



Newman Congregational Church, United Church of Christ

SAFE CHURCH POLICY AND PROCEDURES

January 2017

A. 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 or Senior Minister: a person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ.

Sexual Exploitation: abuse of vulnerability, differential power, or trust to take advantage of someone using sexual behavior (not limited to sexual intercourse or contact) for personal enjoyment, gain, or profit.

Sexual Harassment: repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to their wishes.

Sexual harassment includes obscene notes or invitations, sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs and jokes, leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or media, intentionally touching, pinching, brushing up against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, and coercing sexual intercourse.

Sexual harassment also includes using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. For example, it is forbidden to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment because a person has declined a personal proposition, or hint that benefits such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties, or recommendations will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

Sexual harassment also includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating or humiliating the other person or subjecting the other person to public discrimination.

Child Abuse or Neglect: means the physical or mental injury, sexual abuse or exploitation, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child under the age of eighteen by a person who is responsible for the child's welfare under circumstances indicating harm or threatened harm to the child's health or welfare. The term encompasses both acts of commission and omission on the part of a responsible person.

Elderly Abuse: the physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, financial exploitation, or neglect of elders (persons 60 years and older) by a family member, caregiver, or person with duty of care (*e.g.* minister). Neglect includes the willful failure by a caregiver or other person with a duty of care to provide goods or services necessary to avoid physical harm, mental harm, or mental illness to an elderly person.

Elderly Self-Neglect: occurs when a person is no longer able to care for themselves. Self-neglect means a pattern of behavior in an elderly person that directly, imminently, and significantly threatens their own health and/or, safety. Self-neglect includes, but is not limited to, an inability or an incapacity to provide self with food, water, shelter, or safety to the point of establishing imminent risk of any of the harm(s) described above.

B. Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment

Newman Congregational Church United Church of Christ (NCCUCC) is committed to creating and maintaining a community in which all persons can worship and work together free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. All persons associated with NCCUCC should be aware that the abuse, exploitation, or harassment of any person 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 in violation.

C. Prohibition of Accessing, Displaying, or Possessing of Pornography

There is no context in which accessing, displaying, or possessing pornography on NCCUCC devices, on NCCUCC property, or during NCCUCC associated programs is acceptable. Displaying or disseminating pornography to children and possessing, displaying, or disseminating pornography of children are crimes. Any incidents will be immediately reported to the police and the offending material or electronic device containing the offending material will be secured for forensic analysis.

D. Ministerial Conduct

All persons engaged in the ministry of NCCUCC, ministers, are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to those who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of parishioner(s) or any other individual(s) by anyone engaged in the ministry of NCCUCC is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

E. Inclusion of Registered Sex Offenders

NCCUCC is committed to welcoming all persons into our church community; this includes registered sex offenders. When a registered sex offender begins worshipping at NCCUCC they should immediately report their status to the Senior Minister (or Moderator if the Senior Minister is unavailable). The Church Council will then formulate a situation specific Covenant Agreement (see Appendix A) outlining rules and responsibilities for the offender in question as well as the congregation. This covenant is designed on a case by case basis to ensure the safety of all as well as ensure their involvement in NCCUCC becomes a support for rehabilitation and healing.

At the time of entry, the existing congregation must be notified that a sex offender has joined the community. Any parishioners joining NCCUCC after this initial notification may request information, but a list will not be provided upon entry nor will details be posted in the building.

F. Youth Protection Policy

NCCUCC 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, NCCUCC shall establish requirements for anyone doing children's and youth ministry at this church. The church will conduct a comprehensive Screening Process of all volunteers and employees working with minors, abide by specialized Administrative Policies, and participate in the continued Supervision and Training and Response Plans adopted by the wider church.

a. Screening Process for Working with Minors

Before an offer of employment is made or a volunteer assumes their position, a comprehensive Screening Process will be conducted. The Screening Process requires:

- i. Submission of a completed and signed disclaimer form (see Appendix B)
- ii. An interview to assess the suitability of character and qualifications of the individual
- iii. A check of references and previous employers for all those who have not been members for at least six months or attendees of NCCUCC for one year.
- iv. A criminal records check and review of the national and state sex offender registry (the scope of check to include the counties of residence and counties of work over the past seven years). The review includes:
 - **County Criminal History Search**
All felonies and misdemeanors are filed in county courts. Based on an applicant's seven-year residential history, there will be a search of the corresponding county courthouses. Results will include cases that have been dismissed as well as convictions.
 - **"U.S. Search"**
National Data is comprised of Department of Corrections and criminal court record data, the National Sex Offender Public Registry, the OFAC Terrorist database, Patriot Act Data, Interpol and National Background Investigations' proprietary database. Data is updated dependent on the individual state.
 - **National Sex Offender Registry**
By searching the name on the Department of Justice website www.nsopr.gov one can view the registered sex offender list which is updated annually.

- **State Sexual Offender Registry**
All states have actively pursued community notification of current address information for released sex offenders (Megan's Law). A search of established state registries will reveal any known convicted sex offenders and/or violent predators that have registered their current address with their local law enforcement officials. The report may identify the individual by name, date of birth, race, height, weight, physical markings such as scars or tattoos, description of crime(s) committed, and incarceration location. The data in individual state registries is considered to be updated in "real time."
- **FRS PASST Report**
The key advantage of this report is in eliminating doubt surrounding an applicant's residential history. This report may indicate that an applicant's social security number is being used fraudulently, provide a date of birth, telephone numbers, any maiden or married names and aliases, as well as note current and previous address information for the last seven to ten years.
- **Motor Vehicle Report**
Based on the applicant's driver's license number and the issuing state, the report will indicate valid or invalid status, current address information, any traffic violations for which points are assigned, status and reason for any suspension and/or revocation.

b. Administrative Policies Pertaining to Minors

Policies have been established to safeguard all ministering and ministered to through NCCUCC. These include, but are not limited to, the following which should be followed to the best of one's ability. It is important to note that in church settings, many ministers are also the parent/guardian of minors within the church community. These policies in no way supersede parental rights, so while a teacher should not be alone with an unrelated child, a parent could help their child in the bathroom without need of supervision or notifying anyone else.

- i. Minors are not to be left unattended in the church at any time.
- ii. It is not permissible for any minister of NCCUCC to be in the church building alone with a minor who is not their child at any time without the explicit permission of the minor's parent/guardian. In pick-up situations where a parent is running late, try to call and get verbal consent from the parent or recruit another family to wait until the last parent arrives.
- iii. No minor may be alone with a minister in the minister's residence. When pastoral care calls for privacy, meetings can occur in rooms within the church with an unobstructed window in the door. Let another adult unrelated to you know that you are in there so they can randomly check-in.
- iv. Electronic communication between ministers and minors should be unidirectional (e.g. email or group text blasts of information). If bidirectional email and text are desired ministers should include a parent/guardian in all communications or receive their written consent (see Appendix C). It is not appropriate for ministers to befriend minors on any social media platforms.
- v. Never touch a minor against their will unless they are in clear and present danger or in imminent risk of destructive or harmful behavior towards self or others. If you must touch a minor, refrain from touching areas normally covered by a bathing suit unless medically necessary and try to be in the presence of an unrelated adult.
- vi. No hazing shall ever be employed or permitted by ministers or minors.
- vii. All classrooms will have at least one door with an unobstructed clear window.
- viii. In any situations where minors are not readily visible to other church members, there will be no fewer than two adults present. The adults may not be a married couple.
- ix. Youth thirteen years of age and older may assist in a classroom; however, this assistance does not change the requirement that at least two adults (not a married couple) be present. Further, when

youth are employed as aides in a classroom, the age difference of the aide and the oldest minor in the class will be no less than five years.

- x. For minors who need help when going to the bathroom:
 - Any adult who is helping an unrelated minor go to the bathroom should inform the other adult in the room that that is what they are doing.
 - In the event that one adult must leave the room for even a brief period of time, the doors to the classroom will remain open.
 - The door to the bathroom will remain open.
 - When able, a minor should take care of removing and replacing their own clothes (*e.g.* unzipping pants, pulling down tights, buttoning, etc.) . If a minor needs help with their clothing the adult should have the minor step outside the stall.
- xi. The purpose of discipline is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of responsibility, respect, and cooperation. No minor shall be disciplined by the use of any form of physical punishment or abusive/derogatory language.
 - Ask the Church School Superintendent if you need assistance.
- xii. Children through Grade 8 will be dismissed from class only when a parent/guardian or other authorized person has arrived. Release permission slips (see Appendix D) will be on file. Youth Grade 9 and above will be permitted to dismiss themselves.
- xiii. A parent/guardian will be required to sign a written consent form (listing the advisors to be present and trip details) for all activities off the church property and any overnight activities.
- xiv. When transporting minors have a second adult “monitor” onboard.
- xv. During overnight stays, at least one adult male shall dorm with boys and one adult female with girls. Should these adults be related, a third advisor is to be present.
- xvi. Ministers shall never share a bed or sleeping bag with a minor under any circumstances.
- xvii. A ratio of at least one adult to eight minors will be maintained on overnight trips.

G. Reporting and Response Plan

There are different legal requirements for reporting child abuse, elderly abuse, and abuse of an adult. It is expected that specific reporting procedures will be followed. NCCUCC’s response will be the same for every situation.

a. Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect

All persons in Rhode Island are required by law (RIGL 40-11-3) to report known or suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect to the Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) within 24 hours of becoming aware of such abuse/neglect. Any minister of the church who suspects that child abuse or neglect has occurred shall immediately report the matter to:

- DCYF Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-742-4453
- The Senior Minister of NCCUCC. (Reports may be made to the Moderator of NCCUCC if the Senior Minister is unavailable or is the alleged perpetrator.)
 - The Senior Minister or Moderator will inform the church’s insurance writer, the church’s attorney, the Conference Executive, and the parent(s)/guardian(s) where appropriate.

b. Reporting Elderly Abuse or Self-Neglect

All persons in Rhode Island are required by law (RIGL 42-66-8) to report known or suspected cases of elderly abuse and/or neglect to the Division of Elderly Affairs (DEA). Any minister of the church who suspects that elderly abuse or self-neglect has occurred shall immediately report the matter to:

- DEA Protective Services Unit 1-401-462-0555
- The Senior Minister of NCCUCC. (Reports may be made to the Moderator of NCCUCC if the Senior Minister is unavailable or is the alleged perpetrator.)

- The Senior Minister or Moderator will inform the church's insurance writer, the church's attorney, and the Conference Executive.

c. Reporting Abuse or Harassment of an Adult

Reports of abuse or harassment should be brought to:

- The Senior Minister of NCCUCC. (Reports may be made to the Moderator of NCCUCC if the Senior Minister is unavailable or is the alleged perpetrator.)
- The Senior Minister or Moderator will inform the church's insurance writer, the church's attorney, the Conference Executive, and the Personnel Committee where appropriate.
- Police where appropriate

All allegations will be taken seriously. Any person bringing a sexual harassment or exploitation complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

Response to allegations will be handled with due respect for everyone's privacy and confidentiality, so while anonymous reports to the Senior Minister or Moderator are not allowed, reporters are guaranteed that they will not be named in the ensuing conversations/investigations except where required by law or after having given consent. Those seeking complete anonymity may choose to report solely to secular authorities independently of NCCUCC.

Individuals and NCCUCC must leave all investigation to the authorities. NCCUCC shall cooperate fully in any investigation under guidance of the church's attorney. The attorney will be present while any investigative questions from the police or applicable agencies are being answered by anyone.

All public statements to press inquiries shall be made by the church attorney. These statements should communicate that the church regards these allegations seriously and offers responsible action, concern, and support for all involved. No details of the accusation will be released.

The church's job is to protect the safety of the victim and the rights of the alleged perpetrator. Everyone involved will be treated with dignity and respect and offered support.

H. Supervision and Training

a. Training

- i. Authorized Ministers, members of the Board of Deacons, the Board of Christian Education, all paid staff, and church volunteers who work with minors or the elderly will attend a Boundary Training workshop as often as suggested or required by the Rhode Island Conference, UCC or will attend at least one workshop each three years, whichever is more frequent. The workshop may be conducted by a current member of the church's Authorized Ministry staff who has received appropriate training.
 - All participants will sign a document indicating they have read and understood our Safe Spaces Policy and have attended a Boundary Training. (see Appendix E)
- ii. The Board of Trustees will keep a record of who has keys to the church building, and they will periodically change the locks on the church doors to ensure they have a complete listing.
 - Those with keys will be presented with a copy of our Safe Spaces Policy and will sign a document indicating they have read and understood it. (see Appendix F)

b. Supervision

- i. The Church Council is responsible for monitoring the dissemination, application, and updating of this policy. Drift from the operational standards outlined herein should be corrected swiftly. The policy should be reviewed no less than every three years.

I. Appendices

Appendix A. Sex Offender Covenant Template
To be adapted to specific circumstances



Newman Congregational Church
United Church of Christ

100 Newman Avenue, Rumford, RI 02916 • 401-434-4742 • newmanchurch@verizon.net

Newman Congregational Church is an Open and Affirming congregation with a mission to welcome all. In keeping with this vision, Church Council approved a covenant with *INSERT FULL NAME*, a registered sex offender, allowing him/her to worship at Newman under specific conditions. Our goal is to provide a safe environment for all persons in the building.

Therefore, guidelines to protect and provide well-being for *INSERT NAME*, as well as others, are as follows:

- I must never be alone in the building. I understand that I must be in line-of-sight supervision at all times;
- I will be allowed access to the first floor for the purposes of worship and fellowship and the chapel during choir rehearsal only. I will use the bathrooms off of Memorial Hall;
- I must avoid all unsupervised contact with children on church property and at church events;
- I will not volunteer for, or chaperone children’s or youth events, including religious education classes;
- I agree to be named to the Congregation as a registered sex offender;
- I agree that the Congregation may be informed in writing of my status as a registered sex offender and the conditions allowing me to worship at Newman;
- I understand that I am responsible for my own behavior. If there is a circumstance that may cause noncompliance with these conditions, I will voluntarily remove myself;
- I understand that this agreement can be modified at any time and failure to comply with these conditions will result in my being barred from the building.

I, *INSERT FULL NAME*, have reviewed this covenant and agree to these guidelines.

Signature _____ Date _____

In conjunction with these guidelines, Newman Congregational Church has a part in helping *INSERT NAME* rebuild relationships, overcome old behaviors, and deepen his/her faith commitment.

To provide the needed assistance to honor this covenant we will:

- Help *INSERT NAME* maintain his/her agreement with the established guidelines;
- Identify covenant partners prepared to meet on a regular basis with *INSERT NAME* for emotional, spiritual, and practical support;
- Hold a forum to educate the Congregation on the complex issues surrounding sexual offenses.

We, Church Council, agree to honor this covenant so that *INSERT FULL NAME* may worship at Newman Congregational Church in a safe and graceful manner.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix B. Disclaimer Form

Name: _____
(Print or Type)

Maiden Name: _____

D/O/B: _____

DISCLAIMER

I _____ hereby direct and authorize the Bureau of Criminal Identification of the Department of Attorney General for the State of Rhode Island to make available to _____ any criminal record that the Bureau of Criminal Identification has on file in reference to me.

I hereby waive and release any and all manner of actions, cause of actions, and demands of every kind, nature and description, arising from any release of criminal records and requests therefrom, whatsoever against the State of Rhode Island, Bureau of Criminal Identification, the Attorney General, and employees of the Attorney General's Office in both law and equity which I may now have or in the future may have.

Signature of Applicant

Sworn to before me in the City of _____ State of _____

this _____ day of _____, 20 _____.

Notary Public

Commission Expires

NOTE: Copy of photo identification with date of birth must accompany this Disclaimer.

Appendix C. Electronic Communication Consent Form



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Electronic Communication Consent Form

I, _____, hereby give permission for _____ to
printed name of parent/guardian *printed name of adult minister*

engage in bidirectional electronic communications with my child, _____,
printed name of minor

without my inclusion for the period of _____. I give consent for them to
date or period allowed

text message and/or email one another for the purposes of NCCUCC related business.
circle allowed forms

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Adult Minister Signature

Minor Signature

Appendix D. Church School Release Permission Forms



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Church School Release Permission Form
INSERT SCHOOL YEAR

Besides myself, I hereby give permission for my child(ren) to be released to the following person(s) at the conclusion of Church School:

Name(s) of Authorized Person(s)

Relationship to the Minor

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Name(s) of Child(ren)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Appendix E. Covenant Statement



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Covenant Statement

As an authorized minister, member of the Board of Deacons, the Board of Christian Education, paid staff person, or church volunteer who works with minors or the elderly, I am willing to sign the following:

I have received, read, and understood *Safe Church Policies and Procedures* and will abide by the policies set therein. Specifically, that I understand that in the state of Rhode Island I am legally required to report any suspected child or elder abuse and am expected to cooperate fully with any resulting investigation. I understand that failure to cooperate in an investigation may be grounds for termination of duties and/or employment.

 Location of last Boundary Training attended

 Date of last Boundary Training attended

 Signature

 Date

Appendix F. Keyholder Contract



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Keyholder Contract

I request a key to Newman Congregational Church for the following reasons:

- _____
- _____
- _____

If I am assigned a key, I will not duplicate it nor lend it to another person. I will be entirely responsible for the key's security and I will return the key when its use is no longer necessary.

The undersigned agrees that they have received, read, and understood *Safe Church Policy and Procedures* and that they will abide by the policies included therein. Specifically, he/she or any other adult will not be allowed in the church building alone with a child that is not theirs at any time.

Assigned Key #

Date Key Returned

Signature

Date

Property Manager