

**Safe Church Policies and Procedures
United Church of Christ Congregational
Burlington, MA**

**Approved by UCC Congregational Safe Church Committee
March 2012**

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A. INTRODUCTION

A.1 PURPOSE

As a community of faith committed to following Jesus Christ, we strive to extend a generous welcome to all who enter our doors and to treat them with the love and dignity that God bestows upon each and every one of us. We want our church to be a safe place for everyone.

Unfortunately, we cannot simply assume that our church is a safe place. We know that we cannot eliminate all risks, but we can strive to reach that goal by taking intentional and direct actions. The Safe Church Committee wants people of all ages to be able to deepen their relationship with God and each other in an environment that is safe and secure. It is in this spirit that the UCC Congregational of Burlington Safe Church Policies and Procedures was created. We consider this to be a living document, which will be amended over time as new considerations arise. We hope that although there are sure to be omissions, this document will provide guidelines to create a safer environment at UCC Congregational of Burlington for our members, employees and guests.

What is safety?

Safety means that a person's spiritual, emotional and physical self is protected from injury. For example:

Spiritual safety

- People have the freedom to express their faith.
- People's beliefs are treated respectfully

Emotional safety

- Kindness and civility are the norm
- People refrain from personal attacks and gossip
- Confidentiality is honored

Physical safety

- Door Key holders agree to abide by safe church policies
- Facilities are clean and well lit
- Exits are clearly marked and free of debris
- Fire alarms are kept in working order
- Food preparation areas are clean and health department guidelines for food preparation are followed

A.2 SCOPE OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The policies and procedures included in this document apply to all activities that take place within the building and properties UCC Congregational of Burlington, as well as programs, activities, or events scheduled as part of the ministry of this church that take place elsewhere. The policies and procedures apply to all members, friends, volunteers, renters and employees of the church.

A.3 LOCATION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

A Safe Church Policies and Procedures Manual is reviewed with each new employee. All volunteers who will be regularly working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will also review the manual. Manuals are located in identifiable binders in two locations, as well as church web site.

1. Church Office
2. Christian Education office

A.4 SAFE CHURCH COMMITTEE DESCRIPTION

The Safe Church Committee's function is to oversee the implementation of the Safe Church Policies and Procedures.

A.4.1 SAFE CHURCH COMMITTEE COMPOSITION

This team will be comprised of six members from UCC Congregational of Burlington. The following groups will provide a representative:

- Christian Education Committee
- Parish Council Committee
- Deacons
- Trustees
- Insurance Policy Rep/State Certified CORI Processor
- Minister

A.4.2 SAFE CHURCH TEAM FUNCTION

The Safe Church Committee will:

- Bi-Annually review and update Safe Church Policies and Procedures
- Oversee distribution of Safe Church Policies and Procedures to committees
- Confirm that staff and volunteers working with children are trained in Safe Church Policies (Section C.4), including keeping an attendance sheet of who has received training, copies of the Volunteer Participation Covenant (Form C-2), and Acknowledgement of Safe Church Policies and Procedures forms (Form F-2)
- Oversee the completion of Criminal Background Check Authorization Forms (Form C-1)
- Receive CORI reports referred to them by the CORI processor
- Receive and manage Incident Report Forms (Form A-1)
- Verify that CORI Reports, Incident Reports and other documents are stored in a safe and secure location
- When necessary, report incidents to the State of Massachusetts Department of Social Services in conjunction with the clergy (Section G.2.4)
- When necessary, serve on a task force to review formal complaints on adult misconduct (Section H)
- Maintain strict confidentiality

B. BUILDING SAFETY

It is the responsibility of UCC Congregational of Burlington with the assistance of the Trustees to maintain physical safety of the church building.

B.1 GENERAL

UCC Congregational of Burlington will:

- Maintain the building upkeep to preserve physical safety
- Maintain the fire alarm system, fire extinguishers and first aid kits
- Create and post floor plans indicating emergency exits, fire extinguishers, first aid kits and emergency phone numbers
- Provide users of the building a mechanism to report any safety issues to the Trustees
- Ensure compliance with local board of health inspection requirements

B.2 BUILDING ACCESS

Care will be taken to secure entrances to the church by limiting access to the appropriate individuals who:

- Abide by all policies and procedures for building use and UCC Safe Church Policies
- Sign a Key Receipt form (Form B-1) which states that the signer will not share the key with anyone and will verify that all outside doors are locked if they are the last person in the building

Documentation of individuals who hold keys to exterior and interior church doors will be kept. This documentation will be maintained by the trustees.

B.3 OUTSIDE GROUPS

All outside groups who rent or use the church facilities on a long-term basis will receive a copy of the Safe Church Policies and Procedures. Groups must agree to comply with its provisions as it pertains to their use of the building, and they will sign the Use of Facilities form (Form B-2). This documentation will be maintained by the Trustees.

C. SCREENING AND TRAINING

C.1 DEFINITIONS

CORI Processor: a UCC Burlington member who is state certified manages the CORI process.

Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI): Criminal conviction information of persons within the Massachusetts Court System. It is regulated by the Massachusetts Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) and maintained by the Board of Probation.

Staff or paid employee: Any individual hired and compensated by UCC Congregational of Burlington on a part-time, full-time, permanent or temporary basis.

C.2 VOLUNTEER SCREENING

UCC Congregational of Burlington welcomes volunteers to become involved in the programs offered as part of our ministries. For those volunteers who work with youth and children on a regular basis, volunteers should generally be at least five years older than the youth or children they work with and have been part of the church community for six months, subject to the discretion of the minister.

C.3 CRIMINAL BACKGROUND VERIFICATION

C.3.1 POLICIES

UCC Congregational of Burlington uses the Massachusetts CORI verification process and may also use a national criminal background verification service selected by the Safe Church Committee.

UCC Congregational of Burlington requires a CORI report on:

- all prospective employees
- adult leaders
- all adult volunteers who supervise youth or children at any time.

Anyone convicted of any felony or a felony default by the court, against a child or elder, whether physical, emotional, or sexual, will not be considered, under any circumstances, for any position at UCC Congregational of Burlington.

C.3.2 PROCEDURES

Ministerial staff will provide CORI applications (Form C-1) to volunteers and turn them in to the CORI processor. The CORI processor will submit CORI applications and receive CORI reports. The CORI processor will consult the Safe Church Committee when there are concerns. The ministerial staff will solicit approval for volunteers from the CORI processor. All attempts will be made to maintain confidentiality.

The Safe Church Comm. may consult with the church's pastoral staff and an attorney retained by the Church regarding background check findings and reports.

All reports are maintained in a secure/locked location in the UCC Congregational of Burlington office.

CORI reports are repeated every three years and a log will be maintained by the CORI processor.

C4. TRAINING

All staff members, teachers, youth leaders and adult volunteers who work with youth, children and elders will receive training on safe church policies and procedures. They will sign a Participation Covenant (Form C-2), which will be kept on file with the Safe Church Comm. Each person will review a copy of the Safe Church Policies and procedures and Procedures and Information for Volunteers (Form C-3), and they will be given an opportunity to ask questions. Those individuals who have regular, direct contact with youth or elders will also receive education about child abuse awareness and reporting procedures.

Training procedures:

- Training sessions will be offered at the beginning of each church school term, or as need arises
- The Safe Church Comm. will keep an attendance sheet of who has received training
- Training will include a review of the UCC Congregational of Burlington Safe Church Policies and Procedures
- Staff will review the Safe Church Policies and Procedures and Form C-3 prior starting their position

D. CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PROTECTION AND SUPERVISION

D.1 CHILDREN'S MINISTRY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The UCC Congregational of Burlington is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which children from nursery to High School can learn about and experience God's love. Therefore, we provide

supervision for all activities and programs involving children, and we employ practices that provide for the safety of children and those who care for them.

D.2 CHILDREN'S MINISTRY DEFINITIONS

Assistant: a volunteer who functions in a non-supervisory role in one of the Sunday school classrooms or nursery/toddler room in the presence of an approved teacher or caregiver. An assistant generally should be at least 14 years of age.

Nursery/Toddler Caregiver: a volunteer who supervises activities in the nursery/toddler rooms. The caregiver must be at least 18 years of age.

Teacher: a volunteer who leads or supports classroom activities. Teachers must be at least 18 years of age.

One Time Volunteer: someone who helps with a trip or event but has not committed to a regular role such as an assistant or a teacher.

Generally, all volunteers should be a member of UCC Congregational of Burlington or part of the church community for six months, subject to the discretion of the ministerial staff.

D.3 CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PROCEDURES

D.3.1 TWO PERSON POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Each class should have at least an adult and an assistant.

If a second person is not available, the teacher may:

- elect to hold class or continue the activity but keep the door open
- contact the Director of Christian Education (CE) for guidance

If circumstances dictate that a child must be alone with a teacher, the teacher should contact a parent or guardian and wait with the child in a public space on the church grounds.

D.3.2 REGISTRATION FORMS

Parents or guardians of all children participating in the Christian Education program will be asked to complete a registration form for each child (Forms D-1). The registration form includes contact information and information regarding allergies or any other relevant medical concerns. This information will be included in the classroom attendance folder.

D.3.3 ATTENDANCE AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

1. Children leave the Sanctuary to Sunday school class rooms at the end of children's time. Parents are not required to leave the sanctuary to escort their children to class.
2. Attendance will be taken at each class.
3. Parents are expected to pick up their children after class.

D.3.4 DISCIPLINE

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

- Teachers are encouraged to clearly and respectfully communicate expectations of appropriate behavior to their class at the beginning of each school year and on a periodic basis throughout the Sunday school year. In addition, a covenant of conduct including class expectations may be posted in each classroom.
- If a child's behavior is disruptive, the teacher is instructed to address the issue with the child directly. Should the behavior be repeated, the teacher will contact the Director of CE, who will follow up with parents/guardians as necessary.
- No child will be disciplined by the use of any form of physical punishment or verbal abuse.

D.3.5 HEALTH AND SAFETY

- A first aid kit is available in the nursery and/or Christian Education Office and in each classroom.
- Fire safety information, emergency evacuation routes and meeting place will be clearly posted in every classroom, along with emergency numbers for the church, police and fire departments.
- Emergency procedures, including evacuation plans, will be reviewed at each teacher orientation.
- Incident Report forms (Form A-1) are found in each classroom folder and should be filled out when necessary. Forms are filed with the Safe Church Committee and are given to the parents as warranted.
- If there is a medical emergency, the parents should be found immediately. As necessary, 911 should be called and the Director of CE should be contacted.
- The importance of hand washing before handling food and after any clean up is emphasized.
- Generally, snacks are not provided. On occasion, a snack may be offered if it supports the curriculum or if the class is celebrating a special event. Special needs and food allergies will be considered.

D.3.6 CONCERN FOR A CHILD'S SAFETY OUTSIDE OF CHURCH

If in the context of a class or other event, a child discloses information that raises concern about his or her safety, the incident should be discussed promptly with the ministerial staff to clarify and determine an appropriate level of response.

E. YOUTH MINISTRY PROTECTION AND SUPERVISION

E.1 YOUTH MINISTRY POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

UCC Congregational of Burlington, MA is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. Therefore, we will provide supervision for all ministries and activities involving youth, and we employ practices that provide for the safety of all youth participants and those who care for them.

E.2 YOUTH MINISTRY DEFINITIONS

Adult: A person 18 years of age or older.

Chaperone/ Driver: A volunteer who helps supervise / transport youth for a special activity. To be a chaperone, an individual should be at least 23 years of age.

Helper, Assistant: A volunteer worker for regular youth activities who functions in a non-supervisory role (e.g., high school student who helps with middle school students). Helpers function under the supervision of the leader or teacher and generally should be 3 years older than the oldest youth participating in the program.

One-time Volunteer: an adult who helps with an event (trip, retreat) but has not committed to regularly helping with youth activities.

Teacher, Leader: A paid or volunteer adult worker who has direct responsibility for the care of youth under their supervision.

Off-Site Event: A youth event requiring transportation that is scheduled off UCC Congregational of Burlington property and may or may not include an overnight (e.g. bowling, mission trip, retreat).

Youth: All students participating in the 6th-12th grade programs.

Adult volunteers should generally be at least five years older than the youth, and should be a part of the church community for six months, subject to the discretion of the Minister.

E.3 YOUTH MINISTRY PROCEDURES

E.3.1 TWO PERSON POLICY

The Two Person Policy is intended to protect youth and prevent adults from encountering a situation where they could be wrongfully accused. Therefore, no adult should be alone in the church or be at a church-approved activity with a youth that is not related to him or her. It is recommended that there be a ratio of one adult for every six youths at all youth programs or activities. If these ratios are unable to be met, the youth activity may be canceled at the discretion of the minister or lay leader.

At least two chaperones should wait with youth being picked up after an offsite event. In the event that an adult is alone with a youth waiting to be picked up, they should wait in a public space.

It is permissible to have one adult per car carrying youth to an off-site event, but at no time should an adult be alone with a child other than his/her own. Two children and one adult in a vehicle is appropriate.

E.3.2 FIVE YEAR OLDER POLICY

It is recommended that all leaders, teachers, and chaperones / drivers for youth activities or off site events be at least five years older than the oldest participant in the class, group or activity.

E.3.3 PERMISSION, MEDICAL, AND COVENANT FORMS

All Youth participating in youth programs must have a UCC Congregational of Burlington Information form (Form E-1) and a Medication Consent Form (Form E-3) on file. These forms will be kept on file for the year with the church. Completed forms will be brought on all youth off-site events by the adult leader. A UCC Congregational of Burlington Trip Permission form (Form E-2) will be filled out and handed in for any offsite overnight trips.

All youth participating in youth ministry programs will develop and sign a covenant with their leaders at the beginning of the year.

E.3.4 OFF-SITE EVENT GUIDELINES

1. Parents or guardians and participating youth shall be given information ahead of time about programs, activities, leaders, chaperones, dates, times, cost, method of transportation, purpose of the scheduled trip or activity and other details whenever possible.
2. All occupants of a vehicle must use an individual seat belt (no multiple belting) at all times during the operation of the vehicle.
3. The driver should not use a cell phone while driving except for an emergency. The driver is encouraged to pull off the roadway to a safe spot before using the cell phone.
4. Appropriate supervision: The two adult policies and procedures apply for all church events including those held off-site. On an overnight trip there will be at least one male and one female chaperone, depending on the gender mix of the participating youth group.

E.3.5 DISCIPLINE

All participants are expected to act in a respectful manner toward all others participating in a youth group function. Participants are expected to follow the Covenant developed with the Leader. The purpose of discipline is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of Christian responsibility, respect and cooperation. No youth will be disciplined by use of any form of physical punishment or verbal abuse.

Mutual respect in communication between youth and leaders, teachers and chaperones is expected. Appropriate behavioral expectations will be clearly communicated.

Disruptive, disrespectful or dangerous behavior will be addressed by the leader, teacher or chaperone in charge. If this behavior occurs on a trip or at a meeting, the leader reserves the right to contact the parent/guardian and send the youth home at the parents/guardians expense.

Adult volunteers must report all infractions of youth rules to the minister or adult leader of the group.

E.3.6. HEALTH AND SAFETY

1. A first aid kit is available in every classroom as well as the CE office.
2. Fire safety information, emergency evacuation routes and meeting place will be clearly posted in every classroom, along with emergency numbers for the church, police and fire departments.
4. Emergency procedures, including evacuation plans, will be reviewed at each teacher orientation.
5. Incident Reports forms (Form A-1) are found in the Church and CE offices, and they should be filled out when necessary. Forms are filed with the Safe Church Committee and are given to the parents as warranted.
6. If there is a medical emergency, the parents and the minister should be contacted, and 911 should be called as warranted.
7. The importance of hand washing before handling food and after any clean up is emphasized.

E.3.7 CONCERN FOR A YOUTH'S SAFETY OUTSIDE OF CHURCH

If in the context of a program, class or other event, a youth discloses information that raises concern about his or her safety, the incident should be discussed promptly with the adult leader to clarify and determine an appropriate level of response.

F. INTERNET SAFETY

The internet and social media are evolving tools which offer great promise for developing and deepening ministries but which also pose significant safety challenges.

F.1 DEFINITIONS

Church Sponsored Sites — any group, page or list-serve that is created by a designated member of the UCC Congregational of Burlington for the purpose of establishing, maintaining or growing ministries to and with youth and/or adults.

Inappropriate Content — refers both to content that is improper or offensive, but also content that might be suited to the medium but not to the relationship, between the parties involved.

F.2 MINOR TO ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

1. Adults should not submit “friend” requests to minors or youth. Youth may request friendships with adults, and adults should discern the level of contact they want to maintain with youth prior to responding to these requests.
2. All youth and adults should be informed that any communication that is sent via digital means (email, social networking site notes or posts, texts, etc.) is not confidential and it may be reported or shared with others.
3. Adults who correspond with youth via email should Cc a parent, another youth leader, the Director of Christian Education, or the Minister on all emails.
4. Covenants should be created to define and govern appropriate and inappropriate content that may or may not be posted to on-line forums.
5. Burlington UCC youth related groups should be “closed” but not “hidden”. These groups should have both youth and adult administrators.
6. Members of UCC Congregational of Burlington groups should decide within their covenant whether or not their social networking site groups are open to parents of current members.
7. Any inappropriate material should be deleted from the site. Any material that is covered by “Mandatory Reporting” laws should be reported to the clergy, documented for church records, and then deleted from the site.

8. Any content that details inappropriate behavior (outside of the bounds of the established covenant) during a church sponsored event or activity should be addressed by adults.

9. Adult leaders are not responsible for internet youth pages that are not sponsored by the UCC Congregational of Burlington.

10. For reasons of education and accountability, digital communication covenants should be made between youth and adult leaders. See Form F-1 for digital covenant guidelines.

F.3 ADULT TO ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

1. Adult members who seek religious or spiritual advice from clergy via digital means (email, social networking site posts, etc.) should be informed that their communication may not be confidential. Use of digital means to communicate is not secure and should be discouraged. The minister should be contacted directly.

2. Clergy are encouraged to use privacy settings to shield both adult and youth members from viewing content that may be inappropriate.

F.4 COMMUNICATION AND CONTACT

F.4.1 TRANSITIONS

1. Clergy who are leaving UCC Congregational of Burlington should refrain from offering pastoral care through digital communication after the end date of their contract with the church.

2. Former youth members and adult leaders, due to departure, removal or loss of eligibility (aged out of a program) should be removed from youth group digital communication membership (Facebook groups, list serves, etc.) (See Guidelines for Making Digital Covenants, Form F-1).

F.4.2 VIDEO CHATS, BLOGS OR VIDEO BLOGS

1. Adults should refrain from initiating video chats with youth.

2. Participants in a video chat or blog should consider what will be shown in the video such as their surroundings, their clothing/state of dress, etc.

3. All transcripts of on-line text chats, video chats, blogs or video blogs should be saved by the system administrator whenever possible.

4. All clergy and youth leaders should consider the content and nature of any post that will be read by or visible to youth, because it might be perceived as the voice of the church and it may be misconstrued as part of church policies and procedures.

F.4.3 PUBLISHING/POSTING CONTENT ONLINE

1. Obtain signed Media Release forms from parents/guardians of minors who may participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution (See Forms D-1, E-1).

2. When electronic media recordings of church services or activities are distributed on the web or via other broadcast media, a notice should be posted in the bulletin that indicates the service or activity may be broadcast at a future date.
3. Photos that are published on church sponsored sites may not include the name or contact information of individuals.

G. CHILD AND ELDER ABUSE RESPONSE AND REPORTING

Through our Safe Church Policies and educational programs, we seek to prevent abuse occurring at UCC Congregational of Burlington. Allegations or reasonable suspicions of abuse will be responded to seriously and will be reported to appropriate church and state authorities. All of the actions and documentation as described below must be held in the strictest confidence and as few people as possible be informed. It is the responsibility of all individuals concerned to maintain confidentiality.

G.1 DEFINITIONS

Minor: A person under the age of eighteen.

CORI Processor: Submits and receives CORI forms. The CORI processor will consult the Safe Church Committee (See Section A.4) when there are concerns. All attempts will be made to maintain confidentiality.

Elder: A person of 65 years of age or older.

Department of Children and Families (DCF): The Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) manage child abuse and neglect reports.

Incident Report: A written report (Form A -1) of any unusual occurrence at UCC Congregational of Burlington.

Mandated Reporter: A person who, by virtue of his/her profession or position, is required by law to report all reasonable suspicions of child abuse. Church mandated reporters include but not limited to: clergy, persons performing duties on behalf of the church (e.g., Deacons), church employees and volunteers who supervise, educate, coach, train or counsel minors on a regular basis (Children, Youth and Music positions).

Moderator: The lay Leader of UCC Congregational of Burlington and the presiding officer for all meetings of the Parish Council.

Parish Council: The governing body of the church which includes the Pastor, Moderator, Treasurer, Clerk, and various committee chairpersons.

G.2 RESPONSE AND REPORTING OF CHILD OR ELDER ABUSE

G.2.1 STANDARD FOR REPORTING

UCC Congregational of Burlington observes the Massachusetts standard for reporting abuse. Anyone with "a reasonable cause to believe" that a child under age 18 or an elder is suffering, or has suffered from, abuse or neglect, will follow the Response and Reporting Policies and Procedures listed below.

"Reasonable Cause" - after examining all the facts in a particular situation, most people with similar training and experience would also suspect abuse. This is the 'reasonable person' standard commonly used in the law - Questions and Answers About Reporting Child Abuse ©: Dayl Hufford. (See Resources, Section J)

G.2.2 PREVENTING IMMINENT HARM

To protect children and elders, any circumstance of abuse that poses imminent risk of serious harm will be reported to the Burlington Police Department at 911 or 781-270-1914 or 781-270-1212. Because of the vulnerability of children and elders, their right to our protection supersedes a counselee's right to confidentiality.

G.2.3 REPORTING PROCESS

If in the context of a class or other event, a child discloses information or an adult otherwise has a reasonable cause to believe that a child is not safe, the incident should be discussed promptly with the ministerial staff to clarify and determine an appropriate level of response. If there is an allegation against the pastoral staff, the Moderator will contact the Area Minister and the Human Resources Committee. The church will seek the counsel of the Association Committee on Church and Ministry regarding action to be taken.

Incident Reports (Form A-1) are required for all unusual occurrences at UCC Congregational of Burlington. They must be submitted to the Safe Church Committee or the appropriate staff member even if it is determined that an oral or written report will not be filed with DCF. These forms will be stored in a secure and confidential location.

The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is the Massachusetts agency with responsibility for protecting minors and elders from abuse and neglect. No one is prohibited from making a report directly to DCF, and may do so as either an identified or anonymous reporter. Reporters can file anonymously by calling The Child-at-Risk-Hotline at 1- 800-792- 5200 (after hours) or contact (DCF) Cambridge office at (617) 520-8700 (Mon-Fri 8:45am-5pm) to report as an identified reporter. For more information see http://www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dss/can_mandated_reporters_guide.pdf

An oral / telephone report to the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF) will be made within 24 hours as recommended by the Massachusetts Conference, UCC. Written reports will be completed within 48 hours as required by Massachusetts law. Mandated reporters who fail to report suspected child abuse may be subject to criminal prosecution.

G.2.4 PASTORAL STAFF AND SAFE CHURCH TEAM'S ROLES

Any person raising a concern of abuse should contact the Safe Church Committee and/or confidentially discuss their concern with the UCC Congregational of Burlington pastor, or the Director of CE.

The role of the Safe Church Committee is to receive the allegation, provide leadership and guide the reporter through the Department of Children and Families (DCF) contact process. Investigation and evaluation of concerns of abuse is the role and obligation of DCF and not the reporter, minister, or the Safe Church Committee.

H. ADULT MISCONDUCT – HARRASSMENT AND EXPLOITATION

UCC Congregational of Burlington wishes to create and maintain a community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation.

H.1 DEFINITIONS

Harassment: repeated misconduct, whether verbal or physical, that creates an environment that is uncomfortable, unwelcoming, discriminating, or intimidating, or leads to an atmosphere in which a person's ability to participate in worship and activities at the church is compromised.

Sexual exploitation: activity or conduct of a sexualized nature in which a person engaged in the work of the Church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior.

Sexual harassment: repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones. Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome – and using sexualized behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another.

Vulnerable adult: Any person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of assistance by reason of physical or mental disability, age, emotional illness or vulnerability, and who is unable to take care of or to protect him or herself against significant harm or serious exploitation which may be occasioned by the actions or inactions of other people.

H.2 POLICY ON ADULT CONDUCT

The Church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment of any kind, and such behavior is prohibited. It is the intention of the church to respond to allegations of behavior that are contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate it and/or report it to the appropriate authorities. Every individual always has the right to report allegations to local authorities.

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

Should someone observe that a vulnerable adult is being abused, harassed or exploited, a concerned member may initiate proceedings on their behalf.

H.3 PROCESS FOR RESPONDING TO A COMPLAINT OR CONCERN

The utmost respect shall be given to the confidentiality and privacy of all parties. Any person who brings a concern or complaint forward, or who assists in investigation of such a report, will not be adversely

affected in terms and conditions of employment or Church membership, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged. Information will be shared only on a need-to-know basis.

H.3.1 RESPONSE

1. **Informal** - The person with a concern may attempt to resolve the matter directly with the person accused. Alternatively, the person with a concern may attempt to resolve the matter with the assistance of his/her supervisor, a Safe Church Committee member, or a member of the minister.
2. **Formal** - If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, or possible, or does not succeed, the person with a concern should complete an incident report form (Form A-1) and submit it to a Safe Church Committee member and/or Minister. This will lead to a formal proceeding. If the allegation involves the Minister, the person with a concern should contact the Moderator, Human Resources Chair, Deacon Chair or the Safe Church Committee.

H.3.2 FORMAL PROCEEDING

When the Safe Church Committee is requested to initiate a formal proceeding, the following procedure will happen:

1. A task force will be convened.
 - If the allegation involves the Minister, the task force will be comprised of the Moderator, the Safe Church Committee, Human Resources Chair, and the Deacon Chairperson. The Moderator will inform the Metro-Boston Area Minister. UCC Congregational of Burlington will cooperate fully in any conference procedures related to the person's ministerial authorization.
 - If the allegation involves another authorized UCC minister, the task force will be comprised of the Minister, Moderator, the Safe Church Committee, Human Resources Chair, and the Deacon Chairperson. The Moderator will inform the Metro-Boston Association Area Minister. UCC Congregational of Burlington will cooperate fully in any conference procedures related to the person's ministerial authorization.
 - If the allegation involves another UCC Congregational of Burlington staff member, the task force will be comprised of the Minister, Moderator, the Safe Church Committee, and the Human Resources Chair.
 - If the allegation involves a lay person the task force will be comprised of the Minister, Moderator, and the Safe Church Committee.
2. The person accused will be notified that an incident report form has been filed.
3. Statements will be gathered from any individuals involved.
4. The task force will carefully document all activities and meetings, including dates, times, locations, names of the parties present, decisions, and actions to be taken. This documentation is to be kept in a secure location determined by the Safe Church Committee.
5. The task force will consider all information and determine an appropriate course of action.
6. If the task force determines that no harassment or sexual exploitation has occurred, all affected parties will be notified.
7. If the task force determines that harassment or sexual exploitation has occurred, the task force will inform the individuals and take actions that may include:
 - Formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior;
 - Recommending or requiring a program of growth that may include education and/or counseling;
 - Probation, with the terms of the probation clearly identified;
 - Dismissal from volunteer leadership position or employment and, in extreme cases, membership in, the Church.

H.4 APPEAL

If the person(s) involved is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter, he or she has the right to appeal to the Deacon Chairperson who will appoint a committee to review the complaint.

I. SAFE CHURCH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES REVIEW

The UCC Congregational of Burlington Safe Church Policies and Procedures were revised by the 2012 Christian Education and Safe Church Committees.

The Safe Church Policies and Procedures will be reviewed each year by the Safe Church Committee. The Committee may recommend revisions to be approved by the Parish Council.

Adopted by: UCC Congregational of Burlington, Ma Date: _____

Moderator: _____

J. RESOURCES

Central Congregational Church, (United Church of Christ) Chelmsford, Massachusetts.

"Safe Church Policies and Procedures."

<http://www.macucc.org/leadership/documents/ChelmsfordSafeChurchPolicies051903.pdf>

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<http://www.mass.gov/sorb/> (2010).

Connecticut Conference, United Church Of Christ. "Internet Safety"

<http://www.ctucc.org/resources/onlinesafetyguidelines.html> (May 3, 2010).

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Dickerman, Susan. New England Pastoral Institute, Inc., "Safe Church

Workshop." (Framingham, MA 2009)

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Injured children; reports." <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/119-51a.htm>

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General Laws of Massachusetts. "Protection of Children Chapter 119:Section 51B

Physically or emotionally injured children; duties of department; disclosure of information to department." <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/119-51b.htm>

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Hancock UCC Standing Committee, "Safe Church Policies and Procedures". Hancock UCC Lexington, MA 2010

Hufford, Dayl H.,D.Min., "Policies and Procedures For a Safe Church." (2002).

Trinitarian Congregational Church, "Safe Church Policies and procedures" and "Safe Church

Procedures". Concord MA 2007

United Church of Christ. "Making Our Churches Safe for All: An Introduction to Abuse Prevention for

Local Churches." <http://www.ucc.org/ministries/safe/safebook.pdf>. (July 2005).

The United Church of Christ, Medfield MA, "Safe Church Policies and Procedures." 2007

Wellesley Hills Congregational Church, "Safe Church Policies and Procedures for the Wellesley Hills Congregational Church." Wellesley, MA 2009

K. FORMS

- A-1 Incident Report Form
- B-1 Door Key Receipt Form
- B-2 Use of Facilities for Outside Organizations - Statement of Compliance
- C-1 Criminal Background Check - Authorization
- C-2 Volunteer Participation Covenant
- C-3 Information for Volunteers
- D-1 Church School Registration
- E-1 UCC Congregational of Burlington Trip Permission Form
- E-2 Medication Release Form
- E-3 Participation Covenant Guidelines for Youth
- E-4 Sample Youth Retreat Covenant
- F-1 Guidelines to Making Digital Covenants
- F-2 Acknowledgement of Safe Church Policies and Procedures

**UCC Congregational of Burlington
6 Lexington Street
Burlington, MA 01803**

A-1 INCIDENT REPORT FORM

Complete for all incidents, accidents or unusual occurrences that occur on the church premises or at any church sponsored event. Complete and file this report with the UCC Congregational of Burlington Safe Church Committee within 24 hours of the incident.

Reporter: _____ Date of Incident: _____ Time: _____

Identification of person(s) involved

1. Name: _____ Age: ____ Gender: ____

Address: _____

Relationship to UCC Congregational of Burlington (Employee, Volunteer, Member, Visitor, etc.): _____

2. Name: _____ Age: ____ Gender: ____

Address: _____

Relationship to UCC Congregational of Burlington (Employee, Volunteer, Member, Visitor, etc.): _____

3. Name: _____ Age: ____ Gender: ____

Address: _____

Relationship to UCC Congregational of Burlington (Employee, Volunteer, Member, Visitor, etc.): _____

Specific Location of Incident: _____

Witness(es), if present: _____

Briefly describe the nature and extent of the injury, accident or abuse and circumstances under which you became aware of the incident. Cite the source of any information not observed first hand.

Treatment, shelter or other action /support immediately provided:

Additional action(s) (e.g. 911, family notification, alternative transportation):

Note: **INDIVIDUALS UNDER AGE 18 REQUIRE PARENT NOTIFICATION; INCLUDE TIME OF NOTIFICATION.**

Disposition:

Name of person completing this report:

(Please Print)

Signature of person completing this report:

(Signature)

(Date)

**UCC Congregational of Burlington
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B-1 DOOR KEY RECEIPT FORM

(print name clearly)

Under UCC Congregational of Burlington efforts to implement UCC Safe Church guidelines, all persons are asked to sign this form and comply with the terms and conditions below.

Please check one of the following:

_____ I am a Member of UCC Congregational of Burlington

_____ I am not a Member of UCC Congregational of Burlington

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

I acknowledge receipt of the current door key and agree that:

- I will not duplicate the key or share it with anyone else
- I will be entirely responsible for the security of the door key.
- If I am the last person to leave the church I will verify that all outside doors are locked.
- I understand that, as a door key recipient, I am required to report child abuse and neglect as set forth by the Department of Social Services. If I have reasonable cause to believe, or have been told, that abuse and/or neglect of a minor or elder has occurred in the UCC Congregational of Burlington Church building or outside play area, I am required to file an Incident Report Form (Form A-1) in accordance with the Safe Church Policies and Procedures.
- I understand that failure to comply with any of the provisions set forth above may result in my loss of privilege to be a door key holder.

Recipient's Signature

Date

Church Office Staff Signature

A copy of this document will be filed with the Trustees

**UCC Congregational of Burlington
6 Lexington Street
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B-2 USE OF FACILITIES BY OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS - STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

Statement of Compliance

I acknowledge that as a representative of the organization below I have read and understand the UCC Congregational of Burlington Safe Church Policies and Procedures and that we agree to comply with them. Failure to follow the policies may result in the termination of my right and that of the organization that I represent to use church facilities.

The organization I represent is _____

To indicate your understanding of your responsibilities as a guest in our church, please initial each of the following paragraphs, sign this document, and return it to the church office along with your “Application for Use of Facilities.”

- 1. _____ We understand that our organization is required to report to the Safe Church Committee (or Director of CE, Minister, or Moderator) immediately and file an Incident Report within 24 hours, if I believe, or have been told, that there is reasonable cause to suspect that a minor or elder has been abused and/or neglected at UCC Congregational of Burlington.

- 2. _____ When the activity of my organization has ended, and we are the last people in the church, we will make sure that the lights are out and the doors are locked before leaving.

On behalf of _____ (organization name)

Signature Date

Print Name

A copy of this document will be kept on file by the Trustees.

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C-1 CORI FORM (CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECK – AUTHORIZATION)

This form will be provided by the Criminal History Systems Board.

Form C-1

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C-2 VOLUNTEER PARTICIPATION COVENANT

UCC Congregational of Burlington is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policies, procedures and statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a safe place where people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

- Adult volunteers will read the Safe Church Policies and Procedures manual.
- All adult volunteers involved with children, youth or vulnerable adults of our church should generally have been part of the church community for at least six months before involvement or acceptance of a volunteer assignment, at the discretion of the clergy.
- Any adult who has been convicted of child abuse (physical abuse, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse) will not work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.
- Adult volunteers with children and youth shall observe the 'Two-Person Policies and procedures' whenever possible, to prevent adults from being alone with an unrelated minor.
- Adult volunteers shall immediately report any inappropriate or abusive behaviors to the minister or to a Safe Church Committee member.
- If in the context of a class or other event, a child discloses information that raises concern about his or her safety, the incident should be discussed promptly with the ministerial staff to clarify and determine an appropriate level of response.

I have read this **Participation Covenant**, and I agree to observe and abide by all the policies regarding work in ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adults, as set forth above.

Signature of Applicant Date

Print full name

**UCC Congregational of Burlington
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Burlington, MA 01803**

C-3 INFORMATION FOR VOLUNTEERS

Two person policies and procedures

- No adult should be alone in the church, or at a church approved activity, with a minor that is not related to him or her.
- At least two chaperones should wait for youth to be picked up for an offsite event. In the event that an adult is alone with a youth waiting to be picked up, they should wait in a public space.
- It is permissible to have one adult per car carrying multiple youth to an off-site event.

Discipline

- The purpose of discipline is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of Christian responsibility, respect and cooperation.
- No child or youth will be disciplined by the use of any form of physical punishment or verbal abuse.
- If a minor's behavior is problematic, the volunteer is instructed to address the issue with the child directly. Should the behavior continue, the volunteer will contact the appropriate staff member, who will contact the minor's parents/guardians.
- If this behavior occurs on a trip or at a meeting, the leader reserves the right to contact the parent/guardian and send the child or youth home at the parents/guardians expense.

Disclosure of Safety Concern

If in the context of a class or other event, a minor discloses information that raises concern about his or her safety, the incident should be discussed promptly with the ministerial staff to clarify and determine an appropriate level of response.

Medical Emergency

- If there is a medical emergency involving a minor, the parents/guardians should be contacted immediately. The staff/volunteer member should alert the ministerial staff and call 911 as warranted.
- All youth participating in off-site church programs must have a UCC Congregational of Burlington Youth Information form and a Medication Release form on file. This form will be kept on file for the year with the church.
- Completed Youth Information and Medication Release forms will be brought on all off-site, overnight events by the adult leader.

Driving

- All occupants of a vehicle must use an individual seat belt (no multiple belting) at all times during the operation of the vehicle.
- The driver may not use a cell phone while driving. In case of emergency, the driver is encouraged to pull off the roadway to a safe spot before using a cell phone.

Form C-3

**UCC Congregational of Burlington
6 Lexington Street
Burlington, MA 01803**

D-1 CHURCH SCHOOL YOUTH/MINOR REGISTRATION FORM

Name: _____
(First) (Last) (Nickname)

Date of Birth: _____ Male _____ Female _____ Grade as of Sept. 20 _____

Parent/Guardian's Name (s): _____

Address: _____

Telephone Numbers: _____

Parent/Guardian's Email Addresses: _____

Please list any special needs, allergies, talents or interests that we should be aware of in order to help us care for your child's health and learning: _____

In order to share the good news of the ministries of UCC Congregational of Burlington, we sometimes take photos of children and youth for use on bulletin boards, in our newsletter and on our website. When published on our website we DO NOT include any identifying information (name, address, etc.) about the child along with the photo. **Please indicate if you do _____; do not _____ authorize the use and reproduction of your child(ren)'s photo(s)/video by UCC Congregational of Burlington.**

Additional Information: _____

Parent's/Guardian's signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Form D-1

**UCC Congregational of Burlington
6 Lexington Street
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E-1 UCC CONGREGATIONAL OF BURLINGTON TRIP PERMISSION FORM

Trip Destination:		Trip Date(s):	
Departure Location:		Departure Time:	
Return Location		Estimated Return Time	
Purpose of Trip			
Transportation Provided:			
<input type="checkbox"/> Private Car	<input type="checkbox"/> Rented Vehicle	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Transport	<input type="checkbox"/> Chartered Bus
<input type="checkbox"/> Parent Driver	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Driver	<input type="checkbox"/> Other Adult Driver	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Driver
Trip Leader:		Leader/emergency # (emergencies only):	

Complete the form below, detach at the dotted line, and return it to the Trip Leader or to the church office
.....

_____ has permission to go with the UCC Burlington Youth Group to

On _____ (date)

My youth has a UCC Congregational of Burlington Youth Registration Form on file in the UCC Burlington Church Office. I understand that every effort will be made to contact parents/guardians in the event of an emergency. In an emergency requiring medical care and treatment, I authorize any physician, hospital or other healthcare provider to give care to this minor. I also give permission for the transport of my youth to/from a doctor and/or hospital by a chaperone or ambulance.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Form E-1

**UCC Congregational of Burlington
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E-2 MEDICATION RELEASE FORM

I give my son/daughter _____ permission to have in their possession any medication(s) they may require during the trip to _____. I have reviewed the proper dosage and use of any medication(s) with my son/daughter and give them my permission to self administer their medication(s) as needed.

I understand the chaperones on this trip will not be responsible for holding medications or administering medications.

(signature of parent/guardian) **Date**

I will be bringing my own medication(s) with me on the trip to _____. I know how and when to take my medicine (s). I will be responsible for the safe use and storage of my medication(s) during this trip.

I will not share any medications with other people during the course of this trip. This includes over the counter medications, such as aspirin, cough drops or cold medicine. (The chaperones will have basic first aid kit available for participants).

(signature of UCC Congregational of Burlington Youth) **Date**

List of all medications, including over the counter:

Medication name	Dose	Amount taken	Schedule	Additional info

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E-3 PARTICIPATION COVENANT GUIDELINES FOR YOUTH

UCC Congregational of Burlington is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following process reflects our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a safe place where people can experience the love of God through relationships with others. The following process will be completed at the beginning of the year for all youth programs. If situations arise during the year (e.g., group trips) which requires additional topics to be included in the covenant, it will be amended or another covenant will be created.

1. Post ahead of time a list of the non-negotiable rules that are in the Safe Church guidelines, Section E (e.g., rules about driving, confidentiality, drugs and alcohol, sexual activity, bullying)
2. Ask the group the following question: "What other ground rules can the group adopt so that each person in the group feels comfortable participating?" As participants brainstorm, list their suggestions on newsprint. Try to use positive language. Topics and possible guidelines to discuss include:
 - Expected attendance
 - Be open-minded
 - No put-downs; only pull-ups
 - Start and end on time
 - Keep what is said in the group confidential
 - Use "I" language / speak for yourself
 - Be a team player
 - Participate but share time (Step up/ step back)
 - Have as much fun as possible
 - Cell phones will only be used to help make activities work
3. Once the group has reached a consensus on a list of operating principles, write the principles on newsprint beneath the title Group Covenant. Explain that a Group Covenant is a statement that outlines the rules that the group agrees to follow while they are together. Have participants sign the covenant. Post it somewhere in the room where everyone can see it at all times.
4. Email the covenant to the parents of the youth so they know the rules.

E-4 SAMPLE YOUTH RETREAT COVENANT

Mission Trip and Retreat Covenant
UCC Congregational of Burlington

My covenant with God and my fellow UCC Congregational of Burlington Youth Group members is to be open to the surprising work of God on this trip, even when it comes through the unexpected (like exhausting work, or people who are very different from me). I will live and participate in a Christian community, showing respect and attentive love to each person in our group.

For the days of this trip, I will seek to follow the example of Jesus who did not come to be served, but to serve. I will participate in all activities that have been planned for me, including any assigned work or chores. I will be hospitable to strangers.

I will avoid actions or attitudes such as complaint, gossip, profanity, making fun or excluding others, etc. that might detract from the building of Christian community or the mission we have been sent to accomplish. I understand there will be absolutely no tolerance of the use or possession of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, or weapons, including, but not limited to, cigarette lighters and knives.

I will honor the adults who have so graciously given their time in order that this trip might happen. I will respect and obey them without challenge or complaint because I know that they love me and always have my best interests in mind. I will also listen to my assigned adult leader(s).

I will not destroy or take any property that does not belong to me, but I will instead leave things better than they were before I arrived.

I will put my romantic relationships on hold for the duration of this trip, directing my full attention and energy to spiritual growth, community building, and the mission we have been sent to accomplish. I will refrain from any and all sexual activity, including, but not limited to, any public or private displays of romantic affection.

I will honor the group and the importance of the time we have together by living within these basic behavioral guidelines for the trip:

- I will be ready and on time for all activities.
- I will not wander off from the group, and I will stay with at least two friends, being careful that an adult always knows where I am.
- I will let girls' bedrooms be for girls only, and boys' bedrooms be for boys only.
- I will obey the assigned "lights out" instructions.
- I will only use my cell phone for purposes related to the trip or to communicate with my family.

In the event that I choose to break this Covenant, I understand that I may be sent home prior to the trip's end at my parents' expense. This decision will be made by the leaders on the trip, in consultation with the adult chaperones.

This Covenant is committed to by:

Youth Participant Signature _____ Date _____

Parent/Guardian Signature _____ Date _____

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F-1 GUIDELINES FOR MAKING DIGITAL COVENANTS

1. Digital Covenants should acknowledge that materials posted on Church Sponsored sites (and/or group pages) are not confidential.
2. Digital Covenants should acknowledge that content deemed inappropriate will be removed from the site or group page.
3. Digital Covenants should address the following issues:
 - Use appropriate language and appropriate content
 - Membership eligibility (do you have to be a member of the UCC Congregational of Burlington Youth group), are parents of current members eligible, are there age requirements/ restrictions for participation, etc.)
 - Content that can be posted/published on the site or page
 - Who, how and when may photos be tagged (members identified by name; for example, individuals may tag themselves in photos but should not tag others)
 - Stipulate appropriate and inappropriate (bullying, pictures that depict abuse, violence, sexual acts, etc.) behavior of members and the consequence for inappropriate behavior
 - Transitions, due to departure, loss of eligibility or removal of youth members and/ or adult leaders
 - Mandatory reporting laws will be followed

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F-2 ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SAFE CHURCH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

I, _____ have reviewed and understand the “Safe Church Policies and Procedures” for UCC Congregational of Burlington.

Signature: _____

Date: _____