

# SAINT STEPHENS UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

## SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Approved April 11, 2016

### **Goal of Safe Church Policy**

The goal of the Saint Stephens United Church of Christ Safe Church Policy is to prevent the abuse of children, youth and vulnerable adults, by educating staff, volunteers and Authorized Clergy. As a community of faith, this church is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, visitors, staff and volunteers can worship, learn, and work together in an atmosphere free from discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation.

Saint Stephens UCC strongly opposes and prohibits sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or any form of exploitation or abuse of others regardless of age, gender, race, national origin, sexual orientation, sexual identification, mental capacity, disability, or any other protected characteristic.

### **Working with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults**

The Safe Church Policy for working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults defines specific rules, procedures, behavior and conduct that all employees, volunteers and Authorized Clergy who work with children or vulnerable adults are required to follow in order to comply with Saint Stephens UCC Safe Church Policy. All employees, volunteers and Authorized Clergy who work with children or vulnerable adults will receive and agree to implement the Safe Church Policy prior to assuming responsibilities. Every two years, these individuals are required to review their volunteer application. This biannual Safe Church update corresponds with Saint Stephen's biannual background check update.

### **General Requirements**

- Act as a team member in fulfilling ministry objectives.
- Treat children, youth, and vulnerable adults fairly and with respect, without regard to race, age, gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity, or religion.
- Practice those behaviors we regard as necessary and positive, as well as refrain from those behaviors that have been defined as prohibited.
- Observe the 2:1 rule: Two adults may meet with a child, or youth, or one adult may meet with two or more children or youth.

## General Prohibitions

The following behaviors are prohibited at all times.

- Display affection toward a child or vulnerable adult in private.
- Use profanity or tell off-color jokes.
- Discuss sexual encounters with or around children, youth, or vulnerable adults, or in any way involve children, youth or vulnerable adults in one's personal problems or issues.
- Date or become romantically involved with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- Use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- Possess sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on church property or at church-sponsored events.
- Have secrets with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- Stare at or comment on anyone's body.
- Engage in inappropriate or unapproved communication with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
- Work one-on-one with children, youth or vulnerable adults in a private setting.
- Abuse children, youth or vulnerable adults in any way, including but not limited to the following:
  - a. Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restrain.
  - b. Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, or curse.
  - c. Sexual abuse: inappropriately touch, expose oneself or engage in sexually oriented conversations.
  - d. Mental abuse: shame, humiliate, and act cruelly.
  - e. Neglect: withhold food, water, or shelter.
  - f. Permit children or youth to engage in the following: hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, ridicule, humiliation or sexual activity.
  - g. Manipulate or exploit a child, youth, or vulnerable adult in any way.

## Reporting Obligations

Each employee, volunteer and Authorized Clergy shall report:

- Concerns or complaints about other employees, volunteers, other adults or children to the Authorized Clergy or Christian Education Coordinator.
- Allegations or incidents of suspected abuse to the designated law enforcement or child welfare authority.

## Ways To Demonstrate Appropriate Approval and Affection

In providing physical approval or affection, the following guidelines apply.

Appropriate Physical Interactions	Inappropriate Physical Interactions
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Side hugs</li> <li>• Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs</li> <li>• Pats on the shoulder or back</li> <li>• Handshakes</li> <li>• High-fives and hand slapping</li> <li>• Pats on the head, when culturally appropriate</li> <li>• Touching hands, shoulders and arms</li> <li>• Arms around shoulders</li> <li>• Holding hands with young Children in escorting situations</li> </ul> <p>Note: These may be inappropriate if unwanted by the child, youth or the vulnerable adult.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwelcomed hugs</li> <li>• Kisses</li> <li>• Showing affection in an isolated area</li> <li>• Wrestling</li> <li>• Piggyback rides</li> <li>• Tickling</li> <li>• Allowing a child to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg</li> <li>• Any type of massage given by or to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult</li> <li>• Any form of affection that is unwanted by the child, youth or vulnerable adult.</li> <li>• Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> <li>• Touching bottom, chest or genital areas</li> </ul>
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**Ways To Demonstrate Appropriate and Inappropriate Verbal Interactions**

Appropriate Verbal Interactions	Inappropriate Verbal Interactions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive reinforcement</li> <li>• Appropriate jokes</li> <li>• Encouragement</li> <li>• Praise</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name-calling</li> <li>• Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving children in the personal problems or issues of employees and volunteers</li> <li>• Secrets</li> <li>• Cursing</li> <li>• Off-color or sexual jokes</li> <li>• Shaming</li> <li>• Belittling</li> <li>• Derogatory remarks</li> <li>• Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate children, youth, or vulnerable adult.</li> <li>• Derogatory remarks about the child, youth or vulnerable and/or his/her family</li> </ul>

**Adult-Child Ratios**

- Babies up to 18 months of age, a 1:4 ratio will be observed.
- Children ages 18 to 36 months, 1:5 ratio will be observed.
- Children 36 months to age 9, a 1:10 ratio shall be maintained.

- Children and youth over the age of 9, a 1:25 ratio shall be maintained.

Employees, volunteers and Authorized Clergy under the age of 18 are not included in the ratio. In all cases an employee, volunteer, or Authorized Clergy under the age of 18 working with children shall be under the supervision of an adult over the age of 21.

Employees, volunteers and Authorized Clergy under the age of 21 shall not supervise or lead a youth group in which the oldest participating child is less than three years younger than the supervisor/leader.

### **Bathrooms and Changing Rooms**

The following practices shall apply to supervision of bathrooms and changing rooms during church programs.

- No employee, volunteer or Authorized Clergy shall enter with a single unrelated child, unless the entry door is ajar (propped open) in a way that an employee, volunteer or Authorized Clergy can be observed by others. Children may not supervise other children in the bathroom unless easily observed by another adult.
- Children in second grade or younger shall not enter unsupervised or enter as a lone pair.
- Supervised bathroom or changing room usage means that the adult in charge is within eyesight of the bathroom or changing room door.
- Children in eighth grade and younger are required to ask permission before using bathrooms.

### **Transportation of Vulnerable Adults, Youth and Children**

Whether on buses, motor coaches or private passenger vehicles transporting vulnerable adults, youth and children is a serious responsibility.

The following standards shall apply.

- No employee, volunteer or Authorized Clergy shall transport a single vulnerable adult, youth or child, who is not his/her own, except as may be required in an emergency with the approval of a supervisor; or written/verbal permission from a legal guardian. Communications shall be established to verify the whereabouts, expected arrival and change of custody of the child.
- Any driver operating a vehicle that holds 16 passengers or more, including the driver, shall possess a valid Commercial Driver's License (CDL).
- Any person who drives on behalf of Saint Stephens UCC sponsored programs shall be required to show proof of drivers license and insurance and have a Criminal Records Background Check.
  - Adult-child ratios shall be maintained and within the safe loading limits of the vehicles being used. Before each trip, a church travel manifest shall be provided to the church office that documents the approximate departing time,

arrival time, destination, mileage and names of passengers, supervising staff and volunteers. Any unusual occurrences or significant changes in route should be documented.

- Parent/guardian permission shall be obtained.

**Out-of-Program (Off-Site) Contact**

Saint Stephens UCC generally recommends that employees, volunteers and Authorized Clergy do not have outside contact with children from church programs. However, there are certain programs for which off-site contact is acceptable and where observing the 2:1 rule is required. The following forms of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate for ministry with children or youth:

Appropriate Outside Contact	Inappropriate Outside Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending sporting events , concerts, plays, or other activities as part of a group</li> <li>• Attending functions at a child’s home with parents present</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking one child on an outing without a parent’s or guardian’s written permission</li> <li>• Visiting a child’s home without a parent present</li> <li>• Entertaining one child in the home of a church employee or volunteer, or Authorized Clergy</li> <li>• A lone child spending the night with a church employee or volunteer or Authorized Clergy</li> </ul>

**One-on-One Interactions**

Because most abuse occurs when an adult is alone with a child, private one-on-one meetings with a child are prohibited unless approved in advance by legal guardian. When so permitted, the following guidelines shall apply.

One-on-One Interaction Guidelines
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• When meeting one-on-one with a child, always do so in a public place in full view of others.</li> <li>• Avoid inappropriate physical interactions as previously stated.</li> <li>• If meeting in a room or office, leave the door open or move to an area that can be easily observed by others passing by. Inform other employees, volunteers or Authorized Clergy that you are alone with a child and ask them to randomly drop in. (Ask to be supervised.)</li> <li>• Document and immediately report any unusual incidents—including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment and behavior problems—and how they</li> </ul>

were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted.

### **Social Media and Electronic Communications**

Social Media definition: Electronic platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, or similar, that allow for reciprocal interaction between individuals.

Electronic Communications definition: communication avenues that include email, texting and any additional application or website which allows for direct and potentially private communication.

### **General Social Media Policy**

In order to extend the life of the congregation, enhance communication and develop participation of young people in the life of the church and its ministry, Saint Stephens UCC will authorize certain employees, volunteers and Authorized Clergy to manage the church's website and social media channels.

No party shall create a website or social media site in the name of, or purporting to represent, the church without the explicit, written permission of the Authorized Clergy or Christian Education Coordinator directly involved with the ministry.

Technology is here to stay, continuing to grow and expand. People are using social network to stay in touch with family and friends, build communities, acquire information, engaging conversation, and share news and notices of events.

To safeguard against misuse, Saint Stephen UCC's employees, volunteers, and authorized clergy will use the following guidelines.

- Learn how to use current technology efficiently.
- Remember ourselves and remind others that social media is a public forum; not a personal journal, therapy or private conversation.
- Use group formats to send messages and notices. Group leaders will make messages transparent.
- Permission is needed to post pictures of youth and children.
- Model messaging. Avoid innuendo and off color humor.
- Set and maintain security settings.
- Do not delete messages, conversations, etc.
- Do not forward sensitive communication without consent of author
- Respect confidentiality
- If an employee, volunteer or Authorized Clergy leave Saint Stephens UCC discern appropriate contact with network friends in a setting.
- Do not use social media to threaten anyone.
- Refrain from violent, racist, sexist, or unethical comments that minimize the dignity of any person.

- If employees, volunteers or Authorized Clergy accept friend requests from minors or youth who are associated with Saint Stephens UCC, other adult leaders must have access to their correspondence.
- Adults should not submit friend requests to minors.
- Not knowingly expose the congregation to liability or bad publicity due to foolish or unwise social network postings.
- Any material that raises suspicion that a child, youth, or vulnerable adult has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the Christian Education Coordinator or Authorized Clergy.
- Authorized Clergy or Program Directors shall notify parents/guardians of any new electronic channel of communication upon it becoming a reliable means of communication, and provide parents/guardians the opportunity to participate in said electronic channel.

### **Background Screening and Checks**

Saint Stephens UCC wants our congregation to be a haven free of sexual misconduct or harassment. To help reach these goals, we require all staff and volunteers to agree to abide by the following covenant which governs children, youth, and vulnerable adults at Saint Stephens UCC United Church of Christ.

- To honor each child's integrity and worth
- To provide a nurturing and safe environment for children, youth, and vulnerable adults to grow socially and spiritually.

### **Volunteers**

Our congregation welcomes persons who are active participants in the life of the church to become involved with children, youth and vulnerable adults at various levels of commitment. Volunteers shall become involved with the appropriate clearance and approval of appropriate staff persons who will offer supervision for a period of time. Any person known to have committed previous acts of misconduct with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall be prohibited from working with Saint Stephens UCC children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

### **Screening Procedure**

The Christian Education Coordinator shall be responsible for screening applicants for volunteer positions related to children, youth and vulnerable adults. There are two levels of screening: Primary and Secondary.

Primary Screening: All paid staff, along with volunteer teachers and youth group leaders who will have appointed and frequent contact with children, and/or youth must undergo the primary screening procedure.

- Reviewing of this policy

- Returning a signed acknowledgment indicating review of policy to the church office – Business Manager or Authorized Clergy
- Completing an application form authorizing a Criminal Records Background Check

Secondary Screening: Folks that will have limited contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, such as the occasional nursery assistant or youth group driver or mission trip sponsor must undergo the secondary screening procedure.

- Reviewing this policy
- Returning a signed acknowledgment indicating review of this policy to the Christian Education Coordinator or Authorized Clergy.

### **Responsibilities**

The Christian Education Coordinator will be responsible for:

- Reviewing the submitted forms
- Arranging for Criminal Records Background Check, when applicable
- Maintaining records in a confidential and secure location which will be kept for at least seven years

Church and Ministry is responsible for:

- Insuring Criminal Records Background Checks occurs for all church employees as a condition of employment.
- This information will be kept as a part of the employee's personnel file.

### **Education and Training**

A designated person will be responsible for the implementation of educating and training volunteers and staff regarding the Safe Church Policy. Training programs will include how and when to report a possible sexual misconduct or physical or verbal abuse. This policy will be included as part of the new member orientation.

### **Responding to Media**

Media publicity following an incident or allegation of abuse or exploitation may be detrimental to the reputations of individuals, and/or the congregation of Saint Stephens UCC UCC. Without evading the media, contact with media must be managed and conducted only by a person specifically designated by Church Council. No other person(s) may speak on behalf of the church unless designated by Church Council in a particular circumstance.

### **Congregational Awareness**



Saint Stephens UCC is dedicated to open communication and education surrounding the Safe Church Policy. The congregation is entitled to know what to expect of church ministries and of employees, volunteers and authorized clergy, as well as policies created to protect the respective ministry constituencies. Constituencies include: children, vulnerable adults, parents, guardians and employees, volunteers or Authorized Clergy. The Safe Church Policy will be posted on the Saint Stephens UCC website.

**Leadership and Reporting**

Reports of Safe Church Policy violations, suspicions or concerns can be made to any of the persons listed below, but preferably to the person in whose ministry or program the incident or allegation has occurred.

Position	Name	Telephone	Email Address
Senior Minister	Rev. Kyle Carnes	(715)536-7322	kyle@ststephensucc.net
Associate Minister	Rev. Missy Holdorf	(715)536-7322	missy@ststephensucc.net

Other important Safe Church Policy reporting contacts include:  
 The pastor on call. The Emergency/Pastoral Care number is (715) 575-3191.

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have thoroughly read the entire above Safe Church Policy for Saint Stephens UCC United Church of Christ. I have understood the content and have sought clarification for areas that were either confusing or unclear. I pledge to uphold this Policy for my own safety, the safety of children and vulnerable adults, and for the overall health and wellbeing of the congregation of Saint Stephens UCC UCC.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name