



**The First Church of Christ, Congregational  
Redding, Connecticut**

**Safe Church Policy– September 23, 2011**

**Statement of Policy:**

FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST recognizes the need to have formal, written policies and guidelines to help prevent the opportunity for, or the appearance of, abuse to a minor. The following procedures are not based on a lack of trust in a particular worker, but instead are needed to protect preschoolers, children, youth, congregants, employees and volunteers of the FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST.

"Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them." Mark 10:14, 16

"Now it is required that those who have been given trust must prove faithful."  
1 Corinthians 4:2

DISCLAIMER: IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PROVIDE BY POLICY OR PROCEDURE FOR EVERY CONCEIVABLE SITUATION OR CIRCUMSTANCE WHICH MIGHT POSSIBLY ARISE IN THE CONTEXT OF DEALING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH. THESE ARE GUIDELINES ONLY. IT MAY BE NECESSARY TO MODIFY OR DEPART FROM THE POLICY IN CERTAIN CASES BASED ON UNIQUE FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES, AND THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST RESERVES THE RIGHT TO DO SO AT ITS DISCRETION.

NOTWITHSTANDING THE POLICIES LISTED HEREIN, THE FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST SHALL COMPLY WITH ALL LOCAL, STATE, NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL LAWS WHERE APPLICABLE.

## **1.0 GUIDING PRINCIPLES AT FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST CHURCH-SPONSORED PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES**

.01 By fostering awareness of appropriate, as well as inappropriate, behaviors in the presence of minors, FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST, as part of the body of Christ, will demonstrate Christian love and respect for one another.

.02 FIRST CHURCH OF CHRIST (herein referred to as FCC) Leadership recognizes that certain people have exceptional talents for teaching and supporting the growth and development of FCC's children and youth (here defined as children sixteen years of age and under), and we wish to encourage them to use their spiritual gifts. At the same time, however, we have set certain criteria on those adults who choose to serve in this capacity to protect the well-being of our children and youth.

.03 Our intent is not to be judgmental, for we are all accountable to God. We rely on God's wisdom in developing, implementing and carrying out His will through these guidelines. Compassion and truth will be the guiding forces for any investigation, reporting or follow-up action that results from the procedures as outlined in this policy.

.04 Support from the FCC Church Council, Deacons, Standing Committees, Ministerial staff, employees, volunteers and congregants is critical for adherence to this policy. The limited nature of our resources, and our desire to devote as much as possible to the work of the Lord, dictate that this policy is fully understood by every affected member of the FCC community. This understanding will enable the FCC staff and leadership to do what is within their power to protect children and preserve the church resources for the work of the Lord.

## **2.0 PROHIBITED BEHAVIOR AT FCC CHURCH-SPONSORED PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES**

.01 The following behaviors are prohibited for all paid employees and volunteers:

- Threatening or intentionally inflicting physical injury upon a child and youth.
- Committing any sexual offense against a child or youth, or engaging in any sexual contact with a child or youth.
- Making any kind of sexual advance, or making a request for sexual favors, or engaging in other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature with a child or youth.

## **3.0 WORKER ENLISTMENT AND SCREENING AT FCC CHURCH-SPONSORED PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES**

The FCC goal is to screen and train every individual who acts as a volunteer at FCC events and will follow the policies below as is practicable and reasonable; but recognizes that, except as required by law, full and complete compliance with the screening and training policies listed below may not be achievable.

The appropriate ministry director or volunteer coordinator should communicate the substance of the guidelines in this Policy to all volunteers. Volunteers may be removed from service for failure to comply with these guidelines.

.01 Individuals considered for a position in preschool, children and youth areas of ministry at our various Church-sponsored programs or activities must be members in good standing or regular attendees of the FCC for a minimum of six months before serving in these areas.

.02 All paid workers and volunteers for FCC Church-sponsored programs or activities working with preschoolers, children or youth will complete the applicable Screening And Volunteer Application Form (Attachment A). The FCC reserves the right to remove a volunteer or paid staff member because of the responses listed on the screening form or volunteer application, or for any reason not prohibited by law.

.03 A copy of the Screening And Volunteer Application Form will be retained at the FCC church office.

.04 The steps listed above will need to be completed prior to the person being allowed to serve in the preschool, children or youth ministries of FCC Church-sponsored programs or activities.

.05 Individuals who are reasonably suspected (by a FCC Minister or Leader) to have been arrested for, charged with, under probation for, or convicted of either sexual or physical abuse cannot be used to serve nor will they be employed or used as a volunteer for any FCC Church-sponsored programs or activities for preschool, children or youth.

.06 The Church will conduct a registered sex offender review for each volunteer by searching their name on the Department of Justice website at [www.nsopr.gov](http://www.nsopr.gov).

#### **4.0 GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS OF CHILDREN'S PROGRAMS AT FCC CHURCH-SPONSORED PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES**

##### **4.1 Volunteer Conduct at FCC Church-Sponsored Programs or Activities**

.01 Under no circumstances shall a volunteer be alone with a child behind a closed door that is not equipped with a view or glass panel. While discouraged, in circumstances where the volunteer must be alone with a child, the door to classrooms should be kept open or partially open.

.02 Two adult volunteers is the goal for all children's classes and programs.

.03 Classes shall remain in the assigned spaces. If there is to be a change, the appropriate ministry director must be informed and approve the change.

.04 Each room should maintain a master child care registration log. This log and instruction form should be taken with the class in the event of a fire or other emergency requiring the evacuation of the room so that attendance can be taken after the evacuation.

.05 Care should be taken by volunteers so that young children (under the age of 8) do not leave the classroom unattended and older children and youth leave for a brief time period (under 5 minutes) and only to an authorized destination (i.e., restroom or Fellowship Hall).

.06 Classroom doors must never be locked while occupied.

.07 With children under the age of 10, only a parent or other person specifically designated by the parent and known to the volunteer or paid staff person may pick up children. Parents will be requested to provide the appropriate ministry director or volunteer coordinator with any special information regarding a possible child custody dispute where leadership should pay particular attention to who picks up the child.

Child and youth ages 10 and above may be released at the end of the scheduled child or youth care time unless the parents provide special instructions to the contrary. When the parents must pick up a child, the parents should do so as soon as possible at or after the end of the scheduled child or youth care time.

.08 Touching to comfort or affirm a child in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Children in first grade or older should not sit in the lap of volunteers.

Volunteers shall not touch children in genital areas except as necessary to change a diaper or to assist a child in the bathroom as noted below.

.09 Parents of pre-school age children are encouraged to change the diapers of their own children and should check on their children periodically if they plan to leave their child for an extended period of time. Volunteers will be instructed to change a diaper only if the parent gives permission for a volunteer to do so. This granting of permission can be contained on the registration form for the child. Parents who grant permission to volunteers to change diapers should supply the diapers.

.10 Only adult volunteers and paid staff may assist children in the bathroom and only where necessary in the case of individuals with a disability and small children.

## **4.2 Discipline of Children at FCC Church-Sponsored Programs or Activities**

.01 Physical discipline, such as spanking, by volunteers or paid staff is never permitted.

Using physical resistance to prevent a child from doing something disruptive or dangerous is permitted and may, in some instances, be necessary. Affirmation and encouragement is always appropriate.

.02 The ministry director or volunteer coordinator should advise volunteers on the best age-appropriate discipline methods.

.03 The behavior of a child who is a constant disruption to a class should be discussed with his or her parents and the director or volunteer coordinator. In appropriate circumstances, the parents can be asked to attend class to observe or control the problem behavior. If the behavior persists, the child may be removed from the class.

A child who is a danger to other children should be removed immediately.

## **4.3 Continuing Training for Volunteers for FCC Church-Sponsored Programs or Activities**

.01 The appropriate ministry director or volunteer coordinator should encourage volunteers to take advantage of ongoing Safe Church continuing education opportunities that are available through the United Church of Christ website (<http://www.ucc.org>). Volunteers will be required to attend specific classes or educational programs as required by law.

#### **4.4 Communication with Parents at FCC Church-Sponsored Programs or Activities**

.01 Volunteers should attempt to keep open lines of communication with parents.

.02 Parents shall always be permitted to observe in a classroom or child care room although the volunteer may tell the parent that his or her presence may be disruptive to the child.

.03 Parents shall be encouraged to change diapers and/or take children to the bathroom before their time in child care, etc.

.04 Parents shall not leave a child if the child has a fever or other severe illness. Parents must advise the volunteers if the child is on medication or has relevant allergies.

.05 Information concerning the sleeping accommodations for children at any overnight event should be made available to parents.

#### **4.5 Staffing of Children's Programs at FCC Church-Sponsored Programs or Activities**

.01 The goal is to have two (2) adult qualified volunteers assigned to each class. In kindergarten and pre-school rooms, at least one (1) of the volunteers must be female.

.02 There should always be a FCC staff person or volunteer on duty while class is in session who will make roving checks of all classrooms. The checks should be on an irregular basis so that the time of the visit cannot be predicted.

.03 The appropriate FCC ministry director should make provisions for last-minute replacements of a volunteer who cannot be present on a given day. If a qualified volunteer cannot be obtained, the class must be cancelled or combined with another class.

.04 Parents may be requested to work in children's rooms to fill in or substitute for other volunteers.

### **5.0 GUIDELINES FOR VOLUNTEERS OF YOUTH PROGRAMS AT FCC CHURCH-SPONSORED PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES**

#### **5.1 Physical Contact**

.01 Back rubs, neck rubs, massages, kissing, or similar contact are not allowed. Side-by-side hugs are to be used instead of full body contact. Touching need not be completely avoided, but staff and volunteers must be aware of the appearance of inappropriate touch and how the person being touched may interpret the contact.

## **5.2 FCC Staffing Considerations for Planned Activities**

.01 A minimum of two (2) adults who have completed the required screening and training, as described in section 3.0 of this policy and in the FCC'S Volunteer Policy, should be present for all activities. A specific ratio of leaders to youth is not suggested; instead, the ratio should be appropriate for the activity being undertaken. The youth's parent or guardian must grant any exceptions to the two-adult rule and the appropriate ministry director should be contacted in advance and advised that permission has been obtained.

.02 Any one-on-one meeting involving a youth must be conducted with the door open or in a room with a window in the door. An adult may participate in one-on-one meetings, lunches, or outings with a child or youth only in the following situations:

- (1) where the activity will occur in a public place;
- (2) proper approval has been given by the parent or guardian;
- (3) a FCC ministry director or manager has been notified; and
- (4) if the adult and child travel to a destination together, they must be accompanied by at least one other individual.

.03 At no time shall a FCC office employee or volunteer pursue a dating relationship with a child or youth.

## **5.3 Unplanned Meetings Between FCC Employees or Volunteers and Youth**

.01 Unplanned contacts between a youth and a FCC employee or volunteer shall, insofar as possible, be conducted under the same rules as are planned activities. It shall not be a violation of this policy, however, for a FCC employee or volunteer to talk with a youth in a room with the door closed, when the youth has requested the closed meeting, providing;

- (1) the door is closed for a relatively brief time (less than 5 minutes),
- (2) the FCC employee or volunteer informs another FCC employee or volunteer at the beginning of the meeting,
- (3) the FCC employee or volunteer informs the other FCC employee or volunteer at the end of the meeting, and
- (4) such meetings are infrequent.

## **5.4. Driving Rules**

.01 Only FCC employees or other qualified, screened adult volunteers may drive. All drivers must have, and, upon request, must show a valid driver's license and proof of insurance to the person in charge of an event. When one vehicle is used for an event, the two-adult rule still applies unless parental permission is obtained prior to the trip. When several vehicles are taken for an event, keeping the other vehicles in sight is an acceptable substitute for the two-adult rule. The number of persons per vehicle must not exceed the number of seatbelts, and seatbelts must be worn by all occupants.

## **5.5 Overnight and Trip Rules**

.01 FCC written Permission and Medical Consent forms must be completed prior to the trip. The two-adult rule must be followed throughout the trip, with any exceptions clearly stated and approved in advance by the parent or guardian. The total number of adults on each trip will be adjusted according to the requirement of the planned activities.

.02 Parent chaperones must complete a Screening Form before supervising an event sponsored by the Church.

## **6.0 REPORTING AND INVESTIGATIONS AT FCC CHURCH-SPONSORED PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES**

### **6.1 Reporting Requirements**

.01 All FCC employees, volunteers or other paid children or youth workers at a FCC Church-sponsored program or activity shall immediately report to an FCC Minister, ministry director, or volunteer coordinator any incident of abuse or violation of the two-adult or open door policy of which they have knowledge, which they have observed, or which they reasonably suspect. Any person making such a report shall document the incident and keep the information strictly confidential.

.02 All FCC employees and volunteers shall comply with all applicable laws regarding mandated reporting of abuse of children and vulnerable adults.

### **6.2 Incident of Abuse Defined**

.01 An "incident of abuse" means any occurrence in which any person:

- Has threatened or inflicted (intentionally or negligently) physical injury upon a child, youth or vulnerable adult, other than by accidental means, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
- Commits or allows to be committed any sexual offense against a child, youth or vulnerable adult, or engages in any sexual contact with a child, youth or vulnerable adult, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.
- Makes any kind of sexual advance, or makes a request for sexual favors, or engages in sexually motivated physical contact, or engages in other verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature with a child, youth or vulnerable adult, or is reasonably suspected to have done so.

## **7.0 MINISTERIAL CONDUCT AND REQUIREMENTS**

### **7.1 Ministerial Conduct**

.01 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.

.02 It is the policy of the FCC 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.

.03 Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Harassment of parishioners or others by anyone engaged in ministry on behalf of the FCC is unethical behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

**7.2 Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Ministry**

.01 Before beginning their duties, all Ministers and paid employees will complete and submit the FCC Employment Disclosure Form.

.02 Before beginning their duties, all Ministers and paid employees will be personally interviewed to assess the suitability of their character and qualifications for the position they seek.

.03 In the interest of maintaining the safety and security of our parishioners and employees, First Church of Christ Congregational of Redding, CT (“the Church”) will procure a consumer report and/or investigative consumer report (“background check report”) on all paid employees in connection with their employment application, and if they are hired, may procure additional background check reports on them for employment purposes. The background check report will contain information bearing on their character, criminal record and will validate their identity. We do not search civil or driving records, nor do we perform any credit checking. The types of information that may be obtained include but are not limited to: social security number verification; criminal records check; and, if appropriate drug testing results. The information will be obtained from private and public record sources.

.04 Authorized Ministers of the Church will attend all boundary workshops required by the Fairfield East Association of the Connecticut Conference of the United Church of Christ, or will attend at least one workshop on this topic every three years, whichever is more frequent.

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the First Church of Christ Safe Church Policy.

*Print Name and Sign*

*Date*