

March 1, 2014

**SAFEGUARDING OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH,  
MINISTERIAL CONDUCT, AND  
SEXUAL EXPLOITATION PROTECTION POLICY  
WITH PROCEDURES IN CASES OF ALLEGED MISCONDUCT**

**St. Paul's United Church of Christ  
626 Williams Grove Rd. Mechanicsburg, PA 17055**

Reviewed and Revised by the Consistory

**Statement of Policy**

**A. Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment** (see appendix 1)

St. Paul's United Church of Christ in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania is committed to creating and maintaining a worship, ministry, and work community in which members, friends, clergy, paid staff, and volunteers can worship and minister together in an atmosphere free of all forms of harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Specifically, all persons associated with St. Paul's UCC should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy on the local, Conference, and National levels. It is the intention of the church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior which is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

**B. Ministerial Conduct** (see appendix 1)

All persons engaged in the ministry of St. Paul's UCC are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of parishioner(s) or other individual(s) by anyone engaged in the ministry of St. Paul's UCC is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Because ministers often deal with individuals who are emotionally and psychologically fragile or otherwise personally vulnerable, it is imperative that those engaged in the ministry of this church maintain their own psychological, emotional, and spiritual health and that they have adequate preparation and education for helping those individuals they seek to serve in ministry. It is the policy of St. Paul's UCC to encourage its leaders, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers to nurture safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

**C. Children and Youth Protection Policy**

St. Paul's UCC is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, we expect that all people applying to be volunteers who work with minors will have been members for at least six months or friends of St. Paul's UCC for one year. It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all youth activities.

## **D. Expectations of all Church Employees, Ministers, and Authorized Ministers**

### **1. Background checks.**

a. Before an offer of employment will be made to anyone (ordained, licensed, commissioned, or lay), or before anyone can minister to children or youth a criminal background check will be completed by the Pennsylvania State Police and a child abuse clearance will be conducted by the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. The cost for the criminal background check and child abuse clearance will be paid by St. Paul's United Church of Christ.

b. The Head Pastor and President of Consistory will also conduct a review of the Sex Offender Registry ([www.nsopr.gov](http://www.nsopr.gov)) for all clergy, employees, and volunteers ministering to children and youth who are minors. Upon the existence of a record in any one or all of the background checks required pursuant to this section, the Head Pastor and President of Consistory will conduct a review and make a determination as to the suitability of that individual to be employed or otherwise engage in activities as outlined in this policy. The determination and justifications shall be documented in writing and maintained in accordance with this policy.

c. Within 180 days of the date this policy is adopted, all current employees and volunteers who minister to children are required to have background checks conducted at the expense of St Paul's UCC. Thereafter, a criminal background check and child abuse clearance will be required every three years.

d. An employee or a volunteer who has been subject to background checks that meet the criteria outlined in this policy within the past three years can provide certifications or access to the certifications in lieu of the background check requirements.

### **2. Disclosure Statement**

a. We expect all clergy and employees, and volunteers who work with minors to complete and submit a disclosure document in a form substantially similar to the one accompanying this policy.

b. Annually, subsequent to the initial background check, all employees and volunteers must complete St Paul's Safe Church Disclosure Statement. Attachment 1. This form shall be filed by October 1 of each year.

c. Should there be a change at any time that would affect an employee's or volunteer's clearance status that individual shall make immediate notification of the status change to the Head Pastor or President of Consistory

### **3. Training.**

All Authorized Ministers (Clergy) of the church will attend all boundary workshops required by the Mercersburg Association. Failure to do so may result in loss of standing in the Association.

## **E. Supervision**

Supervision procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse of children, youth, or vulnerable adults and to protect staff persons and volunteers from unwarranted accusations. These are minimum goals and more stringent goals may be adopted as appropriate.

1. Training is required for all staff, Christian Education Leaders and Youth Leaders.

2. We will strive to comply with the 'two-adult rule.' That is, no matter the size of the group, we will always endeavor to have at least two unrelated adults present. This may include the presence of an adult roamer.
3. No child should be left unsupervised while attending any children's or youth activity.
4. Each room or space where children are being cared for should have an uncovered window in the door. If the youth or children's activity is outdoors or occurs in a setting, which makes it difficult to comply with this goal, the person in charge shall take appropriate measures to make sure that the setting suits the activity, and the children or youth are supervised.
5. Registration materials for activities in which children are outside of the direct supervision of their parents or legal guardians shall require written permission forms.
6. No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 18 years or older and is at least five years older than the children/youth being supervised.
7. Accurate participation records will be maintained for all youth and children's activities.

#### **F. Procedures in Cases of Alleged Misconduct by Authorized Ministers**

1. If any clergy misconduct is suspected, it should be immediately reported to the Consistory President. This should be done in writing and signed by the one reporting.
2. The Consistory President will immediately contact the Conference Minister and the chair of the Mercersburg Church and Ministry Committee. (The Church and Ministry Committee handles all cases of Clergy Misconduct and has specific policies in place. St Paul's Clergy and Congregation agree to abide by these policies. They can be reviewed as stated in the Manual of Church and Ministry Policies.). At this point, all contact by the accused clergy and possible victims will be restricted. The clergy person may temporarily be removed from his/her position and cease to function as such. The Consistory President should also contact appropriate representatives of St. Paul's, including but not limited to the other members of Consistory and St. Paul's legal counsel.
3. The confidentiality and safety of all possible victims, especially minors, is primary and will be respected and ensured. However, allegations will be reported to legal authorities as required by law.
4. The Consistory President shall ensure that the allegations are immediately investigated, in cooperation with the Church and Ministry Committee, the Conference Minister, and legal authorities (if appropriate).
5. In consultation with the Church and Ministry Committee, the Conference Minister, and legal authorities (if appropriate), the Consistory President will inform within a reasonable time period the whole congregation. It is the intention of St. Paul's to share as much information as is possible. If necessary, an outside consultant recommended by the Church and Ministry Committee or Conference Minister will be engaged to lead this special meeting and/or to work with the congregation as it deals with this issue.
6. Violations of this policy shall be cause for discipline, up to and including termination.

## **G. Procedures in Cases of Alleged Misconduct by Paid Staff or Church Volunteers or Others**

1. If any misconduct is suspected, it should be immediately reported to the Pastor and Consistory President. The reporting individual (with the assistance of the minister or Consistory President if needed) will complete a St Paul's Safe Church Incident Report. Attachment 2. The Consistory President should also contact appropriate representatives of St. Paul's, including but not limited to the other members of Consistory and St. Paul's legal counsel.
2. The Pastor and Consistory President shall ensure that the allegations are immediately investigated, in cooperation with legal authorities (if appropriate).
3. A paid staff person may immediately be put on leave, required to turn in all church keys, and refrain from all children and youth activities; a church volunteer may be immediately suspended from his/her position of ministry trust, required to turn in all church keys and refrain from all children and youth activities. All contact by alleged perpetrators with possible victims will be restricted. In any removal of a person from any children or youth's activities, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.
4. The confidentiality and safety of all possible victims, especially minors, is primary and will be respected and ensured. If the alleged perpetrator is a minor, the confidentiality of their identity and their safety will also be respected and ensured. However, if the alleged victim is a minor, the victim's parent or legal guardian must be immediately contacted by the Pastor or Consistory President. In addition, allegations will be reported to legal authorities as required by law.
5. The Pastor and Consistory President at their discretion will release information to the whole congregation as necessary. The confidentiality of all persons involved will be respected.
6. Violations of this policy shall be cause for discipline.

## **H. Administration**

Updated copies of this policy and all related forms are to be kept on file in the church office. All clergy, paid staff, and volunteers, who work with children and youth, will complete and sign all related policy forms, which will be kept on file in the church office.

This policy will be posted on the church website for all to review. Hard copies of this policy will be given to all Consistory Members, Christian Education and Youth Leaders, paid staff and clergy. Copies of this policy may be obtained from the church office. This policy and all related forms will be reviewed, updated, and revised by the Consistory and Pastor annually.

This policy and all related forms were reviewed, updated, and revised by the Consistory and Pastor of St. Paul's UCC at its regular monthly meeting on xxxxxxxx. The original policy and subsequent changes upon approval by the consistory must be approved by a Congregational vote.

In order to maintain confidentiality of the information collected, all application and disclosure forms, background check forms and incident reports will be maintained in a secure manner in the church office. Access to this information will be limited to the Head Pastor and Consistory President, and to other individuals on an as needed basis through a request to the Head Pastor and Consistory President.

**APPLICATION AND DISCLOSURE FORM  
FOR EMPLOYMENT OR  
AUTHORIZED VOLUNTEERS WHO MINISTER TO MINORS  
St. Paul's UCC, Mechanicsburg, PA**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Name: Last	First	Middle
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Address

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City	State	Zip
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Home Phone	Cell Phone	Email
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A. Previous experience in the past seven years (paid or volunteer) related to the employment or ministry I am seeking to fill (attach additional page[s] if necessary):

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency Name

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Address

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City	State	Zip
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Contact Person	Phone	Email
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2. \_\_\_\_\_  
Agency Name

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Address

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City	State	Zip
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Contact Person	Phone	Email
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B.  Yes, I have received a copy of the "Sexual Exploitation, Ministerial Conduct, and Safeguarding Our Children and Youth Protection Policy" of St. Paul's UCC of Mechanicsburg. I have read it and understand it.

C. Name of church where I am currently a member/friend: \_\_\_\_\_  
I have been a member/friend of this church since \_\_\_\_\_.

D. I have never been found guilty or pleaded guilty or "no contest" to a criminal charge.  
 True  Not True

*If not true, give a short explanation of the charge. Please indicate the date, nature and place of the incident leading to the charge; where the charge was filed; and the precise disposition of the charge. Use the back of this form, if necessary.*

E. No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual harassment, exploitation, misconduct, abuse, or child abuse 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.*

F. 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 harassment, exploitation, 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*

G. Do you have a valid driver's license?  Yes  No

State and Driver's License Number: \_\_\_\_\_

With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five (5) years because of reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.  True  Not True

H. 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 employment or sanctioned 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 to amend in a timely manner 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 employees or volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize St. Paul's UCC and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement and/or 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 and character. 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 made in good faith and without malice.

St. Paul's hiring and authorized volunteer recruitment process may involve the distribution of information regarding applicants to the Pastor, Director of Christian Education and the Chairperson of Consistory. To that end, I authorize St. Paul's UCC and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these stated purposes. I understand that St. Paul's UCC will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so. I understand that St. Paul's UCC will keep this and other related forms in a confidential file in the church office.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant's Signature Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent's/Guardian's Signature for applicants under age 18

**For Office Use Only (1-6 for Volunteers and paid staff; 1-7 for Clergy)**

1. Sex Offender Registry ([www.nsopr.gov](http://www.nsopr.gov)) review performed on (date): \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Personal Interview conducted on: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Reference Inquiries completed on: \_\_\_\_\_
4. Church member for 6 months or church friend for 1 year: \_\_\_\_\_ Yes
5. Safeguarding Our Children Awareness Training and Policy Orientation performed on (date): \_\_\_\_\_
6. *For Employment:* Copies of Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check and Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance filed (date): \_\_\_\_\_
7. *For Clergy:* Oxford Document Management and Fair Credit Reporting Act Notices completed and copies on file (date): \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX 1

Minister: a person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry either on church property or off site during church sponsored events. Consistent with our understanding of “the priesthood of all believers,” the ministers of this church 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.

Abuse: physical, emotional, psychological, sexual injury, under Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law.

Adult: a person 18 years or older

Child: a person up to grade 5

Children or Youth Leader: any person who supervises a children or youth activity. This person has regular and direct contact with children, must be 21 years or older, and is counted in the two-adult rule.

Children or Youth Activity: any activity or program in which children or youth are under the direct supervision of staff or another adult who has been specifically, requested to provide volunteer supervision by the church.

Helper: anyone assisting in ministry, by request of the church, but is not counted in the two-adult rule (includes youth ages 11-17).

Legal Guardian: person legally responsible for child, youth or vulnerable adult.

Roamer: a designated adult moving in and out of various rooms and activities for the purpose of meeting the two-adult rule.

Vulnerable adults: adults with reduced mental or physical abilities, which makes them more susceptible to abuse

Youth: any person grade 6 to age 17.

Sexual Exploitation: sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which an individual engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant to engage in sexual behavior.

Sexual Harassment: repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public ridicule. 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, invitations, e-mails, or text messages;
- Verbal contact, in person or by phone or other technology, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, 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, magazines, computer websites, or phone pictures.

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. For example: it is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment because a person has declined a personal proposition; 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 classifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

ATTACHMENT 1

St Paul's United Church of Christ  
Safe Church  
Disclosure Statement

I, \_\_\_\_\_(full name) disclose that I have not been reported for, investigated or found in violation of the Pennsylvania Child Abuse laws or other criminal violations since my background check on \_\_\_\_\_(original date) as part of St Paul's Safe Church Policy.

I understand that if any information on this form is false, I will be removed upon such discovery from work with children and youth and possibly membership with the congregation.

I hereby affirm that the information is true.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_

ATTACHMENT 2

St Paul's United Church of Christ  
Safe Church  
Incident Report Form

Date of Incident \_\_\_\_\_ Time of Incident \_\_\_\_\_  
(A separate form should be completed for each incident in order to keep the information confidential.)

Name of individual observing incident or suspecting abuse \_\_\_\_\_

Victim's name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of parent/guardian (if child or youth) \_\_\_\_\_

Location of incident \_\_\_\_\_

Describe incident as seen/heard and actions taken \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of person(s) who may have also witnessed incident \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person suspected of alleged abuse \_\_\_\_\_

Immediate steps/action

1. Ensure safety of alleged victim
2. Notify Pastor or Consistory President
3. Ensure all information remains confidential
4. Complete Incident Report Form