

Safe Church Policy

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Wilmington, North Carolina

A. Policy

As a Community of Christian faith, First Christian Church (Disciples 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 First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual and all other forms of abuse, 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 exploitation of minors and take appropriate action to remove those persons who violate this safe church policy.

B. Definitions

- 1. Minister** – refers to all ordained, commissioned, licensed and lay ministers hired by or solicited by the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to conduct any portion of the church's ministry where they will contact minors, any person who has a disability that could create a vulnerability to misconduct or is otherwise involved in situations where abuse, exploitation or harassment might become present.
- 2. Employee** – refers to all persons hired by the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to perform some function in support of the ministry for pay and which would bring them into contact with minors, persons with a disability that create a vulnerability to misconduct or any other individual participating in the ministerial program of the church where abuse, exploitation or harassment might become present. This includes any persons who have the responsibility to keep any of the records associated with this policy.
- 3. Volunteer** – refers to a term used to define persons who may or may not be members of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who are elected, appointed or volunteer to carry out some part of the ministerial program of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and who may come in contact with minors. This would include but not necessarily be limited to Elders, Sunday School Teachers of minors, Bible School leaders, Department Heads, Outreach leaders, Youth leaders and other leaders of church programs that administer to minors.
- 4. Harassment** – Behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the other person to public discrimination because of race, sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion. Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors and any other verbal or physical

conduct of a sexual nature. Prohibited harassment includes but is not limited to the following examples:

- Written contact such as letters, notes, e-mails or invitations that include sexual or obscene content, or derogatory comments regarding ones sex, race or religion.
- Verbal contact including sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes of a sexual or ethnic nature, or sexual propositions.
- Physical contact with potential sexual overtones such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against ones body, blocking movement, assault and coercing sexual activity.
- Visual acts such as staring at another persons body, gesturing, displays of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters or magazines.
- Using sexual behavior to control, influence or affect the career, salary, work, learning, counseling or worship of another.

5. Abuse – Any pattern of harmful behaviors directed at achieving and/or maintaining control over an individual in such a manner to cause some form of physical or emotional harm to that individual, or to treat or use that individual in some unlawful or wrongful way.

6. Minor – Anyone under the age of 18 years of age.

C. Purpose

1. Establish a policy prohibiting abuse, exploitation and harassment as one step in creating a *Safe Church* environment within First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
2. Increase the awareness and sensitivity toward abuse, exploitation and harassment within the ministry of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
3. Define a policy for protecting against and dealing with abuse, exploitation and harassment within the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

D. Procedure

1. Ministers – Before an offer is made to a Minister the following must be completed:

- Submission of a signed and dated application for Minister that includes self-disclosure regarding any crime, including any sex related crime or child abuse, and references as required by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- Consent to the church's policy for screening and criminal background checks
- Provide a signed and dated acknowledgement that they have received and understand the church's *Safe Church* policy
- The background check must be completed and must include checking the references, completion of an interview, criminal records

check covering 7 years in the counties of residence and employment, and a review of the national sex offender registry.

- Records supporting these procedural requirements were met plus a copy of the offer and acceptance letter will be kept on file in the church office.

2. Employees - Before an offer of employment is made to any Employee (as defined herein), the following must be completed:

- Submission of a signed and dated application for employment that includes self-disclosure regarding any crime, including any sex related crime or child abuse, and at least 3 references one of which is a relative and the other two who are non-relatives
- Consent to the church's policy for screening and criminal background checks
- Provide a signed and dated acknowledgement that they have received and understand the church's *Safe Church* policy
- The background check must be completed and must include checking the references, completion of an interview, criminal records check and a review of the national sex offender registry.
- Records supporting these procedural requirements were met will be kept on file in the church office.

3. Volunteers- Before volunteers can serve in programs of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) that involve minors, the following must be satisfied:

- Submission of a signed and dated application for volunteer work that includes self-disclosure regarding any crime, including any sex related crime or child abuse, and at least 3 references one of which is a relative and the other two who are non-relatives
- Consent to the church's policy for screening and criminal background checks
- The selection process for volunteers serves as the interview process
- Provide a signed and dated acknowledgement that they have received and understand the church's *Safe Church* policy
- The background check must be completed and must include checking the references, a criminal records check and a review of the national sex offender registry
- Records supporting these procedural requirements were met will be kept on file in the church office

4. Requirements for dealing with minors

- Adequate supervision and safeguards are required for all activities involving minors. In any situation where participants are not readily visible to other church members, at least two persons must be present at all times when a child is in their care in order to avoid a

one-on-one situation. Exceptions to this are when there is an emergency, the minor's well being is otherwise in jeopardy or a written consent is in place.

- Written consent of one parent or guardian will be required for all activities off the church property and any overnight activities.
- First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will provide an orientation covering this policy to all Ministers, Employees, and Volunteers who work with minors. Records of this orientation shall be kept in the form of a sign-up sheet with the date, the person giving the orientation, the general subject matter and the signatures of all attending.

5. Other requirements

- For all persons filling positions that initially required a check of the national registry for sex offenders, an annual update review of the registry shall be made.
- This policy becomes effective July 1, 2007, and applies to all persons entering into service after that date. All records required by this policy shall be maintained in a safe and orderly manner in the offices of the First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- A summary of the *Safe Church* policy will be posted in conspicuous locations and the full policy is to be available upon request to any one requesting a copy
- Ministers are required to attend all boundary workshops as required by Christian Church, Disciples of Christ North Carolina
- The Board of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) shall establish and maintain a grievance process so that grievances can be registered in person or anonymously. The ombudsmen shall be independent enough from the activities of the church to ensure independence and thoroughness of investigation. The contact information is to be posted with the policy.
- This policy is to be reviewed annually by the Personnel Committee of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and receive a legal review at the discretion of the Committee.
- In addition to the routine posting of the policy and the acknowledgment at the time people are engaged in certain positions, the membership will be advised of the policy annually through customary means of communication (e.g. Newsletter).
- Any activities involving minors that are to be subcontracted will require Board approval and those providing the subcontracted service at a minimum will be government licensed and demonstrate proof of liability insurance.

E. Review and Council

The Personnel Committee of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) serves as the review and council regarding this policy.