

# Safe Church/Abuse Prevention Policy and Procedures

## Spring Creek United Church of Christ Rockford, Illinois

As a community of Christian faith, Spring Creek United Church of Christ of Rockford Illinois, (hereafter SCUCC) is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities, and a dynamic environment in which employees, volunteers, worshipers, students, and those served by SCUCC can work together in an atmosphere free from abuse, discrimination, harassment, exploitation, and/or intimidation. To this end, all persons associated with SCUCC should understand that the church is strongly opposed to any form of physical or verbal abuse, intimidation, sexual exploitation, or sexual harassment. It is the intent of this policy to define procedures to prevent or correct such prohibited behavior; monitor our activities to detect such prohibited behavior, investigate allegations of such action; and (if necessary) take such action to prevent further violations of this policy; or where findings indicate, to refer allegations to the responsible law enforcement agencies.

### DEFINITIONS

**Authorized Minister:** a person who holds an ordained ministerial appointment or who has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ.

**Staff:** a person, not an authorized minister, who holds an employment relationship with SCUCC and is responsible to carry out certain assigned duties within the scope of that employment. Examples would include Director of Music, Office Staff, or Coordinator of Educational Programs.

**Lay Volunteer:** a person, neither staff nor authorized minister, who accepts a defined role in the church or its programs, without financial compensation. Lay volunteers are members of the congregation, known to a recruiter to have personal attributes, talents, and experiences which are necessary and relevant for a defined role. Examples of lay volunteer roles would include nursery attendant, youth leader, classroom teacher, etc.

**Immediate supervisor:** that person, whether volunteer, staff, or authorized minister, who bears responsibility for the recruitment, assignment, and supervision of the person in question. In cases of potential conflict of interests in the implementation of this policy, an authorized minister shall assume the role of immediate supervisor. Leadership at the Conference level assumes the role of immediate supervisor for an authorized minister.

### PROCEDURES- Prevention

- A. Before beginning any assigned duties, in particular, those roles which may involve relationships with children or other vulnerable persons, all staff, lay volunteers, and authorized ministers will be asked to execute the following steps:
1. Complete and submit the SCUCC *Safe Church Disclosure Form* (Form A, attached).
  2. Undergo a personal interview by the immediate supervisor (in the defined church role) to assess and to assure appropriate motivation and qualifications for the duties.
  3. Read, understand, and sign a copy of this *Safe Church Policy and Procedures Statement*.
  4. Read the required material or view the video presentation on Safe Church Policy (to be obtained from Illinois Conference UCC or reputable commercial vendor) or successfully attend an appropriate, qualified workshop and indicate their understanding of the material by signing an affidavit to that effect.
  5. Agree to and undergo a registered sex offender review search on the Department of Justice web site at [www.nsopr.gov](http://www.nsopr.gov).

- B. As a condition for continuing responsibility as an authorized minister, staff, or lay volunteer, the following steps must be completed by the church or the individual involved:
1. The registered sex offender review search must be conducted yearly.
  2. Every three years, the individual involved must read the required material, view the required CD/video presentation (either to be obtained from Illinois Conference UCC or reputable commercial vendor,) or successfully attend a qualified workshop on Safe Church Policy and indicate her/his understanding of the material by signing an affidavit to that effect.
- C. All classes or service activities conducted in SCUCC will be held in rooms whose doors are equipped with windows or the doors will be left open. All classes for children or other vulnerable persons will be scheduled with no fewer than two teachers. All off campus activities will be conducted by no fewer than two unrelated adults. For overnight (on- or off-campus) activities, there must be a ratio of no less than 1 adult for every 5 youth and a minimum of two unrelated adult teachers. If a youth group includes male and female youth, there must be at least one adult of each gender.

### **PROCEDURES- Monitoring**

Under the supervision of the authorized minister, all documentation related to this policy will be reviewed yearly, between January 1 and February 1. To execute this review, each November the church office will query ALL ministries to compile an up-to-date list of all persons recruited by each ministry for such educational or service roles. This review shall check for completeness of records for all persons currently engaged in active educational or service missions on behalf of SCUCC. This list will be compared with the signed acknowledgements, attestations, and releases plus the results of previous sexual predator searches. At this same time, a new sexual predator Web-site search will be conducted to include all persons currently engaged in educational or service missions for the church.

This policy will be reviewed in its entirety every three years by the Risk Management Committee of the SCUCC.

### **PROCEDURES- Handling/Investigating Complaints**

The following procedures are to be implemented should there be a complaint of intimidation, belittling, abuse, sexual harassment, or sexual exploitation. After a complaint has been made and until a final resolution has been achieved, the person about whose action the complaint is directed shall not be permitted to continue in their duties without appropriate and constant supervision.

- A. The Illinois Conference Minister or her/his designee will be notified of every complaint under this policy involving authorized ministers, staff, or lay volunteers. Any investigation and action relative to such complaint will go forward only with the approval and participation of the Illinois Conference Minister.
- B. The SCUCC authorized minister will be notified of every complaint under this policy involving authorized ministers, staff, or lay volunteers. Any investigation and action relative to such complaint will go forward only with the full participation of the SCUCC authorized minister; with the singular exception when the complaint is relative to the conduct of the authorized minister. In this case, all aspects of the case (investigation, testimony, action, etc.) will be transferred to the Prairie Association Ministry Team for Authorized Ministry, who will take responsibility for initiating the appropriate review.
- C. In most cases, the immediate supervisor, in consultation with the Conference Minister and the SCUCC authorized minister, will conduct an initial and confidential investigation to assess the situation and to determine the facts of the case. At this time, the complainant (and the complainant's parents/guardians if complainant is a minor) will be notified of their right to take such complaint directly forward to the Conference Minister or appropriate law enforcement agencies if they so desire.

- D. After sufficient information has been obtained, the facts shall be presented to the SCUCC authorized minister, Conference Minister, and legal counsel (if appropriate). A decision should be made at that time whether no action should be taken, a formal hearing should be conducted, informal resolution should be sought, or law enforcement should be notified. Complete records of all interviews, deliberations, and actions shall be maintained in a confidential file in the office of the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ.
1. **No action** can be chosen when the available facts clearly **DO NOT support** the accuser's position, and there is no evidence that, or reason to believe that, abuse, intimidation, or harassment has taken place.
  2. **Informal resolution** (apology, re-assignment, counseling, retraining, etc may be appropriate in the following situations:
    - i. The facts of the case are agreed to by all parties.
    - ii. The episode appears to be isolated, inadvertent, and/or with a minimal potential for personal harm.
    - iii. The complainant will be satisfied with **informal resolution**.
  3. **A formal hearing** may be the best course of action in the following situations:
    - i. The facts of the case remain in dispute, but they do not appear to warrant the involvement of law enforcement agencies.
    - ii. The behavior appears to be recurrent, purposeful, and/or with the potential for significant personal harm.
    - iii. The complainant will **NOT** be satisfied with **informal resolution**.
  4. **Immediate referral to the appropriate law enforcement agency or child protective services must be executed should the information suggest that an applicable law may have been violated. Parents or guardians should be notified that this action has been taken unless they are the subject of the complaint or allegation.**
- E. Should a **formal hearing** be necessary, it will be conducted by the Conference Minister or her/his designee in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ.

**Form A**  
**Spring Creek United Church of Christ, Rockford, Illinois**  
**Safe Church Disclosure- Form A**

---

**Name: Last** **First** **Middle**

---

**Address: Street** **City/State** **ZIP**

**Position which you have been asked to accept:**

---

**1. Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would raise questions about entrusting you with the responsibilities of the position which you have been asked to accept?**

**YES**       **NO**

*If yes, please provide a brief explanation.*

**2. I have never been convicted of, nor pled guilty or no contest to, a felony or misdemeanor in which actual or attempted physical abuse; child abuse; financial misconduct; sexual abuse, exploitation, or harassment was alleged.**

**TRUE**       **FALSE**

*If not true, please provide specific information (date and place of conviction and legal charge of the offense).*

3. **No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted intimidation; physical abuse; child abuse; financial misconduct; or sexual abuse, exploitation, or harassment has ever resulted in a judgment against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.**

\_\_\_ **TRUE**                      \_\_\_ **FALSE**

*If not true, please provide a short explanation of the lawsuit including the date, location, and precise disposition of the lawsuit. Please also describe the nature of the incident leading to the lawsuit.*

4. **I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in the volunteer position; nor have I been terminated from employment or volunteer service or professionally de-credentialed because the allegations of actual or attempted intimidation; physical abuse; child abuse; financial misconduct; or sexual abuse, exploitation, or harassment.**

\_\_\_ **TRUE**                      \_\_\_ **FALSE**

*If not true, please provide a short explanation indicating the date of termination or de-credentialed, the nature of the incident(s) leading to the adverse action, and the name address and phone number of your employer or volunteer supervisor at that time.*

***Please read the following carefully and sign in the appropriate space indicating your agreement:***

**I authorize the Spring Creek United Church of Christ (SCUCC) and the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ (ICUCC) and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications for the role I have been asked to fulfill and the truthfulness of all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, parties, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and/or state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements. I authorized the SCUCC and the ICUCC to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this appointment process with those persons in the position to recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I have been asked to fulfill and the program in which I am seeking to participate.**

*Print name* \_\_\_\_\_ *Date* \_\_\_\_\_

*Signature* \_\_\_\_\_