

**FIRST PARISH CHURCH  
of BRUNSWICK,  
United Church of Christ  
September 2011**

**SAFE CHURCH POLICY**

As a community of Christian faith, First Parish 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 First Parish Church should be aware that sexual exploitation and sexual harassment are prohibited by church policy and will not be tolerated. It is never acceptable for an adult to have sexual contact with a child or youth. It is the intention of the church to prevent, detect, report and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and to take appropriate action if this policy is violated. Complaints shall be filed in accordance with the church's procedures for handling complaints of sexual exploitation or harassment.

**Supervision and Safe Guards for Children and Youth**

First Parish Church is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. The minister responsible for youth activities, the Children's Education Director and the Christian Education Executive Committee shall review this policy and associated procedures at least annually, and shall revise and supplement them as necessary, to ensure necessary safe guards for children and youth.

- All individuals who work with children and youth will be recruited, screened, approved and supervised as described in these policies.
- Parents are encouraged to observe, participate or drop in at any time on any activity in which their children are participating.
- An open door policy will be maintained during all activities.
- Staff and laypersons on the responsible committees will visit and observe activities randomly in order to monitor those involved for compliance with these policies.
- Efforts will be made to create a culture of awareness, comfort and open communication about sexual safety for all participants of the parish and its ministries.

- All Authorized Volunteers will receive orientation regarding safe church policy and procedures.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the church property and any overnight activities.
- All applicants for volunteer service with children and youth will submit a Children and Youth Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form. This includes all church school teachers, office assistants, volunteers/parents who assist on a regular basis and others identified by the Children's Education Director or clergy.
- First Parish Church will conduct appropriate background reviews, including a registered sex offender review, of volunteers and employees working with children and youth at the time of application.
- First Parish will provide and/or sponsor annual training workshops for employees and volunteers who work with children and youth. This training will include understanding of this policy and behaviors displayed by victims and perpetrators of abuse.
- Volunteers who work with children and youth must have been regularly associated with First Parish Church for at least six months.
- Any person affiliated with First Parish Church who serves in an administrative capacity or has otherwise assumed a position of trust or responsibility to the members of the parish, while acting in that capacity regardless of whether the person receives compensation is considered a mandated reporter. As a mandated reporter they shall make a report of any and all suspected abuse or neglect of a minor to appropriate authorities, including but not limited to:
  - The Maine Department of Health and Human Services.
  - A member of the program staff who shall then make a report directly to the DHHS. The State of Maine Child Abuse & Neglect Hotline number is currently 1-800-452-1999.
- Apart from any disposition of the matter by the church, all allegations of behavior that call into question the fitness for ministry of any minister shall be promptly forwarded to the Church & Ministry Committee of the Cumberland Association of the Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ. The Maine Conference of the United Church of Christ shall be contacted at 207-846-5118.
- Any question of sexual harassment by a member of the parish staff will be handled in accordance with the Personnel Policies.

**DEFINITIONS**

As used in the Policy, the following words have the following meanings:

Children and youth include all persons under the age of 19 years.

Mandated reporters: Those who are required to report any and all suspected abuse of minors by state law and receive protections under that law. All clergy, employees and agents of First Parish Church are mandated reporters.

Authorized Volunteer: unpaid person who has been approved to volunteer to work with children and youth by the Director of Children’s Education, currently Susan Fitzgerald.

Sexual Exploitation: sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a volunteer or staff person working with children or youth takes advantage of the vulnerability of the child or youth by causing or allowing that person to engage in sexual behavior with the volunteer or staff person.

Acknowledgement and assent:

I have read this policy and agree to adhere to its contents as it relates to my role.

(signed) \_\_\_\_\_ (date) \_\_\_\_\_