

APPENDIX F: Code of Conduct

This Code of Conduct defines individual responsibilities as ministers, leaders, employees or volunteers to meet the expectations of First Congregational Church of Woodstock with respect to behavior or conduct in the service of the Ministries of the church, especially those which serve children and “vulnerable adults”.

General Requirements --

Each person subject to this Code shall:

1. Act as a team member in fulfilling ministry objectives
2. Treat minors and vulnerable adults with respect, and fairly without regard to race, age, gender, sexual orientation or religion
3. Practice those behaviors we regard as necessary and positive as well as to refrain from those behaviors which have been defined as prohibited.

General Prohibitions --

The following behaviors are prohibited at all times:

1. Display affection toward a minor or vulnerable adult in privacy.
2. Use profanity or tell off-color jokes.
3. Discuss their sexual encounters with or around minors or in any way involve minors in their personal problems or issues.
4. Date or become romantically involved with minors.
5. Use or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of minors.
6. Possess sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on Church property.
7. Have secrets with minors.
8. Stare at or comment on bodies of minors.
9. Engage in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication with minors.
10. Work one-on-one with minors in a private setting.
11. Abuse minors or vulnerable adults in anyway including (but not limited to) the following:
 - Physical abuse: hit, spank, shake, slap, unnecessarily restrain
 - Verbal abuse: degrade, threaten, curse
 - Sexual abuse: inappropriately touch, expose oneself, or engage in sexually oriented conversations
 - Mental abuse: shame, humiliate, act cruelly
 - Neglect: withhold food, water, shelter
 - Permit minors to engage in the following: Hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, games of Truth or Dare, ridicule or humiliation or sexual activity
12. Manipulate or exploit a vulnerable adult in any way.

Reporting Obligations --

Each Minister or statutory “mandatory reporter” shall report:

1. Concerns or complaints about other employees and volunteers, other adults, or children to a supervisor. (Appendix E – Leadership & Reporting Roster)
2. Allegations or incidents of “suspected abuse” to the designated law enforcement or child welfare authority. (Appendix E – Leadership & Reporting Roster)

Specific Interaction Standards –

Each minister, employee or volunteer worker of the First Congregational Church of Woodstock, CT shall conduct him/herself in a manner that fosters understanding of SafeConduct™ in the context of serving minors and vulnerable adults. The standards articulated below serve two purposes:

- To protect minors and vulnerable adults from abuse or grooming for abuse elsewhere; and
- To protect/prevent church staff from engaging in patterns of behavior that may be construed as abusive or predatory. While a single infraction of guidelines may not constitute abuse, a pattern of repeated violations will result in disciplinary action up to and including dismissal from ministry.

1. **Approval and Affection** – In providing approval or affection, the following guidelines apply:

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

2. **Interactions** – The manner of speaking and interacting with minors establishes respect. The following guidelines apply:

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

3. Out-of-Program (Off-Site) Contact –

The First Congregational Church of Woodstock, CT strongly recommends that ministers, employees or volunteers do not have outside contact with children from church programs without parental permission. However, if off-site contacts are unavoidable, the following forms of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate:

| <i>Appropriate Outside Contact</i> | <i>Inappropriate Outside Contact</i> |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking groups of children on an outing • Attending sporting activities with groups of children • Attending functions at a child’s home, with parents present | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking one child on an outing without the parents’ consent • Visiting one child in the child’s home, without a parent present • Entertaining one child in the home of a church employee or volunteer • A lone child spending the night with a church employee or volunteer |

In addition, when outside contact is unavoidable, the following steps are to be taken:

- A supervisor shall identify for employee and volunteers what types of outside contact are appropriate and inappropriate (above)
- A supervisor shall assure that the employee or volunteer has the parents’ permission to engage in outside contact with the child. When time permits, parents shall execute a permission form with a waiver of liability (if permitted by state law).

4. 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 the Safe Conduct Administrator. When so permitted, the following guidelines shall apply:

| <i>One-on-One Interaction Guidelines</i> |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When meeting one-on-one with a child, always do so in a public place in full view of others. • Avoid physical affection that can be misinterpreted. Limit affection to pats on the shoulder, high fives, and handshakes. • 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 and volunteers that you are alone with a child and ask them to randomly drop in. (Ask to be supervised.) • Document and immediately report any unusual incidents, including disclosures of abuse or maltreatment, behavior problems and how they were handled, injuries, or any interactions that might be misinterpreted. <p>To the extent any of these guidelines may appear to be in conflict, the spirit of them is that one shall seek to be under the supervision of others while meeting privately with a child.</p> |

5. Social Media – Electronic Communications –

General Social Media Policy -- No Minister, employee, volunteer or member of First Congregational Church of Woodstock shall create or use a media site (web, Facebook, YouTube, or similar) in the name of or purporting to represent the church without the approval of the Church Council. When clergy or staff, acting in their capacity as a representative of the church, lead or coordinate a group activity using social media, each may use only official church sites/channels when they have been made available by the church. These may include web pages, Facebook, e-mail and similar means.

Communication with Minors – (Restricted Communication) – Due to the attendant risk of electronic communications with minors, especially the inability to supervise, the following standards shall apply:

- Any communications with children should be open and transparent and should include the child's parents or guardians. E-mail communications shall be limited to logistical matters, e.g., meeting dates, times and places.
- Employees and volunteers with profiles on social networking sites may not request to be friends with children.
- When in doubt, copy the program director, Pastor, or Safe Conduct Administrator on your reply message.

Social Media Communications – (Official Church Sites)

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, the First Congregational Church of Woodstock, CT will authorize certain ministers to manage the church's official website and organization Facebook page.

Ministers who shall create public pages on behalf of church programs are responsible to monitor communications and to assure that employees and volunteers do not have private (and possibly inappropriate) conversations with children.

Ministers having Facebook privileges on behalf of the church, shall treat unsolicited communication or "friending" from children under age 13 as an unauthorized text message. No reply may be given except to indicate by a posting that accepting a "friend" invitation by under-age children is a violation of the Code of Conduct.

If a child reveals abuse or inappropriate interactions with an adult, the minister must report this information in the manner of any "suspected abuse".

When using Facebook to communicate with children, the minister shall inform parents/guardians of each child that the latter is communicating with the minister via Facebook, providing the parent/guardian the opportunity to disapprove or to participate in a Group.

Social Networking Code of Conduct

Each minister who leads using the resources of social media shall apply this Social Networking Code of Conduct:

- Prohibit comments that are, or could be construed by any observer, to be harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating.

- Prohibit sexually oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.
- Discourage private messages between employees and volunteers and children.
- Prohibit posting inappropriate pictures (for example, sexually suggestive, exploitive or voyeuristic) or inappropriate comments on pictures.
- Provide children and their parents with this Social Networking Code of Conduct.
- Encourage parents to play a role in monitoring their children's interactions with employees and volunteers.
- Remind children how to interact appropriately through social networking sites.
- Deny participation by individuals who repeatedly violate the Code of Conduct.

At the institution of the use of social media, the minister shall present this Social Networking Code of Conduct to children (or other client group) and parents/guardians.

If offered a position as Authorized Minister, employee or volunteer, I affirm that application disclosures are complete and truthful. I agree to comply with the policies and rules contained in this SafeConduct™ policy, to include training, monitoring, reporting and ministry administrative procedures. I agree to meet standards for one-on-one relationships with children/clients as defined above. If requested to do so, I will cooperate with any investigation of a possible violation of church policies and rules by providing complete and truthful information in an oral and/or written statements.

Signature

Date

Name