

ST. JOHN'S UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH

Safe Congregation Policies

January 28, 2026

Safe Congregation Policies and Procedures

**Adopted April 20, 2005. Amended in 2007, 2008,
June 21, 2017, March 2019, January 2026**

These policies and procedures apply to all St. John's Unitarian Universalist programs, services, activities and events. These include all Religious Education programs, youth/adult activities, events for which child care is provided, field trips and conferences. The policies and procedures apply to the minister, the congregation, the staff, and all volunteers. See Personnel Policy.

The Safe Congregation Committee is led by a chair or two co-chairs. The Committee covers all aspects of safety of the congregation including, safety of children and other vulnerable people, risks from potentially dangerous members, friends, and outsiders, building safety, building security, health and fire risk.

ST. JOHN'S MISSION STATEMENT

St. John's is committed to creating a safe and caring community, working for peace and social justice, and celebrating beliefs that respect freedom of thought.

Revisions History

7/9/2018	Carol Fencl: Safe Congregation complete, and moved into General Board policies from Religious Development
7/1/2019	Monica Pellman: Updated Safe Congregation Policy as per revisions of March 9, 2019
1/13/2021	Nancy Henry: Updated Safe Congregation Policies. Removed reference to Council Directors and changed Religious Education to Religious Life. Safe Congregation Policy, Policy on Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment, and Policy on Dangerous, Disruptive, and Offensive Behavior was moved from General Board Policies into a separate document.
4/19/2023	Nancy Henry: Updated Management of Dangerous, Disruptive, Offensive Behavior
6/7/2023	Nancy Henry: Security & Health Safety Team policies merged into Safe Congregation. Safe Congregation has responsibility for In Case of Emergency forms.
1/28/2026	Joetta Prost: Updates to several policies (current #14-18), as well as general editing updates (removing gendered language, changes to role titles, incorporating UUA values, minor clarifications, etc.)

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Policies for the Safety of Children and Youth

1.0 Definitions

Child A person under the age of 18 years.

Child Abuse The injury of a child under the age of 18 years by an adult or older child that might not be intentional, but is not accidental, which results in any of the following: physical or substantial risk of physical injury, or sexual contact or exploitation; serious emotional distress; or any act that constitutes child abuse under the laws of the state of Ohio.

Child Care Providers Persons responsible for temporary care of children at St. John's, whether they are paid or unpaid, while the children's parents or guardians are participating in events such as choir practice, church dinners and fundraisers, social events, adult religious life programs, worship service, church meeting, etc.

Child Sexual Abuse Child sexual abuse is any interaction between a child and an adult (or another child) in which the child is used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or an observer. Sexual abuse can include both touching and non-touching behaviors. Non-touching behaviors can include voyeurism (trying to look at a child's naked body), exhibitionism, or exposing the child to pornography. Children of all ages, races, ethnicities, and economic backgrounds may experience sexual abuse. Child sexual abuse affects both girls and boys in all kinds of neighborhoods and communities. (National Child Traumatic Stress Network @nctsn.org)

DRE Director of Religious Education; may also be known as the **PDCY** - Program Director for Children and Youth

Religious Education (RE) Workers Persons who are engaged in religious education programs with St. John's children and youth, whether they are paid or unpaid, permanently assigned or occasional.

Friend A person who is active in church activities but who has not signed the membership book.

Group Those children or youth under the age of 18 who have been assigned to an organized program, classroom, room or activity.

Leadership Those members who are in positions of responsibility and have authority, either elected or appointed by the Board of Trustees, the Called Minister or the Congregation or assumed by the individual and acknowledged by other leaders.

Member A person who has signed the membership book.

Minister A member of the clergy who is serving St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church.

Sexual Abuse Any sexual contact or sexual exploitation between an adult and a child under the age of 18 years.

Sexual Misconduct Any instance of: undesired or inappropriate sexually orientated humor, language, questions, or comments; undesired or inappropriate physical contact; inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance; or intimidating or hostile sexually oriented comments. Instances of sexual misconduct may be limited to a one-time occurrence.

Sexual Harassment Occurs when one person subjects another to repeated, ongoing, and unwanted incidents of sexual misconduct.

Supervision The reasonable exercise of thoughtful action and responsibility by adults working with an assigned group, realizing that what constitutes appropriate supervision will vary with the ages of those in the group and the context of the activity.

Unofficial Contact Any contact between an adult and a minor outside of St. John's facilities or programming.

Youth Children enrolled in the 7th to 12th grade.

2.0 Introduction

- a. As Unitarian Universalists, we declare that every person is inherently worthy and has the right to flourish with dignity, love, and compassion. We promote the values of Justice, Equity, Transformation, Pluralism, Interdependence and Generosity, with Love at the center. We recognize the challenges inherent in supporting right relations among members, friends, visitors, and staff who make up the community of St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church. It is our responsibility as a community to find the appropriate balance between safety and inclusiveness, always centering the needs of children, youth and other vulnerable individuals.
- b. There are times when sustaining an inclusive religious community will require that support and compassion align with civil law or congregational polity. Ignoring the requirements of compliance can put the welfare of the congregation at risk. Therefore, concern for the safety and well-being of the congregation as a whole must take priority over privileges of full membership or inclusion for any individual. Current state laws require specific social controls and oversight of persons convicted of sexual offenses against children and adults. This document includes current policy and the requirement for policy review so that an effective response can be made to changes in law.

- c. We have a responsibility to see that our congregation is sexually healthy and free of sexual harassment, abuse, and exploitation for all children, youth and adults. Special consideration must be made for the unique needs and challenges faced by children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
- d. We desire to provide a congregational home to all who seek one, while acknowledging that in the case of an individual with a history of sex offenses, there must be limitations to congregational involvement. Our commitment to inclusion means that only in rare cases might a person be denied access to ministry and fellowship. We must balance compassion and support against further harm. A person with a history of sex offense needs special consideration to assure that involvement in the congregation does not pose a risk to others, and to protect them against false allegations and suspicions.
- e. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of the entire congregation, not just those in leadership or teaching positions, to create and sustain a supportive community that promotes safety and security, respect and right relations for all.

3.0 *The number not in use at this time.*

4.0 Safe Congregations Committee and Response Team

St. John's has established a standing Safe Congregation Committee, which also acts as the Safety Response Team when the immediate need arises for consideration of a particular situation. The Safe Congregation Committee and Response Team is committed to the development, review and maintenance of policies and practices that:

- a. Protect and promote the emotional and physical safety of the congregation
- b. Sustain right relations within the congregation
- c. Honor our Unitarian Universalist Living Tradition

4.1 The Committee will consist of:

- a. At least four members of the congregation appointed by the Board of Trustees and confirmed by the Minister for terms of three years, staggered to ensure continuity so that no more than two members will leave in a given year.
- b. Three ex officio members of the church: the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, and the Board of Trustees Vice President, who will also serve as the liaison between the Board and the Committee.
- c. The committee should reflect the gender diversity of the congregation. It is important that parents of young children be represented on the committee.

4.2 Responsibilities of the Committee include:

- a. Acting as a resource for the community of St. John's;
- b. Ensuring that education is regularly undertaken by Leadership regarding these Policies and Procedures;

- c. Promoting education for the whole community regarding a reasonable expectation of safety and security while balancing this with the need of a person with a history of sex offense for access to compassionate ministry;
- d. Collaborating with other committees of St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church as appropriate to develop and implement comprehensive strategies to implement these policies.

5.0 Reporting Requirements

This section of the policy defines the legal and congregational responsibilities of staff, volunteers and members for investigating and sharing information related to sex offenders.

Mandatory Reporting: Members of several professions as well as volunteers for childcare fall under mandatory reporting guidelines related to knowledge of sex offenders. The guidelines are available here:

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/resources/making-and-screening-reports-child-abuse-and-neglect-ohio/>

Whether or not a member of the congregation or staff is covered by the mandatory reporting guidelines, it is the duty of all members of the congregation to be observant of our community and discuss any concerns that may develop with a member of the Safe Congregation Committee and/or with the Minister (who is then required to share it with the Safe Congregation Committee). In order to provide all members of the congregation with a safe environment and reasonable protection of privacy, any such discussion should take place in confidence with the committee and with every precaution taken to avoid speculation, rumor or gossip.

6.0 Background Checks

6.1 The following people shall undergo background checks:

1. RE teachers
2. RE helpers
3. Coming of age mentors
4. Safe congregation committee members
5. Staff: Minister, Director of Religious Education, Office Administrator, Music Director, Accompanist, Caretaker, and any other paid staff
6. Child care providers
7. Lay pastoral associates
8. Seminary student ministers
9. Board members
10. Those who manage church finances

Background checks are done by Trusted Employees, a subcontractor to Church Mutual. The Safe Congregation Committee Co-Chairs are responsible for designating which type/level of background check is required for:

- Each staff member, including childcare providers, Lay Pastoral Associates, and Seminary Student Ministers
- All lay volunteers, except for those who handle finances
- Volunteers who handle finances

6.2. The Safe Congregation Committee Co-Chairs are responsible for designating who is in charge of Background Check management. serving as the Account Manager. The Secondary Account Managers include the Minister and the Chair of the Personnel Committee, who will also have access to the results. The background check process includes:

1. Institute the background check process.
2. Receive results
3. Institute review process when necessary (when concerns are raised).
4. When a new person is appointed as responsible for background checks, the Safe Congregation Committee assists in training regarding the process..

6.3 Responding to a Problem Check

The committee that decides what to do if there is a concern on background checks shall be composed of the DRE, the Minister, and the Chair or Co-Chairs of Safe Congregation Committee.

7.0 Responding to Congregational Concerns

When a person with a history of sex offense shows interest in joining St. John's UU Church in any capacity, or a current participant is discovered as having such a history, the Safe Congregation Committee will evaluate the situation, in order to make an informed decision about possible inclusion in our community on a case-by-case basis, following the guidelines outlined in UUA Safe Congregations materials, up-to-date requirements by our liability insurance provider, and advice from the Church attorney.

The assessment may include:

1. Checking the criminal record to ascertain the legal situation.
2. Requiring access by the Minister to the parole officer of the offender.
3. Expecting open and honest acknowledgement by the offender of the circumstances of the case.
4. Informing the congregation that this person has a history of sex offense.

The assessment may include, and is not limited to:

1. Contact by the minister with a treatment provider or parole officer.
2. Clinical risk assessment conducted by a qualified therapist with an outcome indicating a low risk factor for recidivism.
3. Offering a Limited Access Agreement, created by the Minister in consultation with the rest of the Safe Congregation Committee and the St. John's UU Church attorney, and approved by the Board. The Limited Access Agreement will condition attendance at St. John's activities by the person with a history of sex offense by:
 - a. Incorporating the principles of transparency and restorative justice by informing the congregation of this history of sex offense.

- b. Agreement to escort by two shadows chosen by the Safe Congregation Committee.
- c. Acknowledgement that participation in activities for Children and Youth is prohibited.

8.0 Managing a Sex Offender in the Congregation

1. A sex offender may be welcome to participate in adult services, adult social and educational activities, and must be willing to enter into an appropriate Limited Access Agreement.
2. We must assure that a convicted sex offender does not have the opportunity at St. John's UU Church to offend. A person with a history of sex offense against children should never be allowed to be alone with children, work with children and youth, or socialize with children at the congregation.
3. No person who has been convicted of, or has an unresolved formal accusation of any sexual misconduct can be permitted to be involved in any religious education or youth group activities.
4. If a person with a history of sex offense is provided a Limited Access Agreement they may be a Friend and but are not eligible to be a Member of St. John's UU Church.
5. A person with a history of sex offense may be excluded from participation in activities associated with St. John's UU Church if this person:
 - a. Violates their Limited Access Agreement
 - b. Cannot Agree to the provisions of the Limited Access Agreement offered by St. John's.

9.0 Screening and Selection of Volunteers and Staff

9.1 Religious Education Workers

The Director of Religious Education (DRE or co-DRE) is responsible for persons who are engaged in RE programs with St. John's children and youth whether they are paid or unpaid volunteers or parents, permanently assigned or occasional. All religious education workers who provide direct care or supervision to children or youth must meet the following criteria:

- **Affiliation Requirements.** All advisors for youth and all volunteer Religious Education teachers must be active participants at St. John's or a Unitarian Universalist church for at least six months prior to taking on any assigned group, committee, activity or event
- **Age Requirements.** Advisors for high school groups must be at least 25 years of age; advisors for junior high groups must be at least 21 years of age; all other volunteer religious life teachers, infant and children supervisors must be at least 18 years of age. Youth under the age of 18 may act as helpers with children with at least one supervisor present.
- **Application Requirements.** All religious education workers must complete the Application Form (see Appendix), must consent to such reference and/or background checks as St. John's, in its discretion, deems necessary, and must

agree to be bound by the Code of Conduct (see Appendix) set forth in these policies and procedures.

- **Training Requirements.** Prior to assigning a new religious education worker to a program, and whenever St. John's employs new staff, the DRE or designee will provide training in the Safe Congregation Policies and Procedures.

9.2. Child Care Providers

By September 1 each year, the Director(s) of Religious Education will be responsible for managing the screening, selection, and orientation of Child Care Providers (both volunteer and paid Child Care Providers) in accord with the following requirements:

- **Age Requirements.** All Child Care helpers must be at least 14 years of age. Youth under the age of 18 should receive appropriate adult supervision.
- **Application Requirements.** All Child Care Providers must complete the Application Form (see Appendix), must consent to such reference and/or background checks as St. John's, in its discretion, deems necessary, and must agree to be bound by the Code of Conduct (see Appendix) set forth in these policies and procedures.
- **Orientation.** The Director of Religious Education or designee will be responsible for assuring that all Child Care Providers prior to being assigned are aware of the Safe Congregation Policy.

10.0 Supervision Requirements

All workers are required to comply with the following requirements to ensure a safe and secure environment for our children and youth:

10.1 General Supervision Requirements

All Religious Education Workers and Child Care Providers are required to comply with the following requirements to ensure a safe and secure environment for our children and youth.

1. Corporal punishment or abusive language may not be used under any circumstances. This includes behavior that constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse, and behavior or language that is threatening or demeaning.
2. When taking children to the restroom, the religious education workers and child-care providers are to enter and assist only when necessary.
3. The responsible adult or worker will remove a child or youth who behaves inappropriately and parents will be notified.
4. For children in the 6th grade and under, who are disruptive, a worker may remove a child from the classroom and the parent will be informed.
5. If any one adult is alone with a group of children, the window coverings and the door to the room must remain open.

10.2 Additional Requirements for Religious Education Workers

The Religious Education Director is responsible for ensuring that RE workers follow the policies below.

1. There will be a minimum of two, preferably unrelated, adults scheduled to supervise each group. The DRE, Minister or adult designated event coordinator may make exception to this rule on a case-by-case basis. Exceptions must be reported to the DRE.
2. If there is only 1 student in any classroom, that student will be reassigned.
3. The DRE and/or a designee will circulate among the RE classroom areas and monitor classroom activities randomly during regular RE classes.
4. If a worker has a church-related, one-on-one meeting with a child or youth, the DRE should be notified immediately of the meeting and its purpose. One-on-one meetings with children and youth are strongly discouraged and must be conducted in a public open space. If a meeting takes place it should be reported to the DRE.
5. A disciplinary meeting with a youth requires two, preferably unrelated, adults. The parents and the DRE must be informed of any such meeting and its contents as soon as possible.

10.3 Child Care Provider Requirements for Special Events

All Child Care Providers must be approved by the DRE as described in 9.2 above. The person responsible for conducting the special event (i.e. event organizer, Adult Faith Formation, Board, etc.) is responsible for providing guidance/direction to the child care provider during the special event.

1. Two, preferably unrelated, people, at least 14 years older, are required in a childcare situation. Any deviation from that requirement must be approved by the DRE and the parents of the child or children.
2. There will be appropriate adult supervision if a childcare provider is under the age of 18.
3. All childcare providers, whether paid or volunteer, will be informed about the general supervision requirements.

10.4 Outings and Transportation Requirements

1. All outings must be pre-approved by the Religious Education Director. Participating children or youth must have a signed permission slip from a parent or guardian.
2. All drivers must be a minimum age of 21, carry a valid license and insurance.
3. Drivers, other than parents of a participating child, are to have two or more children in the car when transporting children/youth to and from activities. Alternatively, two adults may travel with a child.
4. As mandated by law, everyone in the car must wear a seatbelt and all children four years of age and younger or less than 40 pounds must be in a car seat. It is recommended that all children 10 and under should sit in the back seat.

10.5 Coming of Age Program

Special Exception to the Safe Congregation Policy

It is acknowledged that participants in the St. John's "Coming of Age" program have special needs for privacy that differ from the Safe Congregation Policy. On January 16, 2008, the Board of Trustees approved a special Coming of Age Permission Form (see

Appendix) that requires parental approval for mentors/mentees meeting in public spaces.

On June 18, 2008, the Board of Trustees approved adding an Addendum to the Permission to Meet Form that clearly states the reason for the special Permission to Meet Form and why it is needed. The **Addendum** reads as follows: *“The Safe Congregation Policy requires that two, preferably unrelated, adults be present when working with a child/youth during church activities. This Coming of Age Permission Form allows the Mentee and Mentor to meet together without a second adult present in a public space. It allows the youth to explore his/her thoughts with one adult in a safe environment with the approval of the parents.”*

The Coming of Age Permission to Meet Form, with the Addendum included, plus the Mentor Agreement form can be found in the Appendix.

11.0 Conduct for All Adults Working with Children and Youth

Adults who work with children and youth at St. John’s are expected to always have the best interests of the children and youth at heart. Therefore, behavior must both *be* and *appear to be* above reproach. Religious Education Workers and Child Care Providers are expected to nurture the physical, emotional and spiritual growth of the children and youth by fostering an environment of kindness, trust, respect, and fun. Workers are charged to both model and encourage kindness and genuineness among the children and youth, and to discourage unkindness and falseness. In this manner, we intend to create an environment in which children and youth will be able to explore the spiritual and religious nature of their lives, both as individuals and as part of a community.

11.1 Adult Relationships with Children and Youth

Adults have a responsibility to model appropriate relationships between each other as well as refrain from and discourage inappropriate relationships, with any child under age 18, no matter how mature the individual. Adults must assume primary responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries between all participants of all ages and cultivate an atmosphere of health and trust.

11.2 Unofficial Contact with Youth

For the protection of the youth and the adult, any contact between an adult and a minor outside of St. John’s must be with the knowledge and consent of the youth’s parents/guardians.

11.3 Sexualized Behavior

It is never appropriate to engage in any manner of sexualized behavior with, or in the presence of, a child or youth. This refers not only to explicitly sexual behavior, but also to jokes with sexual context or to make “double entendres”. Physical expressions of affection, such as hugs, certainly have their place, but it is best to allow the child or

youth to initiate the contact, and the adult must be sensitive not to allow them to be too frequent or prolonged.

11.4 Tobacco, Drugs and Alcohol & Other Illegal Behavior

Minors are prohibited from using tobacco, non-prescription drugs, or alcohol while engaged in church activities.

11.5 Confidentiality

While you can assure a child that you will respect the information that is shared and use it confidentially, Religious Education Workers and Child Care Providers should never give a child or youth the impression that they will keep secrets. *Confidentiality is not secret keeping*. For the most part a covenant of confidentiality will mean that you do not repeat information told to you in confidence.

It is sometimes difficult to know when to report. Please use the following lens: When the information has or has the *potential* of major consequences – *is* or *may be* of a crisis nature, adults must consult with the minister or the DRE about an appropriate course of action.

For example, you may learn that a child or youth is the victim of abuse, is suicidal, has a serious drug or alcohol problem, etc. It is St. John's policy that this type of information be communicated to St. John's professional staff immediately. Additionally, it is always appropriate to encourage the child or youth to seek help from a parent or other trusted authority.

12.0 Reporting and Response Procedures for Religious Life Workers and Child Care Providers

12.1 Reporting.

Ohio Revised Code Sec. 2151.421 requires that any persons rendering "spiritual treatment through prayer in accordance with the tenets of a well-recognized religion," teacher or other school personnel, and day care provider who *suspects* the abuse or neglect of a child must report these suspicions to Child Protective Services, and any other person who suspects abuse or neglect may do so.

If any adult who is not a mandated reporter suspects abuse or neglect of a child, that adult must immediately report the alleged abuse or neglect to the Minister, the President of the Board or DRE. The person who receives the report of suspected abuse or neglect consults with the Safe Congregation Committee to determine the next actions, including a decision about reporting the situation to Child Protective Services.

When the DRE or the Minister ascertains that a child or youth at a church-related event is in a situation of risk, the responsible person should immediately remove the allegedly abusive adult (or the child) from the situation and take any other steps necessary to protect the minor.

If the reported abuse involves a staff or volunteer at St. John's, the supervisor of that person will immediately relieve that person of any duties involving supervision, care or teaching of children and youth at St. John's until the matter is resolved.

12.2 Documenting.

All persons engaged in the investigation of the allegations will keep a written record of all circumstances. Once the investigation is finalized, these reports will be kept on file with the Minister and passed on to successive ministers.

12.3 Confidentiality.

The Minister or the DRE will inform the President of the Board of Trustees that an abuse situation has been reported. Otherwise, the matter is to remain confidential. Release of information could interfere with successful prosecution, could result in unwarranted damage to the reputation of the accused, or may endanger the child.

12.4 Media Response.

If the media contacts St. John's about an alleged abusive situation involving St. John's, only the Minister or President of the Board of Trustees or their specific designee will speak for St. John's. In general, the following requirements apply for these situations with the public media. Because of the issue of confidentiality, in the best interests of the child, we cannot discuss specific cases in a public context. It is important that we protect the interests of the child and St. John's, particularly if litigation seems possible. The designated spokesperson can discuss what steps we have taken to guard against abusive situations.

13.0 Awareness and Implementation

- The Director of Religious Education will provide announcements about the Safe Congregation Policy and Procedures (Policy) for the order of service and the newsletter twice a year and will make copies available on the web page.
- The Director of Religious Education will provide parents and Religious Education workers a copy of this Policy. Each year at registration, or throughout the year when they enroll, they will be asked to sign a form indicating that they have read and understand the Policy.
- The Policy will be provided and discussed with all Religious Education workers, Child Care Providers, and compensated employees who supervise or care for the children and youth of our community.
- New Religious Education Workers and Child Care Providers must complete an Application Form (see Appendix) and sign the Code of Conduct (see Appendix) before assuming their duties. Forms will be kept on file in the DRE's office.
- An "occasional" volunteer who has worked one time in the church with children or youth will be required to undergo the background check and sign the Code of Conduct (see Appendix) before working a second time. Forms will be kept on file in the DRE's office.

- The DRE will ensure that mandatory training on child abuse awareness and prevention will be conducted annually.
- This policy should be reviewed by the committee and amended as necessary, biannually, by the Board of Trustees.

Policy on Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment

Adopted February 16, 1994 and amended April, 1995; amended June 15, 2005; amended January 28, 2026

14.0 Definitions

Sexual Misconduct Conduct of a sexual nature that, although not so serious or pervasive that it rises to the level of sex discrimination or sexual harassment, is unprofessional and/or inappropriate for the religious life and church environment.

Examples include:

- Repeatedly engaging in sexually oriented conversations, comments or horseplay, including the use of language or the telling of jokes or anecdotes of a sexual nature in the church environment or classroom, even if such conduct is not objected to by those present;
- Gratuitous use of sexually oriented materials not directly related to the subject matter of a class or meeting.
- Failure to observe the appropriate boundaries of the teacher/youth, minister/congregant, minister/employee, church leader/congregant or youth.

Sex Discrimination Conduct directed at a specific individual or a group of identifiable individuals that subjects the individual or group to treatment that adversely affects their employment or education on account of their gender. This might include:

- Exclusion from religious life activities on the basis of one's gender or sexual orientation
- Being subjected to jokes or derogatory comments about one's gender or sexual orientation

Sexual Harassment A form of sex discrimination that involves the imposition of an unwanted condition or requirement on the continued employment or education of the victim. Two forms of sex harassment are recognized:

1. Quid pro quo harassment involves unwelcome sexual advances and/or requests for sexual favors, whether explicit or implicit, that are made as a condition of employment or education. Only persons with the power to confer or withhold an employment or educational benefit can engage in quid pro quo harassment.
2. Hostile environment harassment usually involves a persistent, pervasive, unwelcome, and/or unwanted conduct of a sexual nature that has the purpose or effect of unreasonable interfering with an individual's performance as an employee

or volunteer or which creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive environment. Behaviors that may constitute sexual harassment are:

- Intentional touching
- Explicit or implicit propositions to engage in sexual activity
- Remarks of a sexual nature about a person's clothes or body
- Persistent, unwanted sexual/romantic attention
- Deliberate, repeated humiliation or intimidation based upon the sex of an individual.

15.0 Introduction

St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church of Cincinnati, as a spiritual community, affirms the values of the Unitarian Universalist Association: Justice, Equity, Transformation, Pluralism, Interdependence, and Generosity, with Love at the Center.

In concert with these values, it is incumbent upon the Minister, all paid staff and volunteer adult leaders and the congregation to act with integrity and authenticity to support and enable the spiritual and personal growth of our children, youth and adult congregants. In this privileged role, adult leaders will exercise caution and sound judgment to avoid sexual harassment or any other behavior that could be so construed.

No Minister, adult leader, child care employee, RE worker nor any other person working in a paid or volunteer capacity under the auspices of St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church shall engage in sexual harassment or discrimination.

15.1 Guidelines for Maintaining Appropriate Boundaries

These guidelines apply to Ministers, employees and volunteers.

1. Refer to professional counselors for all matters that you are not qualified to handle.
2. Be careful with physical contact. Some people appreciate hugs; some do not. Any unwanted physical contact could be interpreted as sexual harassment.
3. Counseling should include words of encouragement, support and affirmation—not words of love and affection. Adults working with children, minors and vulnerable adults must establish a relationship of mutual respect and refrain from imposing their own emotional or physical needs in this situation.
4. Church-sponsored retreats, weekends, trips and overnights for minors should always have two unrelated and background-checked adults that reflect the gender mix of the group. There must be no use of alcohol or illegal drugs by any member of the group at these events. See other policy for more details about overnight events.
5. There should be a minimum of two responsible adults in the room when meetings involving minors are held at the church.

6. The Minister will encourage counselees to attend sessions in the Minister's office or online. The Minister must use discretion on a pastoral visit to the home of a person who is alone.

16.0 Policy Provision Unique to Ministers

The Minister is mandated to follow the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA) ethical guidelines with regard to personal, sexual or romantic relationships. <https://uuma.org/guidelines/> From those guidelines: *Recognizing that ministers are called to nourish the health and wholeness of the communities they serve, and recognizing the fiduciary nature of their profession, and as stated in [UUMA] actionable Code of Conduct, ministers will not engage in sexual contact, sexualized behavior, or a sexual relationship with any person they serve as a minister.*

17.0 Reporting and Investigating Violations

17.1 Reporting violations

Anyone who believes that they or anyone else have been the victim of sexual misconduct and/or sexual harassment in violation of this policy shall report the allegation to the Minister, the Safe Congregation Committee, or to any Board member of the church. This includes any incident of harassment or discrimination between congregants or between staff/volunteers and congregants.

Maintaining confidentiality is necessary for the benefit of those who have reported sexual misconduct or sexual harassment, except when the reporting of misconduct or other inappropriate behavior is required by state law. Of special note is that there are specific reporting requirements for suspected abuse of children and youth.

Anyone covered by the personnel policies for staff of St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church shall never knowingly condone or fail to report violations in accordance with state law and this policy.

17.2 Investigating Alleged Violations

- **Responsibility for Investigations**

Allegations of sexual harassment shall be promptly forwarded to the Board President, who will coordinate the investigation unless they are the target of the allegation. In that event, the Board Vice President will coordinate the investigation.

- **Appointment of Ad Hoc Committee**

The Board President shall then appoint an ad hoc committee consisting of the Board President, one other Board member and one member of the congregation to investigate the allegation. At least one member of this committee must have training and/or expertise in the area. The work of the committee shall be completely confidential.

- **Interviews by Committee**
 - The committee will interview the person who made the report, and the alleged victim and prepare a detailed written summary of the allegations of the victim. The committee will then interview the alleged perpetrator and prepare a detailed written summary as relayed by the alleged perpetrator.
 - An interview and written summary will also be prepared for any additional witnesses possessing relevant information.
 - People may be recalled by the committee after it receives the testimony of others in order to pursue questions raised by such testimony. The committee will strive to minimize recalls and will work expeditiously without sacrificing thoroughness.
- **Outcome**

The committee will offer assistance to the victim and the perpetrator by presenting the options that are available to them:

 - a. Victim and perpetrator will be urged to seek counseling and if necessary, the committee will assist with the referral outside the church environment; or in the case of the victim within the church environment if they choose.
 - b. Victim may meet with the perpetrator with the Committee present
 - c. Victim may meet with the perpetrator with a different personal representative chosen by the victim.

18.0 Consequences for Those Committing Violations

18.1 Minister:

Violation of this policy by the Minister shall constitute good cause for discipline.

The Board shall also inform the following of any determinations of serious violations of this policy:

- a. The congregation's Congregational Life Staff contact.
- b. The Director of Ministries and Faith Development of the UUA
- c. The Ministerial Fellowship Committee of the UUA
- d. The Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association (UUMA)

A person who reports that they experienced sexual misconduct and/or sexual harassment by the Minister is provided with information about how they can choose to file a complaint with the UUA regarding the Minister .

18.2 Staff and Volunteers:

The Board shall determine consequences appropriate to the violation including but not limited to removal from the staff and/or all positions of authority within the church.

Policy on Dangerous, Disruptive, Offensive Behavior

Adopted April 19, 2023

19.0 Management of Dangerous, Disruptive, and/or Offensive Behavior by Friends, Visitors, or Outside Persons

A. **Secure atmosphere supports openness:** While openness to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our denomination's purposes and values, we affirm the belief that our congregation must maintain a secure atmosphere where such openness can exist.

A. **Dangerous, disruptive and/or offensive behavior**

1. **Members:** See Bylaws ARTICLE VI: Membership Section 4.
0. **Friends, Visitors or outside persons:** If a friend, visitor or outside person is behaving in a dangerous, disruptive, or offensive manner, as described below, they may be referred by congregants, minister, staff, or Board members to be reviewed by the Board and then assigned to a committee for such review.
 - a. Dangerous behavior: the individual is the source of a threat or perceived threat to themselves, other persons, or property.
 - a. Disruptive behavior: the individual's behavior is interfering with church activities and/or hinders the church's ability to achieve its mission.
 - a. Offensive behavior: the individual's behavior is likely to drive existing members and/or visitors away.
1. If the danger to self or others is perceived as imminent, a representative of the Safe Congregation Committee and the Minister will take immediate steps, such as contacting law enforcement, and will notify the Board of these actions. In the absence of a minister, a representative of the Safe Congregation Committee and the Board President will take immediate steps.

General Safety Procedures

General Safety includes security, health, and safety. The purpose is to maintain a safe environment at St. John's for the benefit of congregants, staff, guests and others.

20.0 Key Responsibilities and Functions:

- Utilize resources from the UUA, Homeland Security and other sources to identify all aspects of health and security for St. John's. Adopt checklists and tools to guide the work of the committee. Key resources: <https://www.uua.org/safe> and <https://www.uua.org/safe/handbook>
- Conduct health and safety assessment of St. John's facilities.

- Identify issues that need improvement and track status as appropriate.
- Consult as needed with other Teams, Committees, Minister, Staff and Board Leaders to determine possible corrective actions and improvements. Create specific plans, timelines and budget requests as needed.
- Communicate Security and Health provisions within the congregation, including location of AED equipment, fire escape plan, etc.
- Work with Minister, Staff and others to conduct drills to promote safety.
- Stay current with changes or modifications to St. John's facilities that may impact health, safety, communication with first responders, etc.

20.1 Building Access Policy

Adopted 12 October 2011, amended June 9, 2021

Purpose: To allow reasonable and convenient access to the building for members of the church, volunteers and staff. Through reasonable procedures, access will be given while assuring the safety of church employees, members, friends, visitors and renters including the security of the church building and its contents. Renters are given access to the building based on their rental agreement.

A. Definitions

- A key fob provides access to the building at exterior doors with electronic readers.
- A key is a standard key that manually operates a lock.
- A Key Fob and Key Holder is the person authorized to have a key fob and/or a key; must be at least 18 years of age.
- Key Fob and Key Possession and Procedures form (see Appendix) is the document the Key Fob/Key Holder signs to show acceptance of the listed responsibilities of a Key Fob and Key Holder and agreement to this Policy.

B. There will be a limited number of people with access to the lock of the exterior doors. The following may have keys:

- The Minister
- Religious Life Director(s)
- Office Administrator
- Caretaker
- Choir Director/Pianist
- Designated leaders within Safe Congregation.

C. Who may receive a Key Fob used with the electronic readers:

- All church staff
- Current Board members
- The Treasurer and Financial Secretary
- Committee chairs, team leaders, leaders of recognized church groups and individual volunteers.
- Renters of church space (or, if a group, their named representatives) or other parties with specific approval to use church space.

- Members of the church with an appropriate short-term need for use of a key fob during non-business hours as determined by the Office Administrator in consultation with the Minister and/or designated co-chair of Safe Congregation.
- Mailman and Duke Energy for meter reading.

D. The following may have digital monitoring of the access and alarm systems on their phones.

- Designated co-chair of Safe Congregation
- The Minister
- President and Vice President of the Board
- Property Team Leader

E. Who May Receive a Key to the Office or Other Locked Interior Rooms.

- Office – Staff and church volunteers on an as needed basis.
- The Minister’s office/study – Only the Minister and the Office Administrator will have a key to the office/study.

F. Key Fob and Key Possession and Procedure Form

- Every person receiving a key fob to the exterior doors of the building, to the church office, or any other room will be required to sign a Key Fob and Key Possession and Procedure Form. A copy of the form can be found in Appendix.
- The Office Administrator shall maintain a binder in the church office containing all the currently signed Key Fob and Key Possession and Procedure Forms filed alphabetically.
- The Key Fob and Key Possession and Procedure form lists the primary responsibilities of Key Fob and the Key Holders.

G. Alarm System

The alarm system is for building security to prevent intruders. The alarm code is maintained by the Minister, Board President, Vice President, Property Team Leader, and designated co-chair of Safe Congregation.

20.2 Evacuation Plan Safety Policy

Adopted April 20, 2005, amended March 10, 2021

- An Evacuation Plan Map will be posted in each public room that doesn’t have a marked exit to the outside, suitably marked with exit paths for that room.
- All teachers and adult helpers will study and be familiar with the Evacuation Plan.
- A safety drill for children and youth will be performed during the first month of the new church year by the Director(s) of Religious Life.
- Periodically there will be safety drills with the congregation.

20.3 In Case of Emergency (ICoE) Form Policy

- ICoE forms shall be stored in the church office.

- ICoE forms are in new member packets. The completed forms are returned to the office.
- Periodically congregation members/friends will be asked to update their ICoE forms.
- See Appendix for the ICoE form.

Appendix: Safe Congregation Forms
(See following pages)

St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church Code of Conduct

Statement of Position: Adults and older youth in leadership roles in this congregation are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions be well qualified to provide the special nurture, care, and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility. The relationship between young people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential of their relationships is to be realized. Respect on the leader's part must include recognition of the absolute right of children and youth to the privacy of their bodies and minds.

Statement of Expectation of Behavior: As specified in the St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church Safe Congregations Policies and Procedures all Workers are expected to adhere to the following behavior.

1. All Religious Education workers and Child Care Providers will not engage in behavior with children or youth that constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse; this includes behavior or language that is personally threatening or demeaning.
2. All Religious Education workers and Child Care Providers will neither indulge in sexually harassing behavior or engage in sexual, seductive, or erotic behavior with children or youth.
3. All Religious Education workers and Child Care Providers shall not allow the use of tobacco, drugs or alcohol or any illegal activities among children or youth.

Statement of Action: In the case of paid or volunteer workers failing to meet the above expectation, St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church will take appropriate actions as outlined in the Safe Congregation Policy.

Statement of Agreement.

1. I will not be under the influence of illegal drugs, alcohol, or any other drug which would impair my judgment or ability to function effectively while in a leadership role with children or youth.
2. I will not engage in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children and youth. I will not sexually harass or engage in behavior with youth which constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.

I have read and understand the St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church Safe Congregations Policies and Procedures and the Code of Conduct. I agree to abide by the provisions of this Policy and this Code of Conduct and to honor and preserve the trust placed in me by the members of this congregation.

I will take responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries with children and youth under my supervision and will cultivate an atmosphere of health and trust.

Print Name: _____ **Signature:** _____

Date: _____

St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church
Application for Working with Children and Youth

Name _____ Phone # _____

Email _____

Other names I have used:

Date of Birth _____ Social Security Number _____

Address _____
Street City State Zip Code

Are you a member of St. John's? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, since _____

If no, describe your relationship with St. John's or indicate if you are new to St. John's. If you have been attending St. John's, include how long you have been attending.

Describe previous experiences working with children/youth.

Provide references: names and contact information for two persons familiar with your experiences that are relevant to the work you are interested in doing at St. John's.

Have you ever been convicted of a crime? ___ Yes ___ No
If you answered yes, provide details:

I swear and affirm that these statements are true. I have read St. John's Safe Congregations policy and signed the Code of Conduct. I also understand that St. John's may require a finger print and criminal records check to work with children and youth.

Date_____

Signature_____

PERMISSION TO MEET: St. John's Coming of Age Mentor and Mentee

The undersigned parents(s) guardian(s) of _____, do hereby give our permission for our daughter/son, _____, to meet directly and in a public space with _____, the mentor for our daughter/son under St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church's Coming of Age Program. We understand that we will be given prior notice by our daughter's/son's mentor of each such meeting including the general time and date of the meeting as well as the place for the meeting.

Parent/Guardian signature

Parent/Guardian signature, if appropriate

Date: _____

Date: _____

MENTOR AGREEMENT

As mentor, I, _____, agree to keep the above parent(s)/guardian(s) informed in advance of all meetings with my mentee and I have signed the St. John's Safe Congregation Code of Conduct.

Coming of Age Mentor signature

Date: _____

Addendum: The Safe Congregation Policy requires that two, preferably unrelated, adults be present when working with a child/youth during church activities. This Coming of Age Permission Form allows the Mentee and Mentor to meet together without a second adult present in a public space. It allows the youth to explore his/her thoughts with one adult in a safe environment with the approval of the parents.

Coming of Age Permission Form approved on 01.16.08 Addendum approved on 06.18.08

Key Fob and Key Possession and Procedures

Name (Printed)

Team, Committee, Group, Rental

Meeting day/date and time

I am responsible for locking the building after the use of St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church and for following the procedures below.

- Keep all doors locked at all times. Post someone from your group at the door to let members of your group inside.
- Close all windows when you leave.
- Close and lock all doors when you leave.
- Turn off all lights including the restrooms.
- Let other groups in the building know your group is leaving to provide building security.
- Clean up after your meeting/event and return the room to the condition as you found it.

Inappropriate use of key fobs or keys may result in the loss of your privilege to open the building. Do not loan your key fob to anyone outside your household.

Please check all that apply. I received the following:

_____ Key Fob # _____

_____ Inside door key

_____ Office door key

_____ External door key (for the 3 doors with electronic readers)

If you lose a key fob or key, please notify the office administrator immediately.

The first key fob you receive is free of charge. A replacement key fob cost \$15.

Signature

Date key fob or key picked up

Date key fob or key returned

St. John's Unitarian Universalist Church
In Case of Emergency (ICoE) Contact Form

From time-to-time members or friends may have an emergency that requires contacting someone in your extended family. St. John's Safe Congregation Committee asks that each adult complete this form. Thank you for helping us be a safe and caring community. Please return the form to Safe Congregation Committee.

Your information:

Name (last, first, middle): _____

Address: _____

Phone:

Cell: _____ Home: _____ Work: _____

Do you have a living will or a health care power of attorney? Circle one YES NO

Where, or with whom, is it filed? _____

First contact in case of emergency:

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Phone:

Cell: _____ Home: _____ Work: _____

Second contact in case of emergency:

Name: _____ Relationship: _____

Phone:

Cell: _____ Home: _____ Work: _____

Please circle one response:

YES Yes, please keep the above information in a secure, safe location, to be used only in a true emergency when it is not possible to communicate with me directly.

NO No, I choose not to disclose this information.

Signature: _____

Date: _____