

United Parish in Brookline

Safe Church Policy

Received from the Children & Youth Deepening Ministry Teams on 6/1/2013
Approved by Church Council on September 1, 2013

Recommended for Review by 6/1/2018

After a review of best practices, the policy was updated in 2020. Updated elements include expanding the Safe Church Policy and the Safe Church School Policy to include all events hosted by the church and the church school regardless of location, be it in the church building, offsite, or online. In addition, the changes reflect the desire to make clear that the intent of the Safe Church Policy is to do more than protect individuals from harm, it is also to foster and create an inclusive, welcoming and diverse community that honors the unique contributions and stories of each person.

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SAFE CHURCH POLICY

United Parish in Brookline Safe Church Policy Concerning Inclusion, Welcome, and the Prevention of Abuse

Policy Prohibiting Abuse, Exploitation and Harassment

As a community of Christian faith, United Parish in Brookline 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.

Further, we seek to create an environment which affirms the inherent goodness of each person created in God's image. No one shall be denied rights, status or access to an equal place in the life, worship, and governance of any program or activity because of race, color, ethnic origin, national origin, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, differing abilities, or socio-economic class.

To the extent possible, all spaces and settings for programs, activities, and ministry shall be accessible. United Parish seeks to support all by providing reasonable alternative arrangements *regardless of state or federal law* to address safety and comfort.

All persons associated with United Parish in Brookline 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.

Ministerial Conduct

Consistent with our understanding of the priesthood of all believers, all settled Pastors, interns, employees, elected and appointed lay leaders, and volunteers are Ministers to the congregation.

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.

It is the policy of United Parish in Brookline 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.

Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Harassment of parishioners or others by anyone engaged in ministry on

behalf of United Parish in Brookline is unethical behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Ministry

- All Ministers (as defined above) will receive and review a copy of the United Parish Safe Church Policy.
- All Pastors of the church will attend all boundary workshops required by their denomination(s) or will attend at least one workshop on this topic every three years, whichever is more frequent. When a boundary training workshop suitable for Christian Educators is offered or available, the Coordinator of Christian Education will attend once every three years and provide a summary of the training to Children and Youth Deepening Ministry Team and the Sunday School teachers.

Additional Requirements for Church School and Children and Youth Music Programs

United Parish in Brookline 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:

- All volunteers who regularly work with children and youth (teach church school, lead youth group, or chaperone trips such as Pilgrimage) will complete and submit a disclosure document in a form substantially similar to the sample attached hereto as [Exhibit B](#). All other volunteers (church school subs, greeters, chaperones for on-site events or short-term, local trips such as CityReach) will submit to a CORI check.
- A paid staff member will run the CORI and reference checks.
- Volunteers who have yet to have a CORI or reference check completed will be paired with volunteers who have been checked.
- All volunteers and employees who regularly work with children and youth will receive orientation regarding Safe Church and Safe Church School policies and procedures. United Parish Safe Church School Policy is attached as [Exhibit A](#).
- This policy shall be posted in an area where activities take place, and shall include the names and office phone numbers of the clergy in charge.

Definitions

Adult: Anyone who is 18 years or older and not in high school

Child: Any young person under age 18, or a young person who is 18 **and** in high school

Cisgender: An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender corresponds with their gender or sex assigned at birth.

Gender Non-Binary: An umbrella term for people who identify their gender as neither male nor female. These people might identify as both ("bigender"), neither ("agender"), a mix between the two ("genderfluid"), or they can be unsure of their gender ("genderqueer").

Leader: A person, adult or youth, who, for the benefit of another, engages in ministry without responsibility for oversight of others engaged in that same ministry. Examples include Sunday school teachers, camp counselors, and program team.

LGBTQ+: An acronym for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, and others. It refers to people whose gender identities vary from their gender or sex assigned at birth, or whose sexual orientations differ from the heterosexual majority. The "+" is an effort to include additional gender identities.

Minister: A person authorized by the church to carry out its ministry. Ministers include elected or appointed leaders of the church, seminarians, 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 American Baptist Church, the United Church of Christ or region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the United Methodist Church, or another denominational body authorized to ordain ministers. An Authorized Minister is one type of minister within the meaning of this policy.

Ministerial Relationship: The relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.

Responsible Person: The person designated as being accountable for compliance with this policy for an event or program.

Supervisor: A person who has oversight responsibilities for a ministry program and/or Leaders in a ministry program.

Sexual Exploitation: Sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a Minister engages in consensual or non-consensual sexual behavior with a member or friend of United Parish, other than their partner/spouse.)

Sexual Harassment: Repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to their 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.
- 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.

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, 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, 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.

Transgender: An adjective describing a person whose sense of personal identity and gender does not correspond with the gender or sex assigned to them at birth.

EXHIBIT A

UNITED PARISH in BROOKLINE SAFE CHURCH SCHOOL POLICY

United Parish in Brookline 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 be they at church, offsite or online. Below are policies that assist to ensure we are doing our best to promote an inclusive environment and to keep our children and those who work with them safe. These policies are part of the overarching Safe Church Policy.

Screening and Training

Background Checks

- All persons who come in contact with children and youth will have completed a Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) Acknowledgement Form that the Associate Pastor will process through the Massachusetts Department of Criminal Justice Information Services. This includes Nursery staff, Church School teachers, children and youth music leaders, adult chaperones, and members of the Children & Youth Deepening Ministry Team.
- The Associate Pastor, and the Minister of Music, will review the results of the CORI screening and a Sex Offender Registry Screening and discuss information with the Senior Pastor, if needed. All information will be held in strict confidence and in accordance with the laws of the state of Massachusetts.
- After review, all items will be kept in a secure location. Background checks will be performed annually.

Screening Process Requirement

To assume the role of a teacher or youth leader/mentor, adults must be reviewed and selected by the children and youth deepening team in conjunction with the Associate Pastor

Supervision and Monitoring of Events and Programs

Creating a Safe Space

To create a safe space, it is necessary to anticipate and avoid circumstances in which children and youth are exposed to inappropriate consumables, materials, unmonitored adult contact, or unsupervised peer contact. For example:

- *Alcoholic beverages:* Alcohol (sacramental or otherwise) shall not be stored in publicly accessible areas of the church buildings.
- *Computers and Electronic Devices:* Children and youth shall have adequate supervision when using electronic devices belonging to the church or supervising adults. Church devices shall have adequate password protection. Each user shall have their own account and password.
- *Persons with keys and access to locked spaces:* Anyone with keys or electronic access to church buildings shall meet all the requirements for screening and training according to the Screening and Training Protocols
- *Unused spaces:* Spaces not in use should not be readily accessible. United Parish staff, in consultation with lay leaders, may determine how best to meet this standard.

Basic Needs

No one is to be deprived of the basic human needs of food, drinking water, shelter, sleep, access to restrooms, safety, and clothing at any event. Exceptions may be made for programs intended to teach children or youth about poverty, need, and hunger, such as an intentional fasting program, or all-night events where less than six hours of sleep is expected. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by fasting or missing sleep. Participants who wish to withdraw or who are unable to complete the program must have their basic needs met immediately while honoring their dignity.

Transgender, genderqueer and gender non-binary children and youth

- Transgender, genderqueer, or gender non-binary children or youth who express the need or desire for increased privacy should be provided with reasonable alternative arrangements. Reasonable alternative arrangements may include the use of a private area, or a separate changing schedule, or use of a single stall restroom. They should not be required to use a locker room or restroom that conflicts with their gender identity.
- Any alternative arrangement should be provided in a way that protects the child or youth's ability to keep their transgender status confidential.

- Safe bathroom/shower facilities will be provided by gender (or specific times will be assigned to the use of a single facility).
- Adults should either have separate shower facilities or shower at other times than the youth. Separate dressing facilities should also be provided. See section on Overnight Programs for further detail.

Violence and Weapons

- No one is to strike, hit, or otherwise physically threaten or harm anyone at any time.
- Bullying of any kind by anyone is prohibited; if a supervisor needs guidance in addressing instances of bullying that they witness, they should contact one of the Pastors. Bullying consists of behavior that intimidates or harasses another person through words or action. Such behavior can include direct physical contact such as hitting or shoving; verbal assaults such as teasing or name-calling; and social isolation or manipulation.
- Children and youth shall not have weapons of any kind at any event or program for children or youth. Exceptions to this restriction may be made for camp programs or other specific events with prior approval (such as knives for cooking, etc).
- Report suspected violations immediately.

Behavioral Standards for Supervisors and Program Leaders

Adults who work with children and youth are expected to model the patterns of healthy relationships that children and youth deserve in all settings, and adults may not have secret relationships, including secret communication, with any unrelated child or youth from the church.

Adults are encouraged to:

- Have ongoing spiritual practices, which might include: daily prayer, regular participation in corporate worship, and Bible study;
- Spend time with and listen to children and youth, and advocate for their ministry within the body of Christ
- Offer appropriate physical expressions of care, which may include:
 - high fives and fist bumps
 - hand-holding while walking with small children, or in prayer
 - brief touching of shoulders, hands, or arms;
 - “laying on of hands” under appropriate pastoral supervision;
 - brief hugs and arms around shoulders

- Model appropriate affection with other adults and be accountable to the community for behavior

Adults shall not under any circumstances:

- provide children or youth with non-sacramental alcohol, marijuana, drugs outside of those prescribed to the student or those available over the counter (tylenol, ibuprofen, midol, etc) , tobacco products, vapes, or pornography;
- Arrive under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or misused legal drugs at any children’s or youth event, or become intoxicated at an event, when they are responsible for children or youth at an event
- Consume non-sacramental alcohol or illegal drugs or misuse legal drugs at any children’s or youth event or when they are responsible for children or youth at an event
- Engage in illegal behavior or permit other adults or children or youth to engage in illegal behavior
- Engage in any sexual, romantic, illicit, or secretive relationship or conduct with any child or youth, or;
- Apart from planned pre-approved educational programs, discuss their own sexual activities, fantasies, or their own use, or abuse of drugs or alcohol with children or youth

Recommended Five Year Age Difference to Supervise

- A volunteer or paid staff person should be at least five years older than the children/youth they are supervising. At their discretion, the Associate Pastor/Coordinator of Christian Education may waive this recommendation.

“The Rule of Three”

- Adults working with children and youth will adhere to the “Rule of Three.” The rule ensures that an adult is not alone with a child or youth. When possible, the “Rule of Three” will include two unrelated adults. If unanticipated circumstances result in an adult being alone with children or youth, the adult must be accessible to viewing at all times, and must report those circumstances to the clergy in charge, or Responsible Person (for example, the Church School Greeter) as soon as possible.
- These procedures apply to online and virtual gatherings, as well as in person gatherings.
- It is permissible, but not ideal, to meet the “rule of three” requirements by having multiple children/youth and one adult, but the adult nevertheless needs to notify the Supervisor or clergy in charge as soon as possible so that a solution can be found.
- Some possible solutions may include:

- Combining church school classes until a late or substitute teacher arrives,
- Keeping a child in a Zoom 'waiting room' until a second teacher can join the call,
- Asking the parent of the first child who arrives at an event to stay until a second child or teacher arrives

Child Drop-Off & Pick-Up Policy

Children in 4th grade and younger must be brought to class and be picked up from class by a parent, legal guardian, or other designated adult or sibling. The Nursery operates a special sign-in/sign-out system. (With parental approval, children in 4th grade may leave unaccompanied at the end of class.)

Child Supervision

Children in 4th grade and younger must be accompanied by an adult if leaving the classroom; if it is for a bathroom visit, the adult must wait outside the bathroom door. If the child needs help toileting, the adult should inform a Responsible Person or clergy in charge as well as the child's parent/guardian at the end of church school.

Communication

Teachers are given parent/guardian names and contact information for communication purposes and in case of an emergency.

Photo Privacy and Protection

- Parents must indicate whether or not they give permission to have their child's photo displayed on the church Website, in weekly and monthly church communications, on bulletin boards within the Church facility, or in the newspaper.
- Written permission is expressed through the registration paperwork associated with the Church School and Music programs.
- Written permission is valid from September through August of the program year but can be changed at any time by notifying the Associate Pastor. Permission must be given each year at the time of registration.
- Permission to have photos and personal information available in the Church directory will be obtained at the time photos are taken.
- Individuals over eighteen years of age who do not wish to have their photos displayed are encouraged to speak with the Parish Administrator who will ensure the desires of the individual are communicated with those responsible for posting photos.

One-to-one Conversations with Children and Youth

When one-to-one conversations occur between an adult and a child or youth, another unrelated adult is either to be present or capable of visually monitoring the conversation. Examples include:

- Doors should be kept open at all times during “one-on-one” counseling or while advising any child or youth in the church. If personal privacy is a concern and the child or youth feels more comfortable with a closed door, the counseling session must be accessible to viewing at all times.
- Planned off-site conversations/meetings can take place in a public place (such as a coffee shop or restaurant) in view of other adults. A Responsible Person shall be informed about the appointment or plans in advance, and briefed on the appointment/meeting afterwards.
- Confidentiality cannot be guaranteed if a child or youth discloses a situation pertaining to abuse, neglect, self-harm, or exploitation because of mandatory reporting laws.
- Impulsive, secluded or secretive activity, online or in person with children or youth, may foster a high-risk situation, and is therefore to be avoided.

Virtual Church School/Events (For more detailed policy, see “Social Media and Online Gatherings” section below)

- The “Rule of Three” procedures apply to online and virtual gatherings, as well as in person gatherings.
- 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.
- All transcripts of online text chats, video chats, blogs or video blogs should be saved when possible.

Special Considerations for Off-Site and Overnight Events

Offsite programs, trips, and events are a welcome and often necessary means for spiritual, social, and emotional development of children and youth. They also present additional challenges for maintaining best practices for safe and healthy ministry. The expectation for safe space, as described above, should be observed off-site.

In the event of uncertainty about application of the policy, the Adult in Charge should contact their Supervisor with the relevant inquiries.

Because of the unique risks that can’t always be anticipated, it is important to obtain permissions and manage documentation as described below.

1. Prior Approvals

- Written parental approval is required prior to viewing any movie, whether offsite or on-site, rated “PG-13” or above, or participating in any conversation or program containing sexually explicit or violent content.
- These same prior approvals are required when the site is a private residence, hosting such events as cook outs, pool parties, progressive dinners, etc.

2. Registration, Waiver, and Release Forms

- All children, youth, and adults shall have a signed registration form on file, and must sign a field trip permission form before participating in any off-site or overnight programs.
- Confidentiality must be preserved with respect to medical and other sensitive information in the forms. Such forms can encompass a program year.
 - There must be a parent/guardian's signature on all release and waiver forms for minors.
 - Completed release and waiver forms shall be maintained in a secure location on-site or online.
- Prior permission for a minor to be photographed or recorded on film, videotape, audiotape, or other electronic media is required from a parent/guardian.

3. First Aid and Medications

- Current certification in First Aid, CPR, and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) is strongly encouraged for those who work with children and youth.
- A first aid kit, appropriately stocked for the event and participants, shall be available in an easily accessible location.
- A record must be kept for all medication or first aid given to a participant. This record shall include the participant's name, the date and time of service, the name of the person administering medication or treatment, and a description of the medication, dosage, and/or treatment given.
- For overnight or off-site events, all medications (prescription and over the counter) belonging to minors shall be given to the Responsible Person, unless otherwise agreed upon by the parents and the Responsible Person. Exceptions may include inhalers, epi-pens, and birth-control pills.
- Only the Responsible Person, or their adult designee, shall administer medications.

4. Supervision

At any overnight or off-site gathering of children or youth, there shall be at least two unrelated adults with one being age 25 or older, preferably reflecting the sex and gender identity of the participants. Minimum ratios of adult to child/youth shall be in accordance with American Camp Association (ACA) guidelines as follows:

- 5 years & younger — 1 adult for each 5 overnight-participants and 1 adult for each 6 day-participants
- 6–8 years — 1:6 for overnight, and 1:8 for day
- 9–14 years — 1:8 for overnight and 1:10 for day
- 15–18 years — 1:10 for overnight and 1:12 for day

Additional adults can provide skills, mentorship, support, encouragement, spiritual guidance, and joy. When you have new leaders-in-training, the leadership teams should also have a reasonable number of experienced adult leaders to provide support.

Overnight Programs

In overnight programming, particular attention will be given to historically excluded or unrecognized people, such as LGBTQ+ and differently-abled individuals. In a situation of unequal power and safety, preferences of these individuals merit additional consideration, accommodation, and action to ensure:

- Participant privacy;
- Maximization of social integration of all participants;
- No stigmatization of any participants;
- Equal opportunity to participate; and
- Safety of all participants.

Additional Guidelines for Overnight Programs:

- The safe use of restrooms and showers by all participants requires consideration of numerous factors, including, but not limited to: age, sex, gender identity and expression, and privacy.
- Adults should have separate showers or separate times for showers.
- Overnight programs shall provide safe, supervised sleeping arrangements.
- Each participant shall have their own sleeping bag or bed. No sleeping bag or bed shall have more than one person sleeping in it.
- Supervision by two unrelated adults is required in any space where one or more youth are sleeping.
- It is acceptable for all participants to sleep in the same open area when dressing rooms and bathrooms provide appropriate privacy.
- Participants shall have access to three substantial meals each full day and access to sufficient water. Participants shall be given the opportunity for at least seven hours of sleep each 24-hour period, except for programs where parental/guardian permission is given to miss sleep. In these cases, children and youth must agree to participate in writing, and parents or guardians must give written permission that includes certification that the youth or child does not have a medical condition that would put the participant at risk by missing sleep.
- Participants shall have some time set aside each day for rest or free time.

The best practice guidelines for hotel or dorm-style stays:

- One child or youth per bed, including cots, pullouts or hide-a-beds, and rollaway beds;
- At least 2 children or 2 youth in each room.

- The door is to remain open whenever non-occupants are in the room
- Adult leader assigns rooms and room occupants;
- Adult supervisors or chaperones have rooms on the same floor, scattered among the rooms with children or youth, and at least one adult room is by the stairs or elevators

Transportation

For the health and safety of all participants, the following practices shall be followed:

- For events that originate and/or terminate at the church, all drivers must be at least 21 years of age, provide proof of insurance and a current driver's license.
- All drivers and riders must comply with state laws including seat belt and cell phone usage.
- When parents/guardians are drivers, they are responsible for the transportation and safety of their children and/or youth to and from the event. This responsibility includes the transportation of any other passengers in their vehicle.

Social Media and/or Electronic Communication/Gathering

Commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries and safe church practices apply to all interactions, in person and online, and include:

- Disparity of power precludes mutuality in friendship.
- Adults have more power than children and youth.
- Clergy have more power than people with whom they have a pastoral relationship.
- Mechanisms should be in place to allow transparency and accountability in interactions with children, youth and adults who may be vulnerable.
- Secret deals between adults and children or young people are never permissible.

Some general considerations:

- Healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to online as well as in face-to-face interactions. Online interactions need to be as transparent as those conducted in person.
- Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, harassment, bullying or exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the online world as they do in the physical world.

Social Networking Sites

1. If you choose to utilize any social networking site to communicate with students associated with your community of faith, we recommend that other youth workers (within the same community of faith) have full access to all of your profiles and correspondence, and someone on staff has access to or may ask for your Username & Password and can login to investigate activity.
2. Parents of a student should be aware of how you utilize social network platforms
3. Consistency with all students on all platforms is of the utmost importance
4. All youth and adults should be informed that any communication that is sent via digital means (email, social networking site notes or posts, etc.) is not confidential and may be reported or shared with others.
5. Adults who work with youth should maintain appropriately stringent privacy settings on any and all social media networks. Individual personal profiles are best for interacting with actual friends, family members, colleagues and peers; limited profile access or separate groups are more appropriate options for interacting with youth. When and where available, authorized youth workers may choose to create separate private and professional profiles on networking sites to create a line of privacy.
6. Adults should not submit “friend” requests to youth. Youth may submit “friend” requests to adults, and adults should discern the level of contact that is appropriate to maintain with all youth prior to responding to such requests. Adults should articulate their policy regarding “friend” requests from youth, and then practice that policy consistently.
 - a. If an adult chooses to accept “friend” requests from youth who are associated with their community of faith, it is recommended that other adult leaders have the same access to that adult’s profile and correspondence.
 - b. Adults interacting with youth via social media networks are encouraged to set up a closed group to which other adults have administrative access. Youth who submit “friend” requests to an adult can then be invited to join this group rather than be admitted as a “friend” on the adult’s personal account. This is one way to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries.
 - c. Authorized youth workers who choose to accept friend requests from minors or youth should use all privacy settings applicable to shield youth from any inappropriate content that may exist within the authorized youth worker’s profile.
7. Closed (but not “hidden”) online groups are recommended to insure membership is limited to those involved with the youth ministry.
8. Online groups should have at least two unrelated adult administrators, and may have youth administrators as well
9. Covenants should be created to govern digital groups, addressing:

- a. appropriate & inappropriate language and behavior
 - b. who may join and/or view group activity and when they should leave the group (for example: whether or not the group is open to parents of current members)
 - c. content that can be posted/published on the site or page
 - d. who, how and when may photos be tagged (ie: did guardians give you permission to post pictures of their student)
 - e. mandatory reporting laws will be followed
 - f. consequences for breaking the covenant
10. Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused, neglected or exploited should be immediately reported to the clergy and/or the Department of Children and Families (DCF). If the material is on a church-affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site after consultation with the DCF and/or police.
 11. Any inappropriate material that is not considered reportable/actionable by "Mandatory Reporting" laws (see item 10 above) should nevertheless be reported to the clergy and then deleted from the site.
 12. Establish and clearly communicate norms for behavior and appropriate content for online youth groups, and moderate accordingly. Any content that details inappropriate behavior during a church-sponsored event or activity should be addressed by the clergy, adult youth leaders and parents.
 13. Parents should be informed that content that appears on youth pages or groups that are not sponsored by the church are NOT within the purview of authorized youth workers.

Private or Direct online communication

1. A good practice is to include at least one other adult in text message or e-mail correspondence with youth, when appropriate. Mass emails sent to an entire group are **not** required to be copied to parents or guardians.
2. When possible, send communication (1) to entire groups, (2) on an individual's "wall," or (3) in public areas, rather than in private messages. This includes photos, images and videos.
3. If a youth requests or initiates a one-on-one conversation, a transcript should be saved.
4. Platforms with no archive feature (videochat or phone call) are generally not recommended for communication between adult leaders and youth, but if a youth requests or initiates communication through one of these methods, a Responsible Person, Clergy, and/or Parent should be briefed on the content of the conversation.
5. Model and maintain healthy practices and boundaries when responding to youth via online and electronic means by doing it during appropriate hours. The "home phone rule" is a basic rule

of thumb to use – normally do not initiate texts/chats, or email back-and-forth with students at a time you would not normally call their home phone line, i.e. before 8:00 AM or after 9:00 PM.

- a. if a youth reaches out to an adult outside these hours and does not appear to be in crisis or have a query that cannot wait a few hours, adults are expected to wait to respond until they are within the “home phone rule”
- b. if a youth reaches out to an adult outside of these hours and appears to be in crisis, adults should use their discretion to keep the youth safe. Steps or responses may include, but are not limited to:
 - i. calling 911 if doing so would not put the youth in immediate danger
 - ii. contacting the youth’s parents/guardians if doing so would not put the youth in immediate danger
 - iii. contacting the local Mental Health Crisis response team: 1-877-382-1609 will automatically transfer you to your local response team
 - iv. contacting the pastor(s)
 - v. staying on the phone/chat with the youth until help arrives or the parent or pastor can be patched into the call/chat

Exhibit B

United Parish in Brookline

Authorized Children and Youth Ministry

Application and Disclosure Form

Your Full Name

Address

Email

Daytime/Cell Phone

Additional Phone

EXPECTATIONS AND QUERIES

Q I have been a member of this church since: _____ or

Q 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)

Q True

Q 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.

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?

Q Yes

Q 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.

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 the United Parish in Brookline 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.

The United Parish in Brookline authorized volunteer recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in.

To that end, I authorize the United Parish in Brookline 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 the United Parish in Brookline will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

THREE REFERENCES

Please provide three references; one reference should be related to you and the other references should not be related to you.

Full name of reference *related to you*:

Address:

Email:

Daytime/Cell Phone:

Additional Phone:

Full name of reference *not related to you*:

Address:

Email:

Daytime/Cell Phone:

Additional Phone:

Full name of reference *not related to you*:

Address:

Email:

Daytime/Cell Phone:

Additional Phone:

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the United Parish in Brookline Safe Church Policy.

(PRINT NAME & SIGN) DATE

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

For Staff Use:

- Sex Offender Registry (www.nsopr.gov) review performed on: _____
- CORI check performed on: _____ • References checked on: _____
- (OPTIONAL) Personal interview conducted by staff on: _____

Exhibit C:

Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment

I. The Response Team

- A. A team will be appointed consisting of at least two members, representing the genders included in the congregation, that shall serve as the Safe Church team. This team will be responsible for hearing and responding to complaints under this policy. The team shall be hereinafter referred to as “The Response Team.” The team will be familiar with the terms of this policy, as well as the established procedures of the church for dealing with a complaint.
- B. 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 a called Pastor, in an effort to resolve the matter informally.
 - c. If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the complainant or the Pastor to whom the incident has been reported may request that the Response Team institute formal proceedings which shall include the following steps:
- C. The Response Team shall advise the Senior Pastor and Moderator of the Church Council of the receipt of all complaints and shall keep them apprised of ongoing steps and actions taken. If either the Senior Pastor or Moderator of the Church Council is the subject of the complaint, this notice requirement shall not apply to that person.
- D. The Response Team shall consider whether this is an incident that requires a report of child abuse or neglect, as discussed in Part II below.
- E. The 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 make determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. These may include:
 - a. finding that sexual exploitation or harassment has occurred, and that the appropriate body of the church is called upon to take action accordingly; such action may include one or more of the following:
 - i. a formal reprimand, with defined expectations for changed behavior;
 - ii. recommending or requiring psychological or psychiatric assessment, counseling and/or treatment;

- iii. probationary standing, with the terms of the probation clearly defined;
 - iv. dismissal from employment or authorized volunteer position by, affiliation with, or membership in, the church.
 - b. finding that sexual exploitation or harassment did not occur.
- F. The Response Team may seek the advice of legal counsel or others to advise it in performing its functions.
- G. A written summary of the Response Team proceedings in such cases will be maintained.
- H. The person(s) toward whom the inappropriate behavior is directed need not be the complainant. Moreover, neither consent nor acquiescence will excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior. At any time the church may initiate or proceed with the formal complaint process.
- I. 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.
- J. 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 or discharged.
- K. If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the Safe Church Committee, they have the right to appeal to the Church Council Moderator, or to the Church Council Clerk if the Moderator is the subject of the complaint, who shall refer the matter to the Church Council.
- a. The subject of any such appeal to the Church Council shall be limited solely to whether the procedures of this policy were followed.
 - b. The matter will not be reconsidered on the merits and the decision of the Church Council will be the final resolution of the matter.
 - c. If the Church Council determines that the procedures of this policy were not followed, it will refer the matter back to the Safe Church Committee to complete the processing of the complaint in accordance with these procedures.

II. Reporting Requirements for Child Abuse or Neglect

Under Massachusetts state law, certain persons, including clergy, are considered “mandated reporters” who are required to report whenever they have reason to believe that a child has suffered from abuse or neglect. See Mass. General Laws chapter 119, section 51A. The state Department of Children and Families has procedures for how and when to file such a report, which can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcfs-child-abuse-and-neglect-reporting-guide/download>.

The United Parish in Brookline will make a report to appropriate authorities, including but not limited to the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families, if at any time the church has reasonable

cause to believe that a minor may be an abused or neglected child. 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 Coordinator of Christian Education or one of the Pastors so that the church may take appropriate action in a timely manner. The Massachusetts Child Abuse Hotline currently is: 1-800-792-5200.

III. 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 settled Pastor will promptly be forwarded to the denomination to which the pastor is affiliated. The Massachusetts/Southern New England Conference for the three denominations may be contacted at: American Baptist Church (978-448-1445); United Church of Christ (508-875-5233); United Methodist Church (978-682-7676).

If you have any questions about these policies and procedures, please speak with one of the Pastors, the Moderator, a Member of the Response Team, or the convener(s) of the Children and Youth Deepening Team