

**The First Congregational Church
United Church of Christ
177 North Main Street
Concord, New Hampshire 03301-5039**

Sexual Exploitation, Ministerial Conduct, and Youth Protection Policy

Statement of Policy

A. Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment *(See definitions)*

The First Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, (hereinafter referred to as the First Congregational Church) is committed to creating and maintaining a worship and work community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. Specifically, all persons associated with First Congregational Church should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention and responsibility of the church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

B. Ministerial Conduct *(See definitions)*

All persons engaged in the ministry of the First Congregational Church (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) 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 the First Congregational Church is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Because ministers (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized 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 the First Congregational Church 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. It is also required that those engaged in providing ministry will complete and submit a disclosure document accompanying this policy.

C. Youth Protection Policy

“Then Jesus took a child and made him stand in front of them. He put his arms around him and said to them, ‘The person who in my name welcomes one of these children welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me, welcomes not only me but also the one who sent me.’ ” (Mark 9:36-37)

The First Congregational Church 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 require that all people applying to be volunteers who work with minors will have been members for at least six months or friends of First Congregational Church for one year. It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all youth activities. We also require all employees or volunteers who work with minors to complete and submit the disclosure accompanying this policy.

Definitions

Minister: a person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. Minister includes 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.

Sexual exploitation: sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.

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 discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requesting 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 as 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, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as unwelcome touching, pinching, intentional 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. For example, 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, recommendation or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

D. Reporting Requirements

A response team will be established consisting of the president, the pastor, and two members of the supervisory board involved (Board of Deacons, Board of Trustees, Board of Christian Education, and Board of Missions) in preparation for the possibility of hearing complaints. An additional board member may be asked to join the Response Team depending on allegations. The response team will familiarize itself with the terms of this Policy as well as the established employees or volunteers in leadership positions in the First Congregational Church. All information will be kept in the strictest of confidence.

It is ultimately the responsibility of the entire congregation, *not just those in leadership positions*, to create and maintain a climate that supports the growth and welfare of children and youth.

Approved by the Cabinet of First Congregational Church, UCC,
August 14, 2002