature and seriousness of each offense, including whether an offense was isolated or part of or pattern of criminal activity;
- penalties imposed and rehabilitation programs completed;
- the length of time since each offense and the applicant's activities during such time;
- the applicant's acceptance of responsibility for prior offense conduct;
- statutes that may legally disqualify person from working with minors; and
- any other relevant factor.

A conviction for any one of the following offenses shall be considered barriers to employment or volunteer work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults:

- violent crimes
- sexual assault
- sexual abuse or any criminal neglect of a child or vulnerable adult.

The above considerations also apply to determine whether an employment relationship shall be terminated in the event a current employee is convicted of an offense. In any such case, the employee's employment record and length of service to the Church shall also be considered. Any decision to terminate (or to

recommend termination where the authority to terminate resides with the Council or Congregation) shall be made by the response team in accordance with paragraph VI.A.2 of this Safe Church Policy.

6. *Acknowledgment & Consent Form*

Prior to beginning work, all employees and all persons who volunteer to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, shall be provided a copy of this Safe Church Policy and shall be required to sign a copy of the Acknowledgment & Consent (attached) or an equivalent form, affirming their familiarity with the policies and their commitment to following the standards and guidelines herein. In addition, upon the adoption of this Safe Church Policy and upon any substantive amendment, all current employees and volunteers in the above categories shall be required to sign a copy of the Acknowledgment & Consent (attached) or equivalent form, in reference to the new or revised policy. The Church shall retain the executed Acknowledgment & Consent forms in the personnel files of employees and, for volunteers, in program files pertinent to the relevant program.

At least once annually, the Senior Pastor (or other supervisor responsible for an employee's annual performance review) shall remind each employee of the requirements and obligations of this Safe Church Policy—including facility safety protocols, and commitments under the Church's Open and Affirming and Anti-Racism statements—and shall discuss any issues that may have arisen under this policy during the review period. Confirmation of such discussions shall be retained in the employee's personnel file along with other notes on the review.

7. *Training*

The Senior Pastor and Church Council shall collaborate to determine additional training requirements for Church employees in relation to the subject matter of this Safe Church Policy, as warranted to ensure that all employees are aware of their obligations and empowered to recognize, prevent, and interrupt any sexual harassment or any form of abuse.

8. *Child Care workers*

The Christian Education Commission in coordination with the pastor overseeing the program or activity shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with this policy for childcare workers. Child care workers shall also be required to complete CPR training for Adults and Infants.

C. Volunteers Who Work with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults

The following requirements apply to persons who volunteer to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults (e.g., teaching Sunday school, leading a youth group, or mentoring confirmands). These requirements do not apply to persons who volunteer at Church services or other events or programs (e.g., service projects) that are attended in large numbers and open to all Church members and friends (including children, youth, and vulnerable adults).

1. Volunteers shall be associated with the Church (via membership or regular attendance) for at least six months.
2. All volunteers shall review this Safe Church Policy and sign the Acknowledgment & Consent (attached) or an equivalent form, in accordance with paragraph V.B.6 above.

The Christian Education Commission in coordination with the pastor overseeing the program or activity shall be responsible for: (a) providing all volunteers an orientation in this Safe Church Policy, including facility safety protocols, and the Church's Open and Affirming and Anti-Racism statements; (b) collecting Acknowledgment & Consent forms from new or returning volunteers who have not completed such forms; (c) ensuring that appropriate background checks, including but not necessarily limited to a sexual offender background check, are completed in a timely way for new volunteers (before they begin their work) and periodically undertaken for all volunteers; (d) and retaining Acknowledgment & Consent forms and a record of the background checks for all volunteers.

3. The Christian Education Commission, in coordination with the pastor overseeing the Church's programs for children and youth, shall also be responsible for developing, recommending, and implementing program-specific training for volunteers, as warranted to ensure that volunteers are aware of their obligations under this Safe Church Policy and empowered to recognize, prevent, and interrupt any abuse.

VI. Reporting and Faithfully Responding to Misconduct and Safety Concerns

The Church shall make this Safe Church Policy available to all employees, volunteers, parents, guardians, members, and all others participating in Church programs, including by posting the policy on its website at <http://www.firstuccdc.org>. To facilitate a culture of safety, the Church invites all stakeholders to assist in implementing and improving upon this policy, including by promptly reporting apparent violations or lapses in any oversight or safety protocols. Concerns may and should be brought to the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastors, Moderator, Assistant Moderator, and other leaders in the

Church. Church volunteers, pastors, and employees shall report and follow up on such policy violations and other concerns as follows.

A. Incidents of Misconduct or Probable Misconduct

The following standards apply to serious incidents of misconduct, including all forms of abuse, harassment and bullying by any employee or volunteer of the Church in relation to Church programs or activities, or by any child or youth participating in Church programs or activities.

1. Response by Employees and Volunteers

If any employee or volunteer witnesses misconduct or probable misconduct, such employee or volunteer shall:

- take reasonable steps to interrupt the behavior;
- report the behavior to the employee or volunteer's immediate supervisor, or, in the event of misconduct by such supervisor, to the Senior Pastor, the Moderator, or the Assistant Moderator;
- document the incident and the reporting of the incident; and
- as warranted, continue reporting until appropriate action is taken.

2. Response by Supervisors and Church Leadership

Whenever a supervisor, Senior Pastor, Moderator or Assistant Moderator witnesses or receives a report of misconduct or probable misconduct such person shall report the misconduct to the other members of the response team. The response team shall consist of (a) the Senior Pastor, (b) the Moderator, (c) the Assistant Moderator, and (d) the supervisor (if any) of the employee or volunteer suspected of misconduct, or when the person suspected of misconduct is a child or youth, the pastor responsible for Christian Education; *provided* that if any of the above persons is the subject of the misconduct report, such person shall be strictly excluded from the response team. If the Senior Pastor is the subject of the misconduct report, a minister from the Central Atlantic Conference of the UCC shall serve on the response team.

The members of the response team shall collaborate on the completion of the following tasks. The team shall:

- communicate with the person who submitted the misconduct report to assure such person that the report is being considered and that appropriate steps will be taken;

- conduct any necessary and appropriate investigation, which generally shall include: (a) contacting and interviewing the person accused of misconduct; (b) reviewing personnel or other files to identify any relevant previously reported complaints of misconduct; and (c) contacting and interviewing all persons involved and other witnesses to the incident;
- discern any appropriate interim response, including, as circumstances warrant, suspending an employee or volunteer from all of some Church activities, while an investigation is ongoing;
- discern any appropriate disciplinary action if misconduct is confirmed, which may include, depending on the nature and seriousness of the misconduct: (a) requiring extra training; (b) requiring increased monitoring or supervision; (c) removing an employee or volunteer or child from specified Church programs; (d) terminating an employee; (e) requiring a period of separation for a member or friend; or (f) revoking Church membership;
- communicate with the victim/target of the misconduct, or in the event the victim/target is a child or youth, the parents or guardians of the victim/target as appropriate, and to discern any appropriate care or relief owed by the Church to the victim/target;
- make a record of the investigation and any response or recommended response, to be retained in the employee's personnel file or other Church files as relevant;
- report all matters that need to be reported for insurance purposes and be the point of contact for any insurance investigation;
- for any alleged misconduct that calls into question the fitness for ministry of any authorized Minister or Ministerial candidate, promptly report the alleged misconduct to the Church & Ministry Committee of the Potomac Association or Central Atlantic Conference of the United Church of Christ or other appropriate body;
- complete any report required by District of Columbia law or the law of the relevant jurisdiction and cooperate with public law enforcement officials (see paragraph VI.B);

- determine if any church policies, including the standards and guidelines in this Safe Church Policy, need to be changed to mitigate or prevent similar misconduct in the future.

In completing the above tasks, the response team shall give due regard to the victim or target of the alleged misconduct and the person accused of misconduct, and shall endeavor to maintain confidentiality within the law and without compromising the health and welfare of the persons involved. Nothing in this Safe Church Policy shall be construed to alter Church obligations under employment contracts or applicable law; nor does this Safe Church Policy authorize members of the response team to take actions not authorized in the Church's By-Laws. The response team shall honor all of the Church's contractual and legal obligations and shall be limited to making recommendations to the appropriate body, with respect to any response to misconduct that, under the By-Laws, requires approval of the Church Council or Congregation.

B. External Reporting of Child Abuse and Neglect

Any minister, employee, or volunteer who becomes aware of child abuse or neglect or facts and circumstances presenting a substantial risk that child abuse or neglect may occur in the reasonably foreseeable future shall immediately report the matter to the Senior Pastor, Moderator, or Assistant Moderator so that the Church may take appropriate and timely action, including reporting to appropriate authorities. Apart from any requirements imposed by law, the Church will make a report to appropriate authorities, including but not limited to the District of Columbia Child and Family Services Agency ("CFSA") (or equivalent agency in Maryland or Virginia as warranted), if at any time the church has reasonable cause to believe that a minor may be an abused or neglected child. The DC Child Abuse Hotline is: (202) 671-SAFE [7233].

C. Facility Safety and Security

Any minister, employee, or volunteer who becomes aware of any condition in the Church building that threatens the physical safety or security of any building user shall promptly correct the situation when reasonably possible (e.g., by closing doors to prevent improper access, replacing dangerous implements to safe storage, etc.). Any hazard that cannot be abated promptly or that is part of a chronic problem shall be promptly reported to any minister or lay leader of the Church, who shall promptly refer the matter to the Building Manager or the Facilities Commission, for resolution by the Building Manager, Facilities Commission, and Council as warranted in accordance with paragraph III.A.2 of this Safe Church Policy.

VII. Registered Sex Offenders

As a community of faith, serving according to the example of Jesus Christ, we also seek to attend to the needs of all who seek healing, redemption, and fellowship among us. We shall be prepared to accept into our midst those who have violated the most sacred mores of our society, in order to provide them refuge, healing, and support in their penitence and recovery. We commit to doing so with the utmost care for the welfare of our congregation and the community we serve. We shall consider limited participation or membership of a sex offender in our Church with deliberate care under the following terms. Absent extraordinary mitigating circumstances, conviction for a sex offense shall be a bar to employment.

These terms apply to prospective and current employees, participants, and members. In the event any current employee, participant, or member commits an offense requiring registration on the sex-offender registry, a period of separation shall be imposed (consistent with the requirements of any applicable employment contract) until the terms of limited participation or permanent separation are determined.

- A. The conditions of participation shall be defined by a “limited access agreement” executed by the offender and the Church, with advice of legal counsel. The agreement shall provide for the immediate cancellation of access upon any material violation of its terms.
- B. The limited access agreement shall be consistent with any restrictions imposed on the offender by law, including any condition of probation or supervised release. Prior to entering any agreement, the Church shall ascertain and document all applicable legal restrictions on the movement and activities of the offender, in relation to the programs of the Church, including tenant operations.
- C. In determining whether to enter a limited access agreement and the conditions of such agreement, the Church shall consider: (1) the nature and seriousness of the offense(s) that required the individual to register as a sex offender; (2) the passage of time without repeated conduct since such offense(s); (3) the risk and opportunity of re-offending presented by the programs of the Church; (4) the nature of the requested participation (e.g., as employee, attendee, or member); and (5) whether any member, regular attendee, employee, or tenant of the Church was a victim of the subject offense. The latter circumstance, if present, shall ordinarily counsel against any participation.
- D. Before entering a limited access agreement, the Church will obtain the opinion of a mental health professional regarding the suitability of the person to participate in the life of the Church. The offender shall agree to meet with the mental health professional to enable such a judgment. Any recommendation by the mental health professional on the conditions or participation or to deny

participation to an offender shall be honored absent extraordinary cause for not doing so.

- E. Because criminal convictions are a matter of public record, the offender shall have no expectation of confidentiality. As a condition of participation, the offender must consent to the disclosure of information on the sex-offender registry to members and tenants of the Church, and disclosure of the conditions and limitations that apply, per the limited access agreement, to the offender's participation in Church programs and activity.
- F. The limited access agreement may require the offender to have a designated escort to attend Church programs or activities. In such case, the escort shall not be a spouse, partner, or relative of the offender.

VIII. Definitions

Bullying means aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. It includes: physical bullying, verbal bullying, and cyberbullying.

Child or Youth means anyone under the age of 18.

Child abuse means conduct of any caretaker that threatens the safety or welfare of a child through the intentional infliction of physical or emotional injury or any act of sexual abuse.

Child neglect means harm to a child's health or welfare which occurs through the failure of a parent or guardian to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, education, or medical care.

Christian Education leader or CE leader means anyone (clergy, volunteers, or employees) carrying out child care or youth programs of the Church.

Mental abuse includes shaming, humiliation, and cruelty;

Misconduct means any conduct by a Church employee or volunteer, or by a child or youth participating in a Church program or activity, that threatens the safety or welfare of any other person at the Church or involved in a Church activity or program through lack of due care. Misconduct includes but is not limited to all forms of abuse, bullying, and harassment as defined herein.

Physical Abuse includes any physical injury inflicted upon an adult, youth, or child by hitting, spanking, slapping, or imposing unnecessary restraints.

Search Committee means any group, including ministers, staffs, and volunteers, organized to hire or to make hiring recommendations for any paid position.

Sexual Abuse includes (a) sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a person acting under authority of the Church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a person being served by the Church by causing or allowing that person to engage in sexual behavior; and (b) any non-consensual sexual activity or contact between two or more persons.

Sexual Harassment means repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to their wishes.

Sexual harassment includes behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. For example, 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 a 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 or hostile work or church environment.

Sexual harassment also includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that contains sexual overtones, particularly: (a) written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, emails, or invitations; (b) verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes, propositions; (c) physical contact, such as touching, pinching, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual contact; and (d) visual contact, such as leering, self-exposure, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed 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 conduct will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership or participation in the life of the church.

Sexual offense for purposes of this policy means an offense for which a person must register under DC law or the law of another relevant jurisdiction.

Verbal abuse includes degrading, threatening, and berating.

Vulnerable Adult means anyone aged 18 or over, who is or may be in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age, or illness, and who is or may be unable to take care of themselves, or unable to protect themselves against harm or exploitation.

Acknowledgement & Consent

The Church is a collection of individuals – young and old – who covenant with God and with each other to worship, learn, and have fun together. Those who are employed by or who volunteer for the Church enter an additional covenant to uphold standards of conduct and to attend to the special needs and circumstances of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults among us. I understand that teaching, caring for, and mentoring children and vulnerable adults is a sacred trust. I have reviewed and am familiar with the Church’s Safe Church Policy and commit to following the guidelines therein. In addition, I consent to any criminal-history and sexual-offender background checks, as may be relevant to the work for which I am applying or volunteering.

Name: Last	First	Middle
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Address: Street	City/State	Zip Code
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Daytime/Mobile Phone	Evening Phone	Email
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Signature

Date

Employee Disclosure

Personal Information

Name: Last	First	Middle
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Address: Street	City/State	Zip Code
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Daytime/Mobile Phone	Evening Phone	Email
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Personal References (provide at least one unrelated reference)

Name			
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Address	City	State	Zip Code
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Telephone	Email		
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Name			
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Address	City	State	Zip Code
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Telephone	Email		
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Professional References (provide at least one unrelated reference)

Name

Address City State Zip Code

Telephone Email

Name

Address City State Zip Code

Telephone Email

Please provide the information requested below. Where further information is required, please provide such information on the back of this form or as an attachment.

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

YES

NO

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

2. Have you even been named as a defendant in a civil lawsuit alleging: (1) actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; (2) physical abuse; (3) child abuse; or (4) financial misconduct, which suit resulted in a judgment against you, was terminated by settlement agreement, or was dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.

YES

NO

If yes, please give a brief explanation of the lawsuit. (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.

3. Have you ever terminated your employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position, or had your employment, professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of (1) actual or sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; (2) physical abuse; (3) child abuse; or (4) financial misconduct.

YES

NO

If yes, please give a brief explanation. (Indicate the date of termination; name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination.

4. Do you have a valid drivers' license?

YES

NO

5. With respect to your driving record, have you ever had your license suspended or revoked due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.

YES

NO

If yes, please give a brief explanation. (Indicate the date of revocation/suspension, the period of revocation/suspension, and the nature of the incident resulting in the revocation/suspension.)

6. Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background (not disclosed in the answers to the above questions) that might 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.

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

I authorize First Congregational United Church of Christ and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

I understand that the Church employee recruitment process involves the sharing of applicant information among those persons charged with recruiting applicants and supervising applicants if hired. I authorize the Church and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application for such purposes. The Church and its agents will not share applicant information for other purposes. Upon request by an applicant, the Church may share information gathered on an applicant with the applicant.

PRINT NAME (& NAME OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN FOR APPLICANTS UNDER 18)

SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT (& PARENT OR GUARDIAN FOR APPLICANTS UNDER 18)

DATE

FOR CHURCH USE ONLY

- Sex Offender Registry (www.nsopr.gov) review performed on

- Personal interview conducted by staff on

- Reference inquiries completed on

- Background check by Third-Party Vendor (Criminal History Verification together with Fair Credit Reporting Act notices), completed on
