

FIRST UNITED  
CHURCH OF CHRIST, INC.

SAFE CHURCH POLICY MANUAL

200 NORTH 46<sup>th</sup> AVENUE  
HOLLYWOOD, FL 33021  
954-983-2603

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

A) First United Church of Christ, Inc., in this document referred to as First UCC, is a community of faith committed to following Jesus Christ and communicating God's love by encouraging faith through respect and service. As such, there is commitment to maintaining a safe place in which members, employees, officers, volunteers, and friends of this church can worship, fellowship and work free of all forms of discrimination, abuse, harassment, and exploitation.

B) Contents of the First UCC Safe Church Policy manual will be shared annually with the congregation at a congregational meeting. Copies of the manual will be available in the church office, as well as, given to volunteers, and outside groups/organizations using this church's facilities.

C) The contents of this Safe Church Policy manual and subsequent revisions require approval by the Church Council and congregation.

## **II. FIRST UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, INC. MISSION STATEMENT**

First UCC is a self – governing congregation of seekers guided by the three principles of the United Church of Christ: a) a church of extravagant welcome and hospitality; b) witnesses to justice as we have concern for our neighbors; and c) priesthood of all believers, every person has the right to discover who God is calling them to be. We are not a one size fits all faith. You come to God your own way and on your own terms. Christ is the head of the Church. Through our relationship with God, we know He is still speaking.

We strive to provide a place for prayerful worship and fellowship within a respectful and welcoming environment; and to meet the spiritual needs of our congregation and community, using Christian ideals and values.

Those who self-identify as Christians and those who are seeking a path are equally valued.

### **III. DEFINITIONS**

The following terms are used with specific meaning in the First UCC Safe Church Policy Manual:

#### **Abuse**

- Interactions in which one person behaves in a cruel, violent, demeaning, or invasive manner toward another person as defined by the American Psychological Association.

#### **Adult**

- A person 18 or older, according to State of Florida law.

#### **Church Officers**

- Officers are Pastor, Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary. Moderator, Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary are active members of this church and are elected by the congregation, as stated in First UCC's Constitution and Bylaws.

#### **Discrimination**

- The behavioral manifestation of prejudice that results in negative, hostile, and injurious treatment of the members of rejected groups, as defined by the American Psychological Association.

#### **Employee**

- Individuals providing services to this church for monetary compensation. According to the National Ministries of the United Church of Christ (NMUCC) Employee Handbook this includes pastors, office staff and independent contractors.

## **Exploitation**

- To take unfair advantage of an individual's vulnerability for one's own benefit. Unfair advantage can be - age, financial, sexual, and or emotional.

## **Friend**

- Frequent attendees who are not on the membership roll.

## **Harassment**

- Engaging "in a course of conduct directed at a specific person that causes substantial emotional distress in such person and serves no legitimate purpose", according to State of Florida law. Harassment can be sexual and nonsexual. It included, but not limited to, in person, any form of social media, emails and texts.

## **Member**

- A person who is included on the official membership roll of this church. A member can be a regular member or associate member, as defined by the First UCC Constitution and Bylaws.

## **Minor**

- A person under the age of 18, according to State of Florida law.

## **Pastor/Minister**

- An ordained minister authorized by an Association of the United Church of Christ to preach and teach the gospel, to administer the sacraments and rites of the church, and to exercise pastoral care and leadership.

## **Volunteer**

- An adult who freely offers to take part in the work of this church without monetary compensation.

#### **IV. NATIONAL MINISTRIES OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST (NMUCC)**

A) First UCC employee policies and procedures are governed by the NMUCC Employee Handbook. A copy of the Handbook may be obtained from the Church office or at

<https://www.ucc.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/NMUCC-Policies-1.pdf>

B) First UCC's employee and safe conduct policies and procedures are stated in the NMUCC Employee Handbook.

C) The Handbook can *only* be revised by NMUCC.

D) Stipulated in the NMUCC Employee Handbook are the nature and expectations of a safe church.

E) Following are excerpts from the NMUCC Employee Handbook that generally apply for First UCC as a safe church:

1) As a community of Christian faith [First UCC] is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which employees, volunteers and persons served by [First UCC] can [exist] together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. All persons associated with [First UCC are made] aware that [this] church is strongly opposed to Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by [First UCC]. It is the intention of [First UCC] to take action to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy [according to the State of Florida law]. (NMUCC Employee Handbook, 2.3. Safe Conduct Policy Concerning Abuse Prevention, Section 2.3.1 Policy Prohibiting Abuse, Exploitation, and Harassment, August 2022, pp. 7-8.)

2) [First UCC] maintains a policy of ensuring that no [minor or adult] will be subjected to ... harassment, [discrimination, abuse, and

exploitation]. Harassment may take the form of sexual harassment and nonsexual harassment. (NMUCC Employee Handbook, 2.2. Workplace Prevention, August 2022, p. 4.)

3) [First UCC] will neither condone nor tolerate acts of ... harassment or bullying, [discrimination, exploitation and intimidation] under any circumstances. (NMUCC Employee Handbook, 2.2. Workplace Harassment, 2.2.4. Duty to Report and Consequences, August 2022, p. 7.)

4) [First UCC] ensures that all ... feel comfortable in bringing forward any complaints or concerns, [First UCC] has adopted a no retaliation policy. This means that [First UCC] will not tolerate any retaliation toward or against any [person] who reports possible violations of the [First UCC Safe Church Policy Manual] or any potential violation of the law. (NMUCC Employee Handbook, 2.2. Workplace Harassment, 2.2.5. Retaliation is Prohibited, August 2022, p. 7.)

In addition to NMUCC's policies for a safe church, First UCC has specific policies that reflects this church's culture and environment as it fulfills its mission.

## **V. PROTECTION OF MINORS**

A) First UCC affirms the protection of all minors.

B) The presence of minors at First UCC is infrequent. Thus, there are no programs for minors.

C) Minors occasionally attend First UCC's public programs, accompanied by an adult, e.g., a parent or a guardian. Minors are to be supervised by the accompanying adult at all times while on First UCC's property.

D) Other contact with minors is done at the request of an accompanying adult whereby the accompanying adult is in the room with the minor and the adult of this church.

E) If one-on-one or small group interaction is requested by the accompanying adult(s) and minor(s), where the accompanying adult(s) is

not in the room, it must be agreed upon by the accompanying adult(s), minor(s) and the adult of this church who will participate in the interaction. In this instance, one of two procedures is used:

- 1) the interaction occurs in a room on the church property with the door of the room open and the accompanying adult(s) in proximity, or
- 2) the interaction occurs in a public place in full view of others.

F) Should any member, volunteer, or friend of First UCC become aware of any form of discrimination, abuse, harassment, and exploitation of a minor on the church property, he or she must immediately report it to the Pastor who will take appropriate actions, which can include immediately implementing reporting procedures as outlined in State of Florida law.

G) Should the Pastor be accused of any form of discrimination, abuse, harassment, and exploitation of a minor, the accuser is to immediately report it to a church officer, who will take appropriate actions, which can include immediately implementing reporting procedures as outlined in State of Florida law.

## **VI. PROTECTION OF ADULTS**

A) First UCC affirms the protection of all adults.

B) Adults affiliated with First UCC include employees, church members, friends, and volunteers.

C) The contents of the First UCC Safe Church Policy Manual applies to all adults affiliated with this church.

D) Adults are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their actions and words in caring for the emotional, mental, and spiritual needs of others.

E) Every adult has the responsibility to promote an environment that is free of the threat of physical or psychological harm, and all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, and intimidation.

F) Adults are responsible for supporting a nurturing environment and keeping safe the faith and spiritual well-being of all within the church.

G) All adults with long term affiliation with this church are given a copy of the First UCC Safe Church Policy Manual.

H) Should any member, volunteer, or friend of First UCC become aware of any form of discrimination, abuse, harassment, and exploitation of another adult on the church property, he or she must immediately report it to the Pastor who will take appropriate actions, which can include immediately implementing reporting procedures as outlined in State of Florida law.

I) Should the Pastor be accused of any form of discrimination, abuse, harassment, and exploitation by another adult, the accuser is to immediately report it to a church officer. The Church Council will form an ad hoc Pastoral Relations Committee. Appropriate actions can include immediately implementing reporting procedures as outlined in State of Florida law and the NMUCC Employee Handbook

J) Should the Pastor be the object of any form of discrimination, abuse, harassment, and exploitation of another adult, the Pastor is to immediately report it to a church officer. The Church Council will form an ad hoc Pastoral Relations Committee. Appropriate actions can include immediately implementing reporting procedures as outlined in the NMUCC Employee Handbook and or State of Florida law.

## **VII. COMMUNITY SERVICE PARTICIPANTS**

As part of First UCC's community outreach this church provides the opportunity for individuals to complete court-mandated community service hours.

A) Community service participants are volunteers who are at First UCC because this church is registered with the Broward County Sheriff's Office (BSO) as a non-profit organization where participants may fulfill their community service hours.

B) The participants have court-mandated community service hours to complete as specified by the BSO.



- C) The individual must be at least 18 years.
- D) The charges for community service participants at First UCC are limited to: a) traffic violations and b) Driving Under the Influence (D.U.I.).
- E) Community service participants fulfill their community service hours by working in the First UCC Thrift Store under the supervision of the Thrift Store Manager on duty, who is a member of First UCC.
- F) Community service participants are under the authority of BSO. BSO's Probation Division conducts intake processing, monitoring and supervision of all misdemeanor offenders placed on community service by the Broward County Court.
- G) Community service participants behaving in a manner that is a deviation from First UCC's Safe Church Policy are immediately reported to BSO and must leave the church property.
- H) The procedures for community service participants at First UCC follows:
- 1) The participants make themselves known to the Pastor, who will inform them of this church's Safe Church Policy.
  - 2) The participant's community service sign-in sheet is an official document. The Thrift Store Manager will log and initial the hours of completion and give a brief description of the work that was done on the participants' community service sign-in sheet that participants bring with them each time they work at the Thrift Store.
  - 3) Upon completion of the specified community service hours the Thrift Store Manager will sign-off and date the participant's community sign-in sheet when the hours are completed at First UCC.

## **VIII. OUTSIDE GROUPS AND ORGANIZATIONS**

- A) All representatives of outside groups and organizations who rent First UCC's facilities on a long-term basis will receive a copy of the First UCC Safe Church Policy Manual and Rental Agreement.
- B) Representatives are to share First UCC Safe Church Policy Manual and Rental Agreement with members of their group(s) and organization(s).

C) Representatives, on behalf of groups and organizations, must agree to comply with the First UCC Safe Church Manual and Rental Agreement, by completing and signing the Use of Facilities by Outside Groups and Organizations Application and Statement of Compliance form and the Rental Agreement form. (See Appendices A and B.)

D) The Use of First United Church of Christ, Inc. Facilities by Outside Groups and Organizations Application and Statement of Compliance form and the Rental Agreement form are reviewed annually. (See Appendices A and B.)

E) Representatives for outside groups /organizations complete a Key Receipt for First United Church of Christ, Inc. form. (See Appendix C.)

F) Appendices A through C are kept together on file in the church office.

G) Outside groups/organizations that have continual rental must provide a Safe Church document. This document is attached to the group's/organization's initial rental agreement.

H) Representatives of groups/organizations renting facilities occasionally will receive a copy of the First UCC Safe Church Manual to share the contents with members.

## **IX. BUILDING AND GROUNDS**

A) It is the responsibility of First UCC members with the knowledge and direction of the Board of Trustees to maintain safe buildings and grounds.

B) Care is taken to secure entrances to all church buildings by limiting the distribution of keys.

1. Each individual with keys to any building at First UCC will complete a Key Receipt form which is kept on file in the church office. (See Appendix C.)

2. Only the Trustees have the authority to distribute keys.

C) Sanctuary, church office, classrooms and fellowship hall are all wheelchair accessible. There are two (2) handicap marked parking spaces.

## **X. PRIVACY**

A) The privacy of members, friends, and volunteers at First UCC is kept confidential during illness and other life circumstances.

B) The Pastor and other persons will only announce or share information with permission of the affected individual.

## **XI. PASTOR TRAINING**

A) The Pastor will participate in required Safe Church training offered by the United Church of Christ, and share information learned with the congregation, when appropriate.

First United Church of Christ Church Council Approval on -10/16/2023

First United Church of Christ Congregation Approval on