

St. Peter's United Church of Christ, Carmel, Indiana Safe Church Policy

- I. **Definitions**
 - A. **Minister:** a person authorized by the church to carry out its ministry. Ministers include elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, and volunteers, as well as Authorized Ministers.
 - B. **Authorized Minister:** a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an Association of the United Church of Christ or region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). An Authorized Minister is one type of minister within the meaning of this policy.
 - C. **Ministerial Relationship:** the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.
 - D. **Sexual Exploitation:** sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a Minister engaged in a ministerial relationship with another takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served by causing or allowing that person to engage in sexual behavior with the Minister.
 - E. **Sexual Harassment:** Repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes 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 any of the following occurs:
 1. 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.
 2. 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
 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 or church environment. Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:
 4. Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, e-mails, or invitations;
 5. Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions;
 6. Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
 7. Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.
 8. Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual

behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply 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. It is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

II. Policy

A. Safe Church Policy Prohibiting Abuse, Exploitation and Harassment

As a community of Christian faith, St. Peter's United Church of Christ is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. All persons associated with St. Peter's UCC should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and sexual harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention of the church to take action in an attempt to prohibit behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

B. Ministerial Conduct

1. Consistent with our understanding of the priesthood of all believers, all Authorized Ministers, employees, elected and appointed lay leaders, and authorized volunteers are Ministers to the congregation.
2. It is important that every Minister to the church be adequately prepared and educated for the ministry in which they serve others, and to understand the ways in which their use or misuse of authority may impact others. Before beginning their duties, all persons who will regularly work with children or youth, all employees and all elected officers of the church will submit a disclosure form similar to the sample attached hereto as Exhibit A. Additional information may be required of persons who will work in particular areas such as financial matters or those that require transportation of persons.
3. It is the policy of St. Peter's United Church of Christ to encourage its Ministers to nurture safety within Ministerial Relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.
4. Sexual exploitation or sexual harassment of parishioners or others by anyone engaged in ministry on behalf of St. Peter's UCC is unethical behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

5. In addition to any applicable legal requirements, St. Peter's United Church of Christ will make a report to appropriate authorities, including but not limited to the Indiana Department of Child Services, if at any time the church has reasonable cause to believe that a minor may be an abused or neglected child as defined by pertinent legal definitions. Any Minister of the church who becomes aware of facts or circumstances that child abuse or neglect has occurred or that there exists a substantial risk that child abuse or neglect may occur in the reasonably foreseeable future shall immediately report the matter to the Senior Minister and President so that the church may take appropriate action in a timely manner. The Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline currently is: 800-800-5556.

C. Requirements for Child and Youth Ministry

1. St. Peter's United Church of Christ is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love.

In order to promote this, we have established the following guidelines in addition to the general requirements for ministry to the church:

- a. Those who volunteer to work with minors will have been members of St. Peter's UCC for at least six months or, if not members, regularly and frequently associated with St. Peter's United Church of Christ for at least a year.
- b. All volunteers who regularly work with children and youth will complete and submit a disclosure document, in a form substantially similar to the sample attached hereto as Exhibit A, every five years.
- c. Before beginning their duties, all prospective employees will undergo a background check, including but not necessarily limited to inquiries of references and a criminal history verification by a third party vendor. The church will conduct a registered sex offender review for each Minister by searching their name on the Department of Justice website at www.nsopr.gov. or other appropriate source of information. This registered sex offender review will be repeated on an annual basis for all Ministers.
- d. All volunteers and employees who regularly work with children and youth will receive orientation regarding safe church policy and procedures including annual training in preventing child abuse.
- e. Adequate supervision and safeguards must be provided for children's and youth activities.
- f. Written consent of one parent or guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the church property, and any overnight activities.
- g. Chaperones, volunteers, participating children and their parents will be required to agree to written covenants for participation in children's off-site events.
- h. The president, vice president and secretary of the congregation will receive all documentation and determine if persons will be

authorized to serve in various employee and volunteer capacities and are authorized to deny such service if they determine that the ministry of the church will be jeopardized or impaired by permitting a person to serve. Pastoral staff may be consulted in this determination but the confidentiality of communications with clergy will not be impaired.

III. Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment

- A.** Upon receipt of a credible report (as determined by non-involved pastoral staff and the President of the congregation or the Vice President if the President is involved) of sexual exploitation or sexual harassment occurring on the church grounds or at a church sponsored activity a Response Team will be formed. The Response Team will be chosen by the aforementioned persons and will consist of members or trusted friends of the congregation who are skillful and experienced in psychological and/or social welfare issues, legal issues and who will maintain the highest level of confidentiality and discretion. The Response Team will undertake fact finding and report its findings to the aforementioned persons as soon as practicable. The Response Team may seek the advice of legal counsel or others to advise it in performing its functions. The aforementioned persons may attempt to informally resolve any issues that do not involve criminal conduct or may bring such matter to the Governance Team on a confidential basis.
- B.** Several approaches may be taken in addressing incidents of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment:
1. The complainant may attempt to resolve the matter directly with the respondent, the individual accused of sexual exploitation or harassment.
 2. The complainant may report the incident to a called minister, in an effort to resolve the matter informally.
 3. If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the complainant may request that the Governance Team institute formal proceedings which shall include the actions consistent with sections III C through G below.
- C.** The Governance Team leadership shall determine if sexual exploitation or harassment occurred and shall take appropriate action to resolve the matter. If the Governance Team determines that sexual exploitation or harassment has occurred the Governance Team shall take appropriate action which may include one or more of the following:
1. a formal reprimand of an employee with defined expectations for changed behavior;
 2. recommending or requiring psychological or psychiatric assessment, counseling and/or treatment;
 3. probationary standing, with the terms of the probation clearly defined;
 4. dismissal from employment or authorized volunteer position, affiliation with, or membership in, the church.
- D.** A written summary of the Governance Team proceedings in such cases will be maintained.

- E.** The complainant(s) need not be the person(s) toward whom the inappropriate behavior is directed. Moreover, neither consent nor acquiescence will excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior.
- F.** In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes sexual harassment or exploitation, consideration shall be given to the record of the alleged incident(s) as a whole and to the totality of the circumstances, including the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.
- G.** Any person bringing a sexual harassment or exploitation complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment or church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against.
- H.** The decisions of the Governance Team as set forth above are final and may not be appealed except through formal legal procedures.
- I.** Records and documents created pursuant to this Policy will be maintained under the supervision of the Secretary.

V. Child Abuse

In addition to any applicable legal requirements, St. Peter’s United Church of Christ will make a report to appropriate authorities, including but not limited to the Indiana Department of Child Services, if at any time the church has reasonable cause to believe that a minor may be an abused or neglected child as defined by pertinent legal definitions. Any Minister of the church who becomes aware of facts or circumstances that child abuse or neglect has occurred or that there exists a substantial risk that child abuse or neglect may occur in the reasonably foreseeable future shall immediately report the matter to the Senior Minister and President so that the church may take appropriate action in a timely manner. The Indiana Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline currently is: 800-800-5556.

VI. Clergy

Apart from any disposition of the matter by the church, all allegations of behavior which call into question the fitness for ministry of any Authorized Minister will promptly be forwarded to the Committee on Ministry of the Southeast Association., Indiana-Kentucky Conference of the United Church of Christ or such other body that has supervisory authority over the Authorized Minister. That Committee on Ministry and other supervisory body may be contacted by telephone United States Postal Service and/or email . (The COM contact information currently changes with a change in the chair)

Approved and adopted by the Governance Team this _____ day of _____ 2010

St. Peter’s United Church of Christ

**By: _____
President**

Exhibit A
St. Peter's United Church of Christ
Employment/Authorized Children and Youth Volunteer Application and Disclosure
Form

NAME: LAST FIRST MIDDLE

ADDRESS: STREET CITY/STATE ZIPCODE

DAYTIME PHONE EVENING PHONE EMAIL

References: One reference should be related to you and the other references should not be related to you.

NAME

ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIPCODE

TELEPHONE EMAIL

NAME

ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIPCODE

TELEPHONE EMAIL

NAME

ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIPCODE

TELEPHONE EMAIL

I have been a member of this church since _____

I have been a friend of this church since _____

I have never been convicted of, nor 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)

True Not True

If not true, 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.

No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.

True Not True

If not true, give a short explanation of the lawsuit. (Please 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.)

I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had my employment, professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct.

True Not True

If not true, give a short explanation. (Please 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.)

Do you have a valid drivers' license?

Yes No

With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.

True Not True

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would 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.

The covenants between persons seeking authorized volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, 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. Even though St. Peter's United Church of Christ maintains insurance I realize that prevention of harm and care for one another are the primary goals of the church's Safe Church Policy.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize St. Peter's United Church of Christ, Carmel, Indiana 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. St. Peter's United Church of Christ authorized volunteer and employee recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in. To that end, I authorize St. Peter's United Church of Christ and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that St. Peter's United Church of Christ will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the St. Peter's United Church of Christ Safe Church Policy.

(PRINT NAME & SIGN) _____ DATE _____

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

- Sex Offender Registry (www.nsopr.gov) review performed on _____
- Personal interview conducted by staff on _____
- Reference inquiries completed on _____
- Church membership for 6 mos. or association for 1 year confirmed on _____
- Safe church awareness training and policy orientation performed on _____

Additionally, if considered for employment:

- Criminal History Verification (Oxford Document Management) together with Fair Credit Reporting Act notices, completed on _____