

Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ Abuse Prevention and Safe Church Policy

As recommended by the United Church of Christ (UCC) National Setting polity and practice for the ***Abuse Prevention and Safe Church Policy***, Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ (Peoples Church) adopts the policy as follows. As a community of Christian faith, Peoples Church 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 Peoples Church should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, and harassment, and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention of the church to take action in an attempt to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

The United Church of Christ National Setting sets forth additional Requirements for Child and Youth Ministry. Peoples Church is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love through participation in a variety of children and youth activities. The ***Abuse Prevention and Safe Church Policy***, as adopted and implemented by Peoples Church complies with applicable Federal and District of Columbia law.

All laws are subject to change periodically by action of state legislature, Congress, and state and federal courts. Therefore, the Personnel Committee of Peoples Church, in collaboration with the Senior Minister and Church Council will review the ***Abuse Prevention and Safe Church Policy*** annually to determine its compliance with existing Federal and District of Columbia law.

In order to comply with the ***Abuse Prevention and Safe Church Policy***, Peoples Church adheres to the following procedures in addition to the general requirements for ministry to the Church.

We expect that those who volunteer to work with minors will have been members of Peoples Church for at least six months or, if not members, have been regularly and frequently associated with Peoples Church for at least a year.

All Employees and Volunteers, who work with children and youth regularly, will complete and submit a disclosure document which is the ***Authorized Children and Youth Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form*** provided by Peoples Church in compliance with the UCC National Setting .

Before beginning their duties, all prospective Employees and Volunteers, who regularly work with children and youth will undergo a background check, including but not necessarily limited to inquiries of references and a criminal history verification by a third-party vendor (Employment Background Investigations, Inc.).

All Volunteers and Employees, who work with children and youth regularly, will receive an orientation regarding the ***Abuse Prevention and Safe Church Policy*** and procedures prior to beginning their duties.

Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ
Abuse Prevention and Safe Church Policy

Supervision: It is the policy of Peoples Church to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for children and youth activities. In situations where participants are not readily visible to each other, there will be no fewer than two unrelated adults present with children. Youth over the age of **16** may assist an unrelated adult in supervising children and youth activities; however, such assistance does not alter the requirement that at least two unrelated adults be present.

Parental/Guardian Consent: Written consent of one Parent or Guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the Church property and any overnight activities, which includes both local and non-local events. Prior to events, Parents or Guardians will be informed of sleeping arrangements for all overnight activities.

Virtual/Online Meetings: All virtual or online meetings involving children and youth are subject to the same requirements as in person activities, such that no fewer than two unrelated adults will be online with children. Consent of a Parent or Guardian will be required for participation. Additionally, Parents or Guardians will be provided with attendance credentials and invited to attend if they choose. Youth and adult attendees, at a virtual event, shall conduct themselves in a manner befitting a church event; and be attentive to their virtual backgrounds and what is visible to others. Persons behaving inappropriately will immediately be excluded from the meeting.

Communications with Child or Youth: No unrelated adult may communicate with any child or youth one-on-one via email, social media, text or phone call without the verbal and/or written consent of a Parent or Guardian. If the child or youth initiates the communication, the unrelated adult must immediately add the Parent or Guardian to the communication.

In the instance that the child or youth initiates the communication with an unrelated adult, the Parent or Guardian is required to reinforce adherence to the ***Abuse Prevention and Safe Church Policy*** with the child or youth to promote safe communication. Parents or Guardians should be copied on all electronic communications. Parents or Guardians should be members of any social media group maintained on behalf of Peoples Church of which children are members.

**Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ
Abuse Prevention and Safe Church Policy**

Definitions

Minister: a person authorized by the church to carry out its ministry. Ministers include elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, and volunteers, as well as Authorized Ministers.

Authorized Minister: a person who holds ordained ministerial standing, lay ministerial standing, or has been commissioned or licensed by an Association of the United Church of Christ or region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). An Authorized Minister is one type of Minister within the meaning of this policy.

Harassment: verbal or physical conduct that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual because of their race, color, gender, gender identity and expression, national origin, ethnicity, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, genetic information or that of relatives, friends or employees, and that

- constitutes discrimination in the terms, conditions, and privileges of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity; or
- has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's job performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

Harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to the following:

- epithets, slurs, negative stereotyping or threatening, intimidating or hostile acts, that relate to race, color, gender, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, age, marital status, sexual orientation, disability, genetic information; and
- written or graphic material that denigrates or shows hostility or aversion toward an individual or group because of race, color, gender, gender identity, national origin, ethnicity, age, marital status, sexual orientation or disability and that is placed in emails, text messages or other electronic communications, on walls, bulletin boards or elsewhere on the church's premises or circulated in the church.

Ministerial Relationship: the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.

Sexual Exploitation: sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a Minister engaged in a ministerial relationship with another takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served by causing or allowing that person to engage in sexual behavior with the Minister.

**Peoples Congregational United Church of Christ
Abuse Prevention and Safe Church Policy**

Sexual Harassment: repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to that person's wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person 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, e-mails, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions;
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- 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. 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.

(United Church of Christ National Setting)

Adopted by the Peoples UCC Church Council June 2, 2021