

(KCC Logo)

SAFE CHURCH GUIDELINES

**KIRKLAND CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
KIRKLAND, WASHINGTON**

I. Policy Statement

II. Definitions

III. Ministerial Conduct

IV. Code of Behavior

V. Response Plan

VI. Recruiting Church Workers: Selection and Screening Process

VII. Forms

Acknowledgments:

Some material used in these guidelines came from the following sources:

Safe Church Policy of the First Congregational Church of Natick, MA

Safe Church Policy of the First Congregational Church of Bellevue, WA

Making Our Churches Safe for All: A publication of the United Church Of Christ Insurance Board, 2005

Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church and Safe Sanctuaries for Youth, Joy Thornburg Melton. Discipleship Resources, 2004

Safe Sanctuaries, Dr. Ira S. Williams, Jr. Published by the Rhode Island and Wisconsin Conferences of the United Church of Christ

I. POLICY STATEMENT

The congregation of Kirkland Congregational Church United Church of Christ aspires to be an inclusive community in which all can work and worship together in a trusting, nurturing place, free from harassment or exploitation of any kind. As part of this mission we strive to provide a safe environment for all, especially the children and youth who are entrusted to our care. All people associated with our church know that church bylaws prohibit sexual exploitation and sexual harassment. Child sexual abuse and sexual misconduct, as understood in this document, always involves a relationship in which both parties do not have equal power. KCCUCC has adopted Safe Church Guidelines to reduce the possibility of child sexual or physical abuse, or any type of misconduct or harassment involving minors or adults from occurring in our church. These expectations apply to all, including groups using or renting our facilities, and ensure a secure and nurturing environment in which infants, children, youth and adults can learn about, experience, and share God's love with others.

Any sexual contact must, if it is to be ethical and life giving, take place between two mutually consenting participants. Such mutual consent is not possible where there is an imbalance of power, for example, between pastor and congregant, church schoolteacher or youth leader and child, choir director and choir member.

II. DEFINITIONS

For the purposes of this policy we are using the following 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. **Those who volunteer to work with minors shall have been Church Members for at least 6 months or Associate Members for at least 12 months.**

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

Types of Abuse:

Physical Abuse: Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon (knife, belt, strap, and so forth), burning, shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing bones, and any wide variety of non-accidental injuries to a person's body

Emotional Abuse: Abuse in which a person exposes another to spoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the person of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care. People exposed to emotional abuse may have experienced being locked in a closet, being deprived of any sign of affection, being constantly told they are bad or stupid, or being allowed or forced to abuse alcohol or drugs. Emotional abuse is often very difficult to prove and is devastating to the victim.

Neglect: Abuse in which a person endangers another's health, safety, or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the person's self-worth. This is perhaps the most common form of abuse.

Sexual Abuse of a minor: Abuse in which sexual contact between a child and an adult (or other and more powerful youth) occurs. The child is never truly capable of consenting to or resisting such contact and/or such sexual acts. Often, the child is physically and psychologically dependent upon the perpetrator of the abuse. Examples of sexual abuse may include fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation of and exposure to child pornography or prostitution.

Ritual Abuse of a minor: Abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child's welfare. The abuser may appeal to some higher authority or power to justify the abuse. The abuse may include cruel treatment of animals or repeated threats of harm to the child, other persons, and animals. Reports of ritual abuse are often extremely horrifying and may seem too grim to be true. Children making such reports must not be ignored.

Minor/Child: Any individual under the age of eighteen.

Sexual Misconduct includes sexual harassment (verbal and/or physical) sexual advances and or sexual contact between an ordained, licensed, commissioned minister, or any person, ordained or lay who has an assigned role with children and/or youth in the church and the employees, members, youth, children, and counselees of his/her church.

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, requests 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 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, email messages 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 intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse;

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, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

Teacher: An adult 18 years of age or older who has responsibility for a church school classroom and has attended teacher training.

Classroom Helper: an adult or responsible youth who assists a teacher.

Primary Volunteer: Paid staff persons and full-time volunteers.

Secondary Volunteer: Part-time volunteers and event volunteers.

Unmonitored Contact: Anyone involved in overnight events with minors, transportation of minors, youth ministry events and field trips.

Inappropriate Behavior: Anyone using suggestive language, suggestive behavior or profanity to or around youth. This also applies to electronic forms of communication.

Confidentiality: When investigating an allegation, those involved shall maintain complete confidentiality with respect to names and events. The guiding rule of

confidentiality is to tell only who needs to know and only what they need to know. This policy shall be followed by all involved.

III. MINISTERIAL CONDUCT

All persons engaged in the ministry of Kirkland Congregational Church, including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteer 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 parishioners or other individuals by someone engaged in the ministry of Kirkland Congregational Church is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation. Because 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 education for helping those individuals they serve in ministry.

It is the policy of Kirkland Congregational Church to encourage its leaders, authorized minister, 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.

Youth Counseling: Any counseling sessions with youth will be conducted either in a room with a window in the door, or the door of the room used will remain open for the entire session. Ideally, the session will be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance. Counseling sessions conducted behind closed doors are a breeding ground for false allegations of abuse. Closed doors also make it too easy for the abuser to have the privacy and isolation he or she needs to carry out abusive acts. When one of our youth is troubled and seeks counseling, it is critical to resist the temptation to meet the youth in secret, even if the youth makes that request. Whenever possible, make counseling appointments during regular office hours.

Whenever a youth seeks counseling, it is important to determine in the initial meeting if you are actually qualified to address the youth's needs effectively. If you do not believe you are sufficiently qualified, refer the youth to another counselor. In the event you do agree to counsel the youth, it may be prudent to agree to a limited number of sessions (two or three) and then refer the youth to another counselor if the problems have not been solved. In this way, if you cannot successfully help the youth, you will at least not unduly delay the counseling process with someone else.

IV. CODE OF BEHAVIOR

1. Parental Consent. For each minor participating in faith formation programs, the church shall have on file a signed parental permission form for children and youth fellowship

events outside of Sunday school classes and an emergency medical treatment consent. These forms may be either annual or event specific.

2. Registration forms. For each minor participating in faith formation programs, the church shall have on file a signed registration form.

3. Parent Guidelines. It is strongly encouraged that parents who are attending worship or church events know where their children are, who they are with, and what they are doing at all times. Minors are not allowed in the building or on the grounds unsupervised. If a minor is dropped off for participation in a church activity, a permission form must be signed. Parents shall pick up their children promptly. 2 adults must remain until the last minor is picked up.

4. Two-adult rule. Whenever possible, children shall be under the care and supervision of two adults. An exception would exist when the room(s) set aside for child/youth activities have a door with a window in it or a half door. In any case, each room should provide constant visual access and frequent observation by a primary volunteer or appropriate designee. The recommended adult to child ratios are:

<u>Age Group</u>	<u>Adult/Child Ratio*</u>
Infants and toddlers	4 per adult
Children up to 11 years old	9 per adult
Children over 12	10 per adult

Other child care rules:

All nursery users must ensure two staff persons or volunteers are present in the licensed space of the child care facility when:

- (a) Three or more children under two years of age are in care;
- (b) Seven or more children are in care and at least one child in care is under two years of age; or
- (c) More than ten children are in care.

All nursery users must ensure that only an approved volunteer and/or a primary staff person, eighteen years of age or older, has sole responsibility for the child in care.

*Based on Washington State Law for in-home child care providers.

5. Five Year Separation Rule. When utilizing high school and young adults in Christian Education classes, youth programs and off-site activities there shall be at least a five year separation between these young adults and the minors in the group.

6. Regarding Bathroom Supervision of Children. Normally teachers, advisors, or aides who accompany a child to the bathroom, should remain outside the bathroom while the child is inside. If a child needs assistance buttoning, buckling, cleaning up, wiping, etc., two adults need to be present, one of whom may be a high school aide. If, for any reason, a teacher or aide is left alone in a classroom, another teacher should be so informed. Diapering of infants and toddlers may be done in the classroom if two adults are present. If anything unusual occurred during this assistance, a note describing the help given and persons present should be written and handed to the department supervisor at the close of educational program day.

7. Discipline. The purpose of discipline with children and youth is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of religious responsibility, respect and cooperation. No child shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any form of physical punishment. Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insult or shouting. Teachers, advisors and aides and others helping in the classroom are encouraged to listen to the child, communicate expectations of appropriate behavior, or give alternate choices. If a child is disruptive, a teacher or aide from the class or a neighboring class may be sent to locate the Director of Christian Education. If the DCE is not readily available, a parent should be contacted and brought to the room.

8. Overnight Rule. Any and all adult chaperones supervising overnight stays at our facilities or on congregational sponsored trips shall have been cleared to do so by the Director of Christian Education or other designated official. At least one adult male will dorm with boys and one adult female with girls; and should these adults be spouses or domestic partners, or otherwise in a relationship, a third adult advisor is to be present if possible. Further, a signed written consent form is required, which lists the names of the advisors to be present. Last minute substitute or additional advisors are permissible as long as parental permission of child/youth participants is secured (either signed or witnessed phone contact).

9. Youth Group Activities. Physical contact such as wrestling, horseplay, sardines or other high contact games are not appropriate recreational activity. No adult leader, staff or volunteer, should initiate or encourage physical or intimate contact with children or youth. Setting boundaries is the responsibility of the adults. The Youth Group is a group ministry. All participants are expected to remain with the group throughout the times listed in congregation publications. No pairing or otherwise separating off from the group to other parts of the building or grounds is permitted.

10. Bullying. No bullying of any kind will be tolerated, and this includes the use of the Internet, electronic communication devices and cyber-bullying.

11. Leaving and Locking. At least two adults, including the staff person locking the door, will remain until the last child is picked up. We avoid situations where one adult and one youth or child are left at the facility's door waiting to be picked up by parents at the end of an evening activity. Parents are expected to respect concluding times.

12. Key Assignment. When a key to the areas frequented by children/youth is assigned to staff or a volunteer, an appropriate request form shall be filled out. To be issued keys a background check is required. It is understood that said key will not be loaned out to anyone else, nor will a duplicate key be made. The assigned person shall take full responsibility for the security of the key(s) and will return it/them when he/she no longer has the responsibility that required the use of said key.

13. Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol. The use of any drugs, tobacco or alcoholic products on or in congregation facilities or at congregation sponsored youth events is not permitted. If a volunteer is impaired by prescription or OTC medicines, he/she should find a replacement.

14. Transportation. Staff, adult leaders, or teachers cannot transport minors between the congregation facility and home, except with expressed permission of the minor's parents. Transportation for field trips, to activities, or events is by groups and requires a consent form.

15. Visitors On-site. Visitors are welcomed and shall be accompanied on their visit to the areas frequented by youth and children by a member or staff person.

16. Reporting Responsibilities. Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker and a child or youth shall be promptly reported to the Director of Christian Education or member of the Advocacy Panel.

17. If You Suspect a Violation of the Code. If a suspected case of abuse has either been reported to you or is suspected by you to have occurred at a congregational-related function or program, immediately contact the Director of Christian Education and the pastor. In the case where this person cannot be contacted, call the judicatory head of your conference. If the alleged abuser is the Director of Christian Education, report the allegation to the pastor and the judicatory head of the conference.

If you are unsure whether or not your suspected case falls under this definition in Section II, it is strongly recommended that you err to the side of caution and report your suspicion immediately.

V. RESPONSE PLAN

All reporting procedures are mandatory and governed by the bylaws of Kirkland Congregational Church.

A. What to do when a complaint is received or abuse suspected:

All staff, teachers, aides, and volunteers of Kirkland Congregational Church shall follow the following reporting procedures in order to promote accountability among all members of the church.

1. Report immediately any and all incidents involving questionable or inappropriate behavior related to possible sexual misconduct or sexual, physical, or verbal abuse to the Pastor and Director of Christian Education.

Washington State law requires reporting of suspected abuse or neglect of children within 48 hours upon learning of the alleged incident.

2. Document in writing. The incident shall be documented in writing by the staff member who receives the report. The report shall contain the date, time, persons involved, and full explanation of the incident. See attached appendix. Such documents will be kept in the church office.

3. Meeting of Pastor and Director of Christian Education. The pastor and the Director of Christian Education shall meet to discuss and implement an appropriate response.

4. Training. All staff, teachers, aides, and volunteers shall be informed and trained in this reporting responsibility.

B. Response:

The staff of Kirkland Congregational Church shall treat every allegation of sexual abuse, misconduct and inappropriate behavior very seriously and shall thoroughly investigate every allegation in a prompt, professional and confidential manner.

1. Notify parents/guardians. If an alleged incident involves a minor, the parent or guardian shall be notified immediately.

2. Notify legal Counsel. The Pastor shall notify and discuss all allegations with counsel to the church to ensure that all legal requirements are met in the response process. In the event that the accused is the Pastor, the Moderator in consultation with the Coordinating Council shall follow this course of action on behalf of the church.

3. Notify insurance carrier. The Pastor and/or the Church Moderator shall notify Kirkland Congregational Church's insurance carrier.

4. Determine level of Response. When questionable or inappropriate behavior related to possible sexual abuse or inappropriate behavior is observed and reported, the Pastor and Director of Christian Education shall determine the level of response:

- Document and closely monitor the accused.
- Discussion with the accused to ensure he/she understands and respects appropriate limits of behavior;
- Discussion with the accused and immediate removal from the position and place on leave pending completion of the investigation.
- Overall evaluation of the incident, to include interviews with the alleged victim and accused and counseling referrals if necessary. If the nature of the incident

does not require legal intervention and all parties agree that counseling will suffice, such a recommendation may be made and reviewed by counsel to church for legal sufficiency.

- A formal report may be filed at which time professional intervention shall be requested through the Department of Social and Human Services. In addition, the accused shall be removed from his/her position pending the completion of an investigation.

5. Protect the victim. Every effort shall be made to comfort and protect the victim of the alleged abuse to ensure that the victim's needs are being met.

6. Maintain respect. The accused shall be treated with respect and dignity during the investigation process.

7. Form a response team. The ministers of the church need to be free to provide pastoral care to all parties involved. Therefore, a response team consisting of 3-5 church leaders shall be formed which may or may not include the ministers. A single spokesperson shall be designated to speak to the media on behalf of the church.

The response team shall advise the Pastor and Moderator of the receipt of all complaints and shall keep them apprised of ongoing steps and actions taken. If either the Pastor or Moderator is the subject of the complaint, this notice requirement shall not apply to that person.

C. Response Team Procedures

1. Appoint from within the group, teams of two people, one male and one female, to conduct interviews with victims, accused and any witnesses.

2. The complete team will gather to hear results of interviews and ask questions of clarification.

3. The team will decide if more information is needed to define a response.

4. The team will define a response.

5. The team will inform all parties of the response plan, including the Pastor(s) and the Moderator, who will review the action taken.

6. The response team shall gather statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged sexual exploitation or harassment and from others who may have pertinent information, such as qualified professional consultants.

7. The response team shall make determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. These may include:

a. finding that sexual exploitation or harassment has occurred, and that the appropriate body of the church is called upon to take action accordingly; such action may include one or more of the following:

- 1) a formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior
- 2) recommending or requiring psychological or psychiatric assessment, counseling and/or treatment
- 3) probationary standing with the terms of the probation clearly defined
- 4) dismissal from employment or volunteer position

b. finding that sexual exploitation or harassment did not occur. In this case the church will

- 1) provide written exoneration to the accused on request
- 2) recommend or require psychological or psychiatric assessment, counseling and/or treatment for both parties

8. The response team may seek the advice of legal counsel or others to advise it in performing its functions.

9. A confidential written record of the response team's proceedings in such cases shall be maintained on file in the church office.

10. If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter, he or she has the right to appeal to the Moderator (or to the Vice Moderator, if the Moderator is the subject of the complaint), who shall refer the matter to the Board of Directors. This appeal is limited solely to whether or not the correct procedures were followed. The matter will not be reconsidered on the merits, and the decision of the Board will be the final resolution of the matter.

If the Board of Directors finds that procedures were not followed, it will refer the matter to a new response team to process the complaint.

D. Further Action

1. The Pastor(s) of the church will decide on a case-by-case basis if the counsel of the Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ is needed and will make the appropriate phone call.

2. Notification to the Board of Directors and the congregation will be handled on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Moderator and the Pastor(s).

E. Suspected Child Abuse

Washington State law requires reporting of suspected abuse or neglect of a child or vulnerable adult. Apart from mandatory reporting requirements (see #1 above), the church will make a report to appropriate authorities, including but not limited to the Department of Social and Human Services, if at any time the church has reasonable cause to believe that a child or vulnerable adult may be abused or neglected.

VI. RECRUITING CHURCH WORKERS: SELECTION, SCREENING AND TRAINING PROCESS

A. Documentation. All people in Kirkland Congregational Church who work with minors shall complete an application form and all other necessary forms. See Section VII of this document, "Forms." These forms shall be kept in a confidential file in the church office.

B. Training. In addition, all primary and secondary volunteers will complete a training course; this course may be provided by the Christian Education Committee of KCCUCC, or may be an on-line course through the United Church of Christ and its affiliate organizations.

C. Eligibility. Kirkland Congregational Church welcomes members who have been regular attendees for six months and associate members who have been regular attendees for a year or more to become involved with the church school and youth ministry programs at various levels of commitment. The Director of Christian Education shall be primarily responsible for screening applicants for volunteer and staff positions with children and youth. It is expected that all employees or volunteers who work with minors will complete and submit a disclosure form.

All screening forms will be reviewed by the Director of Christian Education in consultation with the pastor(s). Prior to serving, each volunteer or staff member shall meet with the Director of Christian Education in order to review the statements on the screening forms and policy and guidelines regarding safe and nurturing church environment. All are required to participate in a training program.

In order to ensure safety for all persons involved, the following guidelines will be followed when inviting individuals to service in ministries with minors:

1. An individual with an undeclared criminal history shall not be considered.

2. An individual with a felony conviction involving child abuse shall not be considered.
3. An individual who has any criminal history that may impair or disable his/her ability to effectively perform the functions of the ministry position, including any history which involves the abuse or neglect of a minor shall not be considered.
4. The Director of Christian Education and the Pastor(s) reserve the right to guide individuals to another area of ministry should they feel they are not suited for working with children or youth.

D. Supervision. It shall be the responsibility of the Pastor(s) and the Director of Christian Education to supervise all staff and volunteers including the youth advisors who have contact with minors involved in Christian Education programs of Kirkland Congregational Church.

Supervisors will ensure that all staff and volunteers have received the training to perform their ministries with competence and ensure that all church policies are being administered adequately, according to these Safe Church Guidelines. If any minor is to participate in a chaperoned or supervised church activity away from the church, a signed parental consent form, which includes contact information, and a medical form disclosing all medications and dosages to be taken while on the trip, must be submitted prior to such activity. All such emergency forms will be carried by an adult volunteer on all youth trips.

Any adult who will supervise overnight stays of children or youth in the church must complete the primary screening procedure outlined above to participate in the overnight activity. In addition, these forms must be reviewed and a record check completed prior to participation in the overnight event.

VII. FORMS

For Families:

- A. Registration Form
- B. Youth Event Permission and Medical Treatment Release Form
- C. Emergency Medical Consent Form

For Volunteers:

- D. Volunteer Application Form
- E. Disclosure and Background Check Authorization
- F. Reference Check Form
- G. Washington State Patrol Background Check
- H. Statement of Current Vehicle Insurance and Driver Qualification
- I. Kirkland Congregational Church Vehicle Use Policy
- J. Key Issuance Form
- K. Covenant Statement for Commissioning Faith Formation Volunteers

Incident forms:

- L. Incident Report Form
- M. Response Team Report and Action Form
- N. Accident Report Form