

Safe Church Policy Concerning Abuse Prevention (Updated March 13, 2014)

Policy Prohibiting Abuse, Exploitation and Harassment

As a community of Christian faith, St. Luke's United Church of Christ is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. All persons associated with St. Luke's United Church of Christ should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Harassment, and any form of abuse to an adult or child and further, 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 Authorized Ministers, employees, elected and appointed lay leaders, and authorized 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 St. Luke's United Church of Christ to encourage its Ministers to nurture safety within Ministerial Relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Harassment or any form of abuse of parishioners or others by anyone engaged in ministry on behalf of St. Luke's United Church of Christ is unethical behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Definitions

Authorized Minister: a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by The Western Association of the Missouri Mid-South Conference, United Church of Christ. An Authorized Minister is one type of minister within the meaning of this policy.

Employee: a person who is hired by St. Luke's United Church of Christ to perform a service for wages or salary and who is authorized by the church to carry out its ministry.

Authorized Volunteer: a person authorized by St. Luke's United Church of Christ to carry out its ministry and has completed application requirements. For example, Authorized Volunteers might include Board of Christian Education and Council Members.

Authorized Children and Youth Volunteer: a person authorized by St. Luke's United Church of Christ to carry out its ministry with persons under the age of 18 and has completed the application requirements. For example, Authorized Children and Youth Volunteers might include Sunday School Teachers and/or Youth Group Leaders

Volunteer: a person who performs a service or duty of St. Luke's United Church of Christ willingly or without pay and has **NOT** completed the application requirements. For example, Volunteers might include collecting offering, serving Communion, serving cookies and punch, and/or serving meals and those working with children while supervised by an Authorized Children and Youth Volunteer.

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

Unrelated Adult: for the purpose of this policy, the term Unrelated Adult refers to the relationship of the adults (adult to adult) who are supervising children and/or youth. For the purpose of this policy, adults who are supervising children and/or youth, are considered to be related to each other if they are spouses, significant others, adult parent/adult child, and adult siblings.

Abuse: to intentionally hurt or injure by maltreatment.

Sexual Exploitation: is the act of a person who is engaged in a ministerial relationship with another and takes advantage of that relationship by causing or allowing the person(s) being served to engage in sexual behavior/activity/contact with themselves or others (not limited to sexual intercourse).

Sexual Harassment: repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity.
- 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, but not limited to, sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, invitations, e-mails, or other electronic contact;
- Verbal contact, such as, but not limited to, sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as, but not limited to, intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as, but not limited to, 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.

Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Ministry

- Before beginning their duties, all Authorized Ministers, Employees, and Authorized Children and Youth Volunteers will submit Application and Disclosure form SLSCP2. This form must be completed and returned to the church office within 30 days of receipt of the form.
- Before beginning their duties, all Authorized Volunteers will submit Application and Disclosure Form SLSCP1. This form must be completed and returned to the church office within 30 days of receipt of the form.
- Before beginning their duties, all new Authorized Ministers and all new Employees will be personally interviewed by the Personnel Committee* to assess the suitability of her/his character and qualifications for the position(s) they seek.
- Before beginning their duties, all individuals seeking to become "Authorized Children and Youth Volunteers" and having been a member of St. Luke's for less than 5 years, will be personally interviewed by the Personnel Committee* to assess the suitability of their character and qualifications for the position they seek.

- Before beginning their duties, all new Authorized Ministers and Employees references will be checked by the Personnel Committee.*
- Before beginning their duties, all individuals seeking to become Authorized Children and Youth Volunteers, and having been a member of St. Luke's of less than 5 years, will have their references checked by the Personnel Committee.*
- The church will conduct a registered sex offender review for each Authorized Minister, Employee, Authorized Volunteer, and Authorized Children and Youth Volunteer by searching his/her name on the Department of Justice website at www.nsopr.gov. This registered sex offender review will be repeated as frequently as the Safe Church Committee deems necessary, but at least annually, for each of the aforementioned individuals.
- Authorized Ministers of the church will attend all boundary workshops required by The Western Association of the Missouri Mid-South Conference, United Church of Christ, or will attend at least one workshop on this topic every three years, whichever is more frequent.
- All Authorized Ministers, Employees and Authorized Children and Youth Volunteers will be required to take a refresher course every 2 years.

Additional Requirements for Child and Youth Ministry

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

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

- We expect that those who volunteer to work with children and youth under the age of 18 will have been members of St. Luke's United Church of Christ for at least six months or, if not members, regularly and frequently associated with St. Luke's United Church of Christ for at least one year.
- All Authorized Ministers, Employees, and Authorized Children and Youth Volunteers will receive orientation regarding safe church policy and procedures.
- It is the policy of this church to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for youth activities. In situations where participants are not readily visible to each other or in rooms which are not visible from the central hallway, there will be no fewer than two Authorized Ministers, Employees, and/or Authorized Children and Youth Volunteers present with children. In rooms which are visible from the central hallway at least one Authorized Minister, Employee or Authorized Children and Youth Volunteer must be present. Youth over the age of 14 may assist an unrelated adult (see definition) in supervising children and youth activities; however, such assistance does not alter the above requirements that at least two adults be present.
- **SOCIAL MEDIA** – It is the policy of this church to provide safe social media interactions. When engaging in any type of social media with children and youth under the age of 18, all interactions must include at least one other non-related adult, one of which should be the child/youth's parent or guardian. For the purpose of this policy, social media is considered to be any type of text messages, Facebook,

phone calls, e-mail, Instagram, Twitter or any other electronic and/or online activity.

- Written consent of one parent or guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the church property, and any overnight activities.
- It is the policy of this church for all Authorized Ministers, Employees, and Authorized Children and Youth Volunteers adhere to the following adult/child ratios: Adult/children ratios when in a normal Sunday School situation on Sunday mornings should not be greater than: Children 5 and under; 1 adult per 8 children. Children over the age of 5; 1 adult per 15 children. When we are attending an event away from the church building or having an overnight event the Adult/children ratio should not be greater than: Children 5 and under; 1 adult per 5 children. Children over the age of 5; 1 adult per 10 children. On all overnight events, including but not limited to, lock-ins or trips, if attended by both male and female children, must have at least one male and one female unrelated adult (see definition) over the age of 21.

Preventive Measures

I. Photo Release

It must be noted in bulletins and other possible documents that photos may be taken during services and other activities and that those photos may be used on our website and in other publications. It will also be noted that if a person does not want their photo or that of their minor child published that they should contact the church office immediately. It is the policy of this church to never publish the name of a child under the age of 16.

II. Safe Church Monitor

Safe Church Monitors will make checks of the building at irregular times during all church events when the doors are unlocked.

Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment

I. Generally

- A. If illegal activity is suspected appropriate authorities will be notified immediately.
- B. A subcommittee of the St. Luke's United Church of Christ's Church Council with no less than two members, one male and one female, will be established each year in preparation for the possibility of hearing complaints under this policy. The subcommittee hereinafter referred to as "The Response Team," will be familiar with the terms of this policy, as well as the established procedures of the church for dealing with a complaint.
- C. There is no time limit on registering a complaint.
- D. Several approaches may be taken in addressing incidents of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment:
 - i. The complainant can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the respondent, the individual accused of sexual exploitation or harassment.

- ii. The complainant can report the incident to the Authorized Minister or Council President, unless the Authorized Minister or Council President is the subject of the complaint, in an effort to resolve the matter informally. If the Authorized Minister or Council President is the subject of the complaint, the complainant can report the incident to a member of the Church Council.
 - iii. If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the complainant may request that the Response Team institute formal proceedings which shall include the following steps:
 - a. The Response Team shall advise the Authorized Minister and Council President of the receipt of all complaints and shall keep them apprised of ongoing steps and actions taken. If either the Authorized Minister or Council President is the subject of the complaint, this notice requirement shall not apply as to that person.
 - b. 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, and present such information to the St. Luke's United Church of Christ's Church Council or an appropriate subcommittee thereof.
 - c. The St. Luke's United Church of Christ's Church Council, or an appropriate subcommittee thereof, shall make determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. These may include:
 1. 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:
 - A formal reprimand, with defined expectations for changed behavior;
 - Recommending or requiring psychological or psychiatric assessment, counseling and/or treatment;
 - Probationary standing, with the terms of the probation clearly defined;
 - Dismissal from employment or authorized volunteer position by, affiliation with, or membership in, the church.
 2. A finding that sexual exploitation or harassment did not occur.
 - iiii. The Response Team may seek the advice of legal counsel or others to advise it in performing its functions.
- E. A written summary of the St. Luke's United Church of Christ's Church Council proceedings in such cases will be maintained in a secure location, in the church office for no less than 5 years

- F. 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.
- G. 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.
- H. 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.
- I. If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the St. Luke's Church Council, he or she has the right to appeal to the Council President or to the Vice President if the Council President is the subject of the complaint, who shall refer the matter to the Safe Church Committee. The subject of any such appeal to the Safe Church Committee shall be limited solely to whether the procedures of this policy were followed. The matter will not be reconsidered on the merits and the decision of the Safe Church Committee will be the final resolution of the matter. If the Safe Church Committee determines that the procedures of this policy were not followed, it will refer the matter back to the Church Council to complete the processing of the complaint in accordance with these procedures.
- J. Confidentiality will be maintained at all times.

II. Child Abuse

Apart from any legal requirements, St. Luke's United Church of Christ will make a report to appropriate authorities, including but not limited to the Missouri Children's Division if at any time the church has suspects that a minor may be an abused or neglected child. Any Authorized Minister, Employee or Authorized Children and Youth Volunteer of the church who suspects that, becomes aware of facts or circumstances that child abuse or neglect has occurred, and/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 Authorized Minister and/or Council President so that the church may take appropriate action in a timely manner. The Missouri Child Abuse Hotline currently is: 1-800-392-3738

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 Authorized Minister will promptly be forwarded to the Church & Ministry Committee of the Western Association of the Missouri Mid-South Conference, of the United Church of Christ.

The Western Association of the Missouri Mid-South Conference may be contacted at: 877-877-5884.

Note: The Safe Church Committee will include no less than 3 members of St. Luke's United Church of Christ and will be appointed by the Church Council.