

First Church of Christ and Ecclesiastical Society of Simsbury, Inc.

Guidelines for a Safe Church Environment

(Revision 7.1 Adopted April 6, 2009)

A. POLICY STATEMENT; DEFINITIONS

ARTICLE I – POLICY STATEMENT

As a Christian faith community, this Church is committed to creating and maintaining programs, activities and an environment in which members of the congregation, minors, staff, volunteers, friends and visitors can worship, work and learn together in an atmosphere that is free from all forms of discrimination, harassment and abuse. That includes a commitment to providing for a safe environment and secure facilities and programs for our congregation and minors, as well as staff, volunteers, friends, and visitors.

The Church is strongly committed to preventing Sexual Harassment and Sexual Abuse, including Sexual Harassment and Sexual Abuse of a Minor. Upon notification, the Church intends to take prompt, appropriate steps to investigate, stop and address any conduct involving a Church member, Employee, Volunteer or visitor that could be construed as Sexual Harassment or Sexual Abuse.

These Guidelines for a Safe Church Environment outline the Church's policy specifically with respect to Sexual Harassment and Sexual Abuse, including Sexual Harassment and Sexual Abuse of a Minor. They also describe how the Church, acting through its Safe Church Response Team, expects to respond to allegations of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Abuse and, as appropriate, address such conduct and prevent it from recurring.

ARTICLE II – DEFINITIONS

- 2-a **Minor** – a person under the age of 18.
- 2-b **Adult** – a person age 18 or older.
- 2-c **Church Employee** – any paid employee of the Church.
- 2-d **Church Volunteer** – any member or friend of the Church who engages in volunteer activity on behalf of the Church.
- 2-e **Church** – First Church of Christ and Ecclesiastical Society of Simsbury, Inc., United Church of Christ, located at 689 Hopmeadow Street, Simsbury, Connecticut.
- 2-f **Sexual Harassment and/or Sexual Abuse of a Minor** – behavior that includes Sexual Harassment (as defined in 2-g), molestation or sexual exploitation of a Minor and/or other behavior by which an Adult uses a Minor as an object of sexual gratification and/or creates an environment of Sexual Harassment as defined in 2-g.
- 2-g **Sexual Harassment** – repeated or coercive conduct of a sexual nature or sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. Sexual Harassment includes, but is not

limited to, behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute Sexual Harassment when:

1. Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of an individual's employment;
2. Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making employment decisions affecting an individual; or
3. Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in Church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment includes continuing to directly or indirectly express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, benefits, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It also includes suggesting, threatening, or implying that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the church.

2-h **Safe Church Response Team** – the Safe Church Response Team consists of the Senior Minister, Church School Director, Associate Minister of Youth and Young Adults, President of the Congregation, and Chair of the Personnel Committee. If an allegation of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Abuse is made against any member of the Safe Church Response Team, the Chair of the Board of Elders will replace that person on the Team. The Safe Church Response Team will meet at least once a year.

B. SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR SEXUAL ABUSE OF A MINOR

ARTICLE I – REPORTING OF AND RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR SEXUAL ABUSE OF A MINOR

- 1-a Any person who reasonably believes that an incident of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Abuse of a Minor has occurred within the Church community is encouraged to report the matter to either a member of the Safe Church Response Team and/or the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ (UCC).
- 1-b A Church Employee or Church Volunteer who reasonably believes or has direct knowledge of any behavior or incident that could be construed as Sexual Harassment or Sexual Abuse of a Minor must report that information immediately to a member of the Safe Church Response Team.
- 1-c Upon receipt of an allegation of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Abuse of a Minor, the Safe Church Response Team shall:
 1. When appropriate for guidance, promptly contact any attorney who may be retained by the Church in connection with this matter;

2. When appropriate, notify the insurance carrier for the Church and advise the Connecticut Conference of the UCC;
3. Inform the individual alleged to have been involved in Sexual Harassment or Sexual Abuse of a Minor that he/she may not minister to any Minor until an investigation of the matter by the Safe Church Response Team is complete and the allegations are considered resolved and addressed by the Safe Church Response Team;
4. Keep all aspects of the handling of the allegations documented and, to the extent permissible by law, maintain the confidentiality of the investigation;
5. If needed, designate one member of the Safe Church Response Team as the spokesperson for the Church to communicate to the congregation, the media and others, as appropriate;
6. Upon reasonable cause to believe that the allegations of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Abuse of a Minor have been substantiated, the Safe Church Response Team shall take whatever immediate, effective and appropriate remedial action is warranted under the circumstances, including such reporting as may be required to governmental and police authorities.
7. Offer both parties pastoral care as appropriate.

C. SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR SEXUAL ABUSE OF AN ADULT WITHIN THE CHURCH WORKPLACE OR COMMUNITY

ARTICLE I – REPORTING OF AND RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT OR SEXUAL ABUSE OF AN ADULT

- 1-a Any person who reasonably believes that an incident of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Abuse of an Adult has occurred within the Church workplace or community or who claims to be a victim of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Abuse is encouraged to report the matter to either a member of the Safe Church Response Team and/or the Connecticut Conference of the UCC.
- 1-b A Church Employee or Church Volunteer who reasonably believes or has direct knowledge of any behavior or incident that could be construed as Sexual Harassment or Sexual Abuse must report that information immediately to a member of the Safe Church Response Team.
- 1-c The procedures to be followed by the Safe Church Response Team upon receipt of an allegation of Sexual Harassment or Sexual Abuse of an Adult are described in Section B, Article I-c, above.

D. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

ARTICLE I – BACKGROUND/REFERENCE CHECKS AND VOLUNTEER PLACEMENT REVIEWS; RECORDKEEPING

- 1-a All Church Employees will undergo an appropriate background/reference check prior to the start of their employment, and any offer of employment at the Church will be subject to the candidate's successful completion of the background/reference checking process.

