

**SAFE CHURCH POLICY**  
**Trinity United Church of Christ, Jasper, Indiana**

As a community of Christian faith, Trinity 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 a safe and wholesome environment. To promote such an environment, below are a number of policies and procedures that Trinity has adopted. In all cases, Trinity will make good faith efforts to ensure compliance with them, act promptly to correct violations, and periodically review and change them as necessary.

**Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Employment or Volunteerism**

Trinity United Church of Christ is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which all people can learn about and experience God's Love. In order to promote this goal, the following requirements apply:

- A. All paid staff and volunteers who work with minors will complete the forms included in this document. Completed forms will be kept in a locked file, access to which is restricted to the Ministers and the person's supervisor(s), except as required by law.
- B. Paid staff will complete the following forms:
  - 1. Criminal Background Check to be completed at time of employment.
  - 2. Criminal Records Check Consent Form – If the first check merits further consideration
  - 3. Information and Disclosure Form (Attachment – Form A)
  - 4. Reference Form (Attachment – Form B)
  - 5. Authorized Minister and Youth Ministry Director will submit a copy of current driver's license and copy of vehicle insurance (to be kept in locked file and destroyed when no longer needed).

*The Executive Council will be responsible for screening these applicants.*

- C. Volunteers who work with minors will complete the following forms:
  - 1. Criminal Background Check ( to be repeated annually)
  - 2. Criminal Records Check Consent Form – If the first check merits further consideration
  - 3. Disclosure Form (Attachment – Form A)
  - 4. Any adult who provides transportation to minors for the church will submit a copy of current driver's license and copy of vehicle insurance (to be kept in locked file and destroyed when no longer needed).

*The Youth Ministry Director will be responsible for screening these applicants.*

- D. Parents and volunteers who work with Trinity Tree House will complete the following forms:
  - 1. Criminal Background Check (to be repeated annually)
  - 2. Criminal Records Check Consent Form – If the first check merits further consideration
  - 3. Disclosure Form (Attachment – Form A))
  - 4. Copy of current driver's license and copy of vehicle insurance (to be kept in locked file and destroyed when no longer needed)

*The Trinity Tree House Director or Office Administrator will be responsible for screening these applicants.*

### **Training of Paid Staff and Volunteers**

Training of paid staff and volunteers will cover the following:

- A. Explanation of the Safe Church Policy and reporting procedures
- B. How to respond to reports of abuse
- C. Fire and tornado safety

Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), AED, and First Aid training is required of all paid staff working with youth and children. The cost of this training will be provided by Trinity.

Volunteers can take the training at their own cost.

The Safe Church Policy will be made available to all members and prospective members of Trinity Church. The Church will provide at least one training session per year and will offer training more frequently, if needed. Training will be given by a member of the Covenant Response Team. (See page four.)

- A. All committee members are required to attend the training sessions.
- B. All paid staff and volunteers need to complete the training every three years. (Office Administrator will keep records of training dates.)

### **Ministry for Children and Youth: Expectations**

#### *Supervision*

- A. It is recommended that a minimum of two adults shall be on premises with youth.
- B. When more than twenty youth are present, an additional adult for every ten youth will be present. .
- C. Junior high youth may assist an adult with elementary age youth.
- D. Senior high youth may assist an adult with junior high or elementary age youth.
- E. All leaders of the senior youth must be at least five years older than the oldest youth in the group.
- F. Parental forms
  1. Written consent of a parent or guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the church property and any overnight activities, and this consent must be on file in the church office. (Attachment – Form C)
  2. A separate permission form must be filled out for each trip away from church, and this form must be on file in the church office.
  3. A medical form for each child must be on file in the church office and needs to be updated each year. (Attachment – Form D)
  4. Permission slips, medical forms, and a copy of the church's insurance policy will be taken on activities away from the church.

### *Transportation Safety*

- A. Drivers should be 21 or at least five years older than the oldest youth to transport any passengers unrelated to the driver.
- B. Drivers are responsible to make sure all occupants wear seat belts and proper child restraints.
- C. It is suggested that there be two adults in each car when traveling to a church related event, when possible.
- D. Youth who have a license to drive may drive to and from the meeting place but may not leave the event until it is over. If the youth is to arrive late or needs to leave early, the parent of the youth must notify the sponsor ahead of the event. Parents will be contacted if youth leave early without prior notification.
- E. “Driving My Child Permission Slip” will be on file for each child. (Attachment – Form E)
- F. Any adult organizing a youth trip traveling more than 50 miles from the church will file an itinerary with the Office Administrator.

### *Picture Policy*

A parent or guardian will sign a form giving permission to publish pictures or videos taken at any time during a church related event before publishing it in newsletters, websites, or any other form of publication, such as newspapers or history books. (Attachment – Form F)

### *Housing*

- A. Adult chaperones are required for overnight program/events.
- B. Gathering is to be in public spaces.
- C. Sleeping spaces are considered sanctuaries. Visitors must match gender and age.
- D. Camp housing
  - 1. Allows for multiple youth with a minimum of one adult sharing a room.
  - 2. An adult must be housed in every building housed by youth.
- E. Hotels or college dormitories where only two beds per room are provided.
  - 1. Youth and adults are to be roomed separately in the same area.
  - 2. If rooms have internal doors adjoining rooms, both rooms must match gender and age (youth/adult).

### *Youth Pick-up Procedure*

A pick-up policy is in place for Trinity Tree House students and Trinity Youth Group attendees. Contact event director for specific policy.

### *Fire and Tornado Safety*

Leaders of church school classes, youth groups, and Trinity Tree House will conduct semi-annual fire and tornado drills.

## **Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation, Harassment, Physical or Verbal Abuse**

All persons associated with Trinity United Church of Christ 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 prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy, and if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy and may be cause for immediate termination of employment or volunteer leadership or participation with Trinity Church.

A subcommittee of the Church Council with no less than two members, one male and one female, will be established each year in preparation for the possibility of hearing complaints under this policy. The subcommittee will be comprised of the Vice-President and another member of the Church Council of the opposite sex as the current Vice-President. The subcommittee, hereinafter referred to as “The Covenant Response Team,” will be familiar with the terms of this policy, as well as the established procedures of the church for dealing with a complaint.

Several approaches may be taken in addressing incidents of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment:

- A. The complainant can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the respondent, the individual accused of sexual exploitation or harassment.
- B. The complainant can report the incident to the program/event leader or council president or called minister in an effort to resolve the matter informally.
- C. If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or is unsuccessful, the complainant may request that the Covenant Response Team institute formal proceedings which shall include the following steps:
  1. The Covenant Response Team shall advise the Minister and Council President of the receipt of all complaints and shall keep them apprised of ongoing steps and actions taken. If either the Minister or Council President is the subject of the complaint, this notice requirement shall not apply.
  2. The Covenant Response Team shall gather statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged exploitation or harassment and from others who may have pertinent information such as qualified professional consultants, and present such information to the Minister and Council President.
  3. The Covenant Response Team shall make determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. Finding that sexual exploitation or harassment has occurred, such action may include one or more of the following:
    - a. A formal reprimand, with defined expectations for changed behavior
    - b. Probationary standing, with the terms of the probation clearly defined
    - c. Dismissal from employment or authorized volunteer position
    - d. Dismissal of membership in the church

If it is found that sexual exploitation, harassment, physical or verbal abuse did not occur, then actions will be taken for the respondent’s return to participation.

4. If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the Covenant Response Team, he or she has the right to appeal to the Council President, or to the Council Vice-President if the President is the subject of the complaint. The President shall refer the matter to the Executive Committee of the Church Council. The subject of any such appeal shall be limited solely to whether the procedures of this policy were followed. If the Executive Committee determines that the procedures of this policy were not followed, it will refer the matter back to the Covenant Response Team to complete the processing of the complaint in accordance with these procedures.

The Covenant Response Team may seek the advice of legal counsel or others to advise it in performing its functions.

All written records of the investigation, actions taken, and any resolution of the matter taken by the Covenant Response Team will be maintained by the Trinity Church Office.

The person(s) toward whom the inappropriate behavior is directed need not be the complainant. Moreover, neither consent nor willing participation will excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior. Trinity Church may initiate or proceed with the formal complaint process at any time.

In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes sexual harassment, exploitation, physical or verbal abuse, consideration shall be given to the record of alleged incident(s) as a whole and to the totality of the circumstances, including the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.

Any person bringing a sexual harassment, exploitation, physical or verbal abuse 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 or discharged.

#### **Electronic Communications Including Electronic Social Network**

If there are any complaints, misrepresentations, or harassment, the report will go to the Covenant Response Team. They will determine whether or not it is a church related issue.

#### **Child Abuse**

Apart from any legal requirements, Trinity United Church of Christ will make a report to appropriate authorities, including but not limited to the Indiana Department of Family and Children's Services, if at any time the church has reasonable cause to believe that a minor may be an abused or neglected child.

Any employee or volunteer of Trinity Church who becomes aware of facts or circumstances that child abuse or neglect may occur in the reasonably foreseeable future shall immediately report the matter to the Indiana Department of Family and Children's Services. To report child abuse or neglect, call 1-800-800-5556. The phone call will be documented with the Minister and/or Council President.

## **Ministerial Conduct**

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. Moreover, it is the policy of Trinity Church to encourage its Ministers to nurture safety within ministerial relationships and ministry activities by being attentive to self-care, education, maintenance of appropriate boundaries, and referral of those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

In addition, all Authorized Ministers doing ministry at Trinity Church and the Youth Director will attend boundary workshops required by the United Church of Christ, attending at least one approved workshop on this topic every three years.

All allegations of behavior that call into question the fitness for ministry of any Authorized Minister will promptly be forwarded to the Lincolnland Association of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference.

## **Definitions**

**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.

**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.

**Teacher:** An adult over the age of 18 who has responsibility for a church school classroom.

**Classroom Helper:** An adult or responsible youth who assists a teacher.

**Minor:** Any individual under the age of eighteen.

**Physical and Verbal Abuse:** To injure another, mentally or physically, either by words, actions or physical contact.

**Inappropriate Behavior:** The use of suggestive language, suggestive behavior or profanity to or around youth.

**Confidentiality:** When investigating an allegation, those involved shall maintain complete confidentiality with respect to names and events. The guiding rule of confidentiality is to tell only who needs to know and only what they need to know. This shall be followed by all involved.

**Sexual Exploitation:** Sexual activity or conduct (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a person engaged in a ministerial relationship with another takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served by causing that person to engage in sexual behavior.

**Child Sexual Abuse:** Any sexual activity with a child in which a minor is used for sexual gratification of another to include, but not limited to: fondling, penetration, inappropriate touching, verbal comments, pornographic materials, obscene phone calls, texting, exhibitionism or any behavior that violates related state statutes.

**Sexual Misconduct:** Includes sexual harassment (verbal and/or physical), sexual advances and/or sexual contact between ordained, licensed, commissioned minister, or any person, ordained or lay, who has an assigned role with children and/or youth in the church and the employees, members, youth, children, and counselees of his/her church.

**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:

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; or

Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church related decision affecting an individual; or

Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonable 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:

Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, e-mails, texts, or invitations;

Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender specific traits, sexual propositions;

Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and

Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

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, leadership opportunities, 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.

Adopted 7-11-2012

Revised 7-22-2012