

The Congregational UCC Church

30 N. Clinton Street

Iowa City, Iowa 52245

(319) 337-4301

www.uccic.org

No matter who you are or where you are on life's journey,

You are welcome here among friends!

This policy was adopted in September 2010.

Amended 2012, 2016, 2020

A Safe Church Policy

*Including an Overview of Our
Sexual Exploitation,
Ministerial Conduct, and
Youth Protection Policy*



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A Safe Church Is an Intentional Decision

As a community of faith committed to following in the way of 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 must take intentional and direct actions to ensure that it is safe. We want people of all ages to be able to deepen their relationship with God and each other in an environment that is safe and secure. This includes creating an environment where the vulnerable are protected and opportunities for inappropriate behavior are eliminated.

What is Safety?

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

. Identity Safety

Individuals have the freedom to express their own gender identity

• Spiritual Safety

People have the freedom to express their faith appropriately.

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

Key holders agree to abide by safe church policies

Facilities are clean and well lit.

Exits are clearly marked and free of debris.

Fire extinguishers are clearly visible and in working order.

Chemicals and poisons are properly labeled and stored.

Food preparation areas are clean and well maintained.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes:

. No unsolicited and unwelcome contact

. No physical contact

• No verbal abuse

• No physical contact

Contact Information:

Director of Children's Programs: The Rev. Ann Molsberry
319-337-4301

Pastor: The Reverend William Lovin
319-337-4301

Church Moderator: John Fieselmann
(319) 354-0292

Appendix

Christian Education Discipline Policy

All church School teachers and aides should always show self- control and understanding when dealing with discipline problems as they arise during Church School.

Corporal punishment is never appropriate.

The following steps are to be followed if the problem persists after requests by the leader(s) for appropriate behavior (these requests should always be non-threatening and directed at the behavior and not at the child).

1. The leader(s) will notify the Christian Education Director, who will then work with the child in the classroom.
2. The Christian Education Director will notify the parent(s) who will be expected to attend class with their child until the problem is corrected.
3. The child will sit with their parent(s) during the adult education time or the worship service.

[The leader(s) will proceed to the next step as listed above only if the previous step did not succeed in modifying the behavior problem.]

Protection Guidelines

Sexual abuse can occur anywhere. Removing the opportunity for abuse is a key step in prevention.

Training

All church employees working with children will be asked to watch the American Red Cross' *Babysitting Basics*, an online course. They will become familiar with and adhere to our Safe Church Policy. In addition, national background checks will be conducted on all said employees prior to their involvement with children or youth.

The "Two Adult" Rule

Activities and classes for children and youth will be planned so that there are two adults in attendance. No adult will be left alone with a child who is not their own nor out of sight of other adults and other children.

Five-Year Older Rule

Youth leaders must be at least five years older than the oldest participant in the class, group, or activity.

Meeting Spaces

Meetings with children and youth will be held in public spaces. Doors should be unlocked and have windows. If there is a need for a private conversation, the door should be open and the participants visible to others.

Overnight Events and Retreats

When a function involves an overnight stay, there shall be at least two adults, one for each gender attending. Privacy will be provided for washing and dressing. Permission slips will be required, including the location of the event, medical release form, and parent contact information.

No Previous Offenders will be allowed to work with or be in proximity to children.

Parental Involvement

Parents are always welcome in their child's classroom.

Nursery/Toddler Program

Nursery care is available during our Worship service and the Education Hour for children up to four years old.

Conclusion

We present this booklet for review of our church's Safe Church Policy as a means of raising awareness and demonstrating our heart-felt desire to maintain safety for all who participate in our life and ministry. We welcome your comment and input regarding these and other guidelines that help us to be faithful to our call as Christ's church.

Definitions

- Minister:** a person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. Minister includes elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, and volunteers, as well as authorized ministers.
- Authorized minister:** a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an Association of the United Church of Christ.
- Ministerial relationship:** the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.
- Church:** denotes the collective body of our church family (members and friends) and applies to all program officially run by our own organization whether on or off-site.
- Sexual exploitation:** sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.
- Sexual Harassment:** repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:
 - Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
 - Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
 - Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

Reporting Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse is a crime that will be reported to the appropriate authorities. Church leaders, teachers and lay persons with any suspicion of sexual abuse occurring at The Congregational UCC Church in Iowa City should contact one of the people listed below:

- Christian Education Director
- Pastor
- Church Moderator

The people listed above may also act as confidential advisers for anyone with personal concerns about possible sexual abuse at our church.

Contact information for the above people follows the appendix in this document.

Action to be Taken

All reports of possible sexual abuse will be taken seriously.

The accused will be informed of the report and contact with young people will be suspended immediately. For employees, this suspension will be with pay pending an investigation.

At first opportunity a meeting (to include all concerned) will be held and conducted by the Church Moderator.

If it is determined that inappropriate action has occurred, disciplinary action will be taken and will be reported to the authorities.

Clarifying Definitions and Expectations

for those working with

Children, Youth, and Adults

at the

Congregational UCC Church

Statement of Policy

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

The Congregational UCC Church of Iowa City is committed to creating and maintaining 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.

Specifically, all persons associated with this church should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention and responsibility of the church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

B. Ministerial Conduct (see definitions)

All persons engaged in the ministry of The Congregational UCC Church (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority.

Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of parishioner(s) or other individual(s) by anyone engaged in the ministry of this church is illegal, unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Because ministers (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) often deal with individuals who are emotionally and psychologically fragile or otherwise personally vulnerable, it is imperative that those engaged in the ministry of this church maintain their own logical, emotional, and spiritual health and that they have adequate preparation and education for helping those individuals they seek to serve in ministry.

It is the policy of The Congregational UCC Church to encourage its leaders, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers to nurture safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

It is also expected that those engaged in providing ministry will be required to undergo a background check in order to begin serving in any capacity related to children or youth. A new background check will be required every three years after the initial check.

C. Youth Protection Policy

The Congregational UCC Church is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, we expect that all people

applying to be volunteers who work with minors will have been members for at least six months or regularly participating non-members of our church for a least one year.