

1 **POLICY TO PROTECT AGAINST SEXUAL ABUSE AND HARASSMENT**

2
3 First Congregational United Church of Christ
4 Longmont, Colorado

5
6 First Congregational United Church of Christ is committed to creating and maintaining a
7 community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship and work
8 together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or
9 intimidation. This is in keeping with our Vision Statement adopted January 20, 2002, and
10 our Open and Affirming Resolution adopted September 26, 1999.

11
12 Vision Statement

13 We believe that, as part of the body of Christ, we are called to *Extend the Reach of Christ*
14 inwardly within each individual and outwardly to others within our congregation, local
15 community and world by:

- 16 • Continuously striving to better understand God’s will as made known to us
17 through Jesus Christ, the scriptures and revelations of the Holy Spirit.
- 18 • Actively ministering to the spiritual and other needs of all our brothers and
19 sisters.
- 20 • Being faithful stewards of all of God’s creation.

21
22 Open and Affirming Resolution

23 In keeping with the life and teaching of Christ Jesus, we joyfully and unconditionally
24 welcome all people of any age, gender, race, culture, ability, or sexual orientation into
25 our community of faith and affirm the worth of all people as unique individuals made in
26 God’s image. We are open to the special gifts that each person brings and invite each one
27 to participate in the life of our church.

28
29 This Policy to Protect Against Sexual Abuse and Harassment is in place to help create a
30 safe and healthy environment in which we can worship, work and grow as faithful people
31 together. Sexual exploitation and harassment destroy relationships and hurt people. It is
32 the intention and responsibility of the church to take reasonable steps to prevent sexual
33 harassment or abuse during any church or church-related program, service or activity.

34 This policy outlines steps to be taken and response procedures in case of accusation.

1 **DEFINITIONS**

2
3 **Minister:** a person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. Minister includes
4 elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, volunteers and authorized
5 ministers.

6
7 **Authorized minister:** a person who holds ordained or commissioned ministerial standing
8 or has been licensed by an Association of the United Church of Christ.

9
10 **Ministerial relationship:** the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of
11 the church and the one being served by that ministry.

12
13 **Sexual exploitation:** sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in
14 which a minister engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability
15 of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with
16 the minister.

17
18 **Sexual harassment:** repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person
19 contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person’s sexuality
20 or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the
21 other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual
22 advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual
23 nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- 24 • Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition
25 or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
26 • Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for
27 evaluation in making personnel or church-related decision affecting an individual; or
28 • Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an
29 individual’s performance or participation in church activities or creating an
30 intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

31
32 Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual
33 overtones, particularly:

- 34 • Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, invitations or e-
35 mails;
36 • Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs,
37 epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions;
38 • Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another’s
39 body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
40 • Visual contact, such as staring at another persons’ private body areas, gesturing,
41 displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

42
43 Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being
44 informed directly that the interest is unwelcome – and using sexual behavior to control,
45 influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another.
46 It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date

1 or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable
2 participation in the life of the church.

3
4 **Youth:** A minor, defined in the State of Colorado as a person under the age of 18.

7 **MINISTERIAL CONDUCT**

8
9 All persons engaged in the ministry of First Congregational United Church of Christ
10 (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers and authorized ministers)
11 are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering
12 to the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or
13 over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of
14 parishioner(s) or other individual(s) by anyone engaged in the ministry of First
15 Congregational United Church of Christ is unethical and unprofessional behavior and
16 will not be tolerated within this congregation.

17
18 Because ministers (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and
19 authorized ministers) often deal with individuals who are emotionally and
20 psychologically fragile or otherwise personally vulnerable, it is imperative that those
21 engaged in the ministry of this church maintain their own psychological, emotional, and
22 spiritual health, and that they have adequate preparation and education for helping those
23 individuals they seek to serve in ministry. It is the policy of First Congregational UCC to
24 encourage its leaders, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers to nurture safety
25 within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the
26 importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

1 YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

2
3 First Congregational United Church of Christ is committed to creating a safe and healthy
4 environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order
5 to ensure this, the following strategies are in place:

6
7 Regarding personnel (both employees and volunteers):

- 8
- 9 • All people applying to work with minors will have been members or active friends of
10 First Congregational UCC for at least 6 months. Exceptions can be made for people
11 coming from other UCC or mainline churches with a documented reference from
12 their previous church. Paid employees who have had a background check and
13 reference checks as part of the hiring process are exempt from this provision.
 - 14 • All employees or volunteers who work with minors on a regular basis will attend the
15 boundaries training at least once every other year and will complete and submit the
16 attached disclosure form, or provide written documentation of training from another
17 setting of the United Church of Christ. Substitute teachers who have not yet
18 completed the training will be supervised. For people new to the congregation,
19 boundaries training will be taken before beginning any work with minors.
 - 20 • As of January 1, 2006, volunteers not previously involved in the educational and
21 youth programs of this congregation will complete an application form and have an
22 interview with the Associate Minister for Christian Education and Youth (and/or his
23 or her designee) and will provide two reference forms (attached to this policy).
24 Telephone references may be used with documentation on a reference form by the
25 interviewer.

26
27 Regarding supervision and accountability for activities on church grounds:

- 28
- 29 • In situations where several classes are occurring simultaneously in rooms with open
30 doors and/or windows, one teacher/leader in each class is acceptable.
 - 31 • In situations where a group is meeting in an isolated room or at a different time or
32 place from other activities, at least two adults are required.
 - 33 • Appropriate ratios of leaders to students will be maintained, based on the nature of
34 the program and state child care regulations for the age group involved.
 - 35 • Parents are always welcome in their child's classroom or activity.
 - 36 • Reasonable effort will be made to recognize and address inappropriate sexual
37 behavior between/among minor peers, contacting parents when necessary.

38
39 In higher risk situations:

- 40
- 41 • Overnight events require 2 adults, at least 1 of each gender of students participating.
42 Exceptions to this will be approved in advance by the Board of Christian Education.
43 Participation in Retreats and Conferences provided by the Rocky Mountain
44 Conference includes adults from other congregations. In these cases we provide adult
45 sponsorship as required by the Conference.

- 1 • The Transportation Policy includes a Permission and Emergency Contact form to be
2 completed at least annually. Drivers must be at least 21 years of age, have a valid
3 driver's license, current vehicle insurance, and a good driving record. Youth may
4 drive themselves or other youth only with written permission of parents of both the
5 youth driver and youth riders while maintaining compliance with Colorado State
6 Law. For further details see the Youth Transportation Policy for First Congregational
7 United Church of Christ, Longmont.
- 8 • Off-site formal activities, not overnight, will follow the Transportation Policy and
9 will have an adequate number of supervisors for the type of activity and number of
10 youth.
- 11 • Off-site meetings with youth outside of formal activities will be in a public place
12 (park, coffee shop, etc), and will be scheduled in advance with the Associate
13 Minister for Christian Education and Youth. A note signed by a parent or guardian
14 giving permission for such gatherings will be completed at least once per year and
15 will be kept on file in the church office. A copy should also be in the possession of
16 the youth leader involved. It is acceptable for a parent to e-mail permission to the
17 Associate Minister.
- 18 • Mentors are encouraged to meet with their Confirmands several times during the
19 confirmation process. These one-on-one conversations should take place in a public
20 place (coffee shop, park, etc) or in the confirmand's home with a parent in the house.
21 Written parental permission (form attached) indicates parental approval of these
22 meetings and gives permission for the mentor to provide transportation within the
23 transportation policy. Forms will be kept on file in the church office.
- 24 • Persons with frequent and unsupervised access to minors (both employees and
25 volunteers) will have both reference checks and criminal background checks, will
26 complete an application and interview, will provide written references, (form
27 attached) and will receive boundaries training. This provision includes Mentors of
28 Confirmands, youth leaders and child care providers with frequent and unsupervised
29 access, regardless of length of church membership or previous volunteer service in
30 the Church.

1 **REPORTING, INVESTIGATION, AND COMMUNICATION OF** 2 **CONCERNS**

- 3
- 4 1. When information is received regarding alleged abuse or mistreatment of a minor
5 (except as noted in #6 below), the response team will follow the mandatory reporting
6 procedures of the State of Colorado and will cooperate fully in any investigation by
7 state or county or local officials. In addition, serious consideration will be given by
8 the Board supervising the accused person as to whether he/she will continue in their
9 present position.
- 10 2. A response team of five members, at least one male and one female, will be
11 established by the Cabinet of First Congregational United Church of Christ each year
12 at its first meeting, in preparation for the possibility of hearing concerns or
13 complaints brought under the Policy to Prevent Sexual Abuse and Harassment. The
14 response team will also serve as a vehicle to address written complaints or incidents
15 that are referred from other standing committees and boards of the church. The
16 response team will familiarize itself with the policy as well as the procedures for
17 response to concerns and complaints. These persons will be recommended to the
18 Cabinet by the Ministers and the Moderator. Three members of the response team
19 will be selected by the Moderator to respond to any given issue.
- 20 3. A media spokesperson will also be appointed at the same Cabinet meeting to handle
21 communication on behalf of the church if an incident occurs. This person will also be
22 recommended to the Cabinet by the Ministers and the Moderator.
- 23 4. When concerns are raised about an authorized minister of the United Church of
24 Christ (ordained, commissioned, or licensed), whether an employee or volunteer, the
25 response team will notify the Conference Minister of the Rocky Mountain
26 Conference of the United Church of Christ. First Congregational United Church of
27 Christ will cooperate fully in any procedures of the United Church of Christ related
28 to ministerial authorization, while retaining the right and responsibility to make
29 decision regarding employment and volunteer ministries within First Congregational
30 UCC as it determines best.
- 31 5. If the concern does not involve a minor, one of the following options may be taken in
32 addressing incidents of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment:
 - 33 • The person reporting concerns may offer to resolve the matter directly with the
34 person accused, using the Response Team as a resource if necessary.
 - 35 • If appropriate the Personnel Board may be engaged by the Response Team in an
36 attempt to resolve the matter informally.
 - 37 • If an informal resolution of the concern or complaint does not seem wise,
38 appropriate, possible or does not succeed, the Response Team may institute
39 formal proceedings. At this point the Response Team will offer to provide
40 pastoral care and concern to all those included in the investigation.
 - 41 • The person always has the right to report the concern directly to legal authorities.
- 42 6. If the complaint is made against a minor, the following procedures are recommended:
 - 43 • In a situation involving two minors where there is less than 5 years difference in
44 age, a reasonable attempt will be made to respond in a “teachable moment”
45 fashion, involving parents, a pastor, volunteer teachers, and others as appropriate,
46 depending on the gravity of the allegation. The goal is to provide instruction and

1 support regarding appropriate and inappropriate behavior, including providing
2 separation as needed.

- 3 • In a situation involving two minors where there is 5 or more years difference in
4 age, or the accused is serving in a leadership position, the Response Team will be
5 engaged to determine how to proceed. Age of the older youth and the situation
6 will be taken into account. The highest priority will be to prevent further abuse.
7 Social Services and/or legal authorities will be contacted if necessary.

8
9 In considering whether the reported conduct constitutes sexual harassment,
10 exploitation or other infraction, consideration shall be given to the record of the
11 reported incident as a whole, and to the totality of the circumstances, including
12 the context in which the incident occurred.

13
14 Any person who brings a concern or complaint forward, or who assists in the
15 investigation of such a report, will not be adversely affected in terms and
16 condition of employment, church membership, or otherwise discriminated against
17 or discharged.

18
19 The proceedings should include the following steps:

- 20
21 1. The response team will gather statements or other information from individuals
22 involved in the harassment or exploitation or other incident of concern, and from
23 others who may have pertinent information.
- 24 2. The response team will present information gathered to the supervisor of the
25 employee or volunteer about whom a concern has been raised, and to the
26 appropriate supervisory body of that individual (e.g.. the Christian Education
27 Board).
- 28 3. The appropriate supervisory body will make determinations and take appropriate
29 actions to resolve the matter. These may include:
 - 30 • Finding that sexual exploitation or harassment has occurred and that the
31 appropriate body of the church is called upon to take action, which may
32 include one or more of the following:
 - 33 • Formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior, with
34 possible public notification;
 - 35 • Recommending or requiring a program of growth which may include
36 education or counseling;
 - 37 • Probation, with terms of the probation clearly defined;
 - 38 • Dismissal from employment or volunteer leadership position.
 - 39 • A written summary of all proceedings in such cases will be maintained and
40 kept in a secured file in the church office.
- 41 4. If the person bringing the concern or complaint, or the accused person, is not
42 satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the supervisory body (e.g. the
43 Christian Education Board), he or she has the right to appeal to the Moderator
44 who will refer the matter to the Cabinet for resolution. Rocky Mountain
45 Conference assistance can be requested if satisfactory resolution is not reached.