

# Safe Space Policy Abuse Prevention

Woodmont United Church of Christ  
1000 New Haven Avenue, Milford, CT 06460

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Woodmont United Church of Christ

Revised September 20, 2022

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	2
<b>Section 1</b> Definitions .....	2
<b>Section 2</b> Sexual Exploitation, Ministerial Conduct and Vulnerable Persons Policy .....	3
<b>Section 3</b> Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment by Employees and Volunteer Leaders .....	5
<b>Section 4</b> Code of Conduct .....	7
<b>Section 5</b> Ministry Standards .....	10
<b>Section 6</b> Registered Sex Offender Policy .....	11
<b>Appendix A</b> Employment/Authorized Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form .....	14
<b>Appendix B</b> Permission Form, Media Release, and Behavioral Covenant .....	17
<b>Appendix C</b> Medical Release Form .....	19
<b>Appendix D</b> Acknowledgement of Receipt .....	21

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## Introduction

Psalm 23 promises the confidence of God's protection, ending with, "and I shall dwell in the house of God forever." We, the members of Woodmont United Church of Christ, like to think of our church as a place where we can be safe and secure. It is a place where we can worship God, enjoy the comfort of fellowship and share the grace of God's love...a place that is truly our sanctuary...one that we joyfully share with all who enter. This Safe Space Policy realizes the need for protecting church members and all who enter our doors, while, at the same time, allowing our congregation to celebrate the diversity of our world, by extending the extravagant welcome that we hold so dearly in our hearts and our church's core values. This document is designed to help us to live into God's promise.

## Section 1 - Definitions

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

**Ministerial Relationship:** the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.

**Screened Supervisors:** a staff person or volunteer working with children or youth who has completed the screening process found in the Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy having undergone both a reference check and a criminal reference check and having a disclosure form on file.

**Authorized Volunteers:** a member of the church who is working with children and youth and has completed the screening process found in the Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy.

**Vulnerable Persons:** Any child or adult person who by reason of physical disability or dependence, developmental disability, mental illness, relative social power or cultural circumstances may be susceptible to physical abuse, sexual exploitation, financial exploitation or manipulation as a consequence of being unable to physically resist, or render judgments regarding physical, mental, financial or environmental well-being. Such persons may be unable to act independently and may, to their detriment, manifest high levels of trust or fear of persons of perceived power or authority.

**Mandated Reporter:** Any church employee or volunteer who works with children or tends to vulnerable persons. At Woodmont UCC, mandated reporters include, but are not limited to: the pastor, Sunday School teachers, nursery attendants, youth group leaders, chaperones and caregivers. A mandated reporter may not report anonymously but may request that his or her name be withheld from the family. In all cases, the pastor must be notified, unless the pastor is involved in the allegation, in which case a member of the Personnel and Pastoral Relations (PPR) Committee must be notified. A report must be made and submitted to the Department of Children & Families in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes.

**Sexual Exploitation:** Sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which anyone including an authorized minister engaged in the work of the church takes advantage of the vulnerability of a participant by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior.

**Sexual Harassment:** repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. This includes behavior directed at another person's sexuality or sexual orientation with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination.

Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity.
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, or invitations.
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, sexual propositions.
- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding, or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome; and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the church.

For example, it is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition, or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

**Policy Ownership:** The WUCC Safe Space Policy shall be owned by a sub-committee chaired by the Vice Moderator. Members of this committee will be selected by the Nominating Committee and approved during the Annual Meeting. If a vacancy occurs during the year, the Nominating Committee will seek candidates to fill those vacancies and present them to Council for approval.

## **Section 2 - Sexual Exploitation, Ministerial Conduct, and Vulnerable Persons Policy**

### **A. Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment** (see definitions)

Woodmont UCC is committed to creating and maintaining a worship and work community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship and work together in an atmosphere free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation.

Specifically, all persons associated with WUCC should be aware that the church is absolutely opposed to sexual exploitation and harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention and responsibility of the church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior, which is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

### **B. Ministerial Conduct** (see definitions)

All persons engaged in the ministry of Woodmont UCC, (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) are responsible for understanding the possible impact of their words and actions in ministering to the emotional, mental and spiritual needs of persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of parishioners or other individuals by anyone engaged in the ministry of Woodmont UCC is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Because elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers often deal with individuals who are emotionally and psychologically fragile or otherwise personally vulnerable, it is imperative that those engaged in the ministry of this church maintain their own psychological, emotional, and spiritual health and that they have adequate preparation and education for helping those individuals they seek to serve in ministry.

It is the policy of WUCC to encourage its leaders, authorized ministers, employees, and volunteers to nurture safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources. It is also expected that those engaged in providing ministry will complete and submit an Employment/Authorized Volunteer Disclosure Form (**Appendix A**) accompanying this policy.

### **C. Vulnerable Persons Protection Policy**

Woodmont United Church of Christ is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love.

Prior to beginning their duties, each candidate for employment and volunteers who work with children, or "vulnerable adults" shall be subject to the following qualifying steps:

### **D. Application & Qualification**

All employment candidates and volunteers who work with children shall:

1. Complete an Employment/Authorized Volunteer Disclosure Form (**Appendix A**), reciting work history, education and disclosure of criminal convictions. An affirmative response is required to each and every question; no answers may be omitted. Falsification of any aspect of the application shall be grounds for immediate dismissal.
2. Provide a minimum of three references, which can include both work-related and personal.

3. Grant written permission to conduct a background check as specified by this policy.
4. Upon selection, sign an acknowledgement of these policies and procedures and fulfill all appropriate training obligations within one month after assuming duties.

Volunteers shall be active members of the church, or otherwise affiliated with the church, for no less than six months before being permitted to work in child-oriented programs. There shall be **no exceptions** to this policy, even when volunteer candidates come from another church with similar programs.

Reference/Background checks for staff and volunteers will be made by the Pastor. Reference/Background checks for the Pastor will be made by the Pastoral Search Committee.

It is the policy of Woodmont UCC to provide adequate supervision for all youth activities. In order to insure this:

- a. Volunteers working one-on-one with Vulnerable Persons shall read and follow the "One-on-One Interaction Guidelines" in Section 4 of this document, "Code of Conduct."
- b. There are observation windows in at least one door of classroom, or the door must remain ajar.
- c. Church School teachers of nursery-through-preschool students will be present with their students at all times when in class.
- d. Nursery-through-preschool students will not be released to anyone other than the child's parent/guardian without written parental permission. Anyone, including parents/guardians, not known to the teacher must show identification before a child will be released to their care.
- e. Children will be signed in and signed out of the Nursery.
- f. Signed Permission Slips and Medical Release forms must be on file with the Director of Christian Education or the Pastor before any youth can participate in an overnight youth program or an event that involves transporting a youth off church property. An annual permission slip and medical release form is available.

### **Section 3 - Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment by Employees and Volunteer Leaders**

**A.** Complaints of sexual exploitation or harassment by employees or volunteer leaders will be made to the Personnel and Pastoral Relations Committee (PPR). PPR will, if needed, request that the Executive Board act as an ad-hoc Response Team, consisting of no fewer than two members of the Executive Board.

The Response Team will familiarize itself with the terms of this policy as well as the established procedures of WUCC for dealing with complaints of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment against employees or volunteers in WUCC leadership positions.

**B.** Several options may be taken in addressing incidents of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment:

1. The complainant can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the individual(s) accused of sexual exploitation or harassment.
2. The complainant can report the incident(s) to a pastor of the church, in an effort to resolve the matter.
3. If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the

complainant may request that PPR institute formal proceedings which shall include the following steps:

- a. The accused person (staff or volunteer) will be asked to take a leave of absence from their position, pending a resolution of the complaint.
- b. PPR will discuss communication issues including who needs to be informed of the allegations, being careful to respect the privacy of the complainants and the accused person, as well as the well-being of the church.
- c. PPR or Response Team (if delegated by PPR) shall gather statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged exploitation or harassment and from others who may have pertinent information.
- d. Based on the findings, PPR or, if delegated, the Response Team shall make determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. These may include:
  1. Finding that sexual exploitation or harassment has occurred, and that the Response Team is called upon to take action accordingly, such action may include one or more of the following:
    - i. A formal reprimand, with defined expectations for changed behavior, including possible public notification;
    - ii. Recommending or requiring a program of growth, which may include education, counseling and/or treatment;
    - iii. Probation, with the terms of the probation clearly defined;
    - iv. Dismissal from employment or volunteer leadership position, and in extreme cases, affiliation with, or membership in, the church.
  2. Finding that sexual exploitation or harassment did not occur.
- e. If the accused employee or volunteer is an Authorized Minister, PPR or delegated Response Team shall inform the appropriate body of the wider United Church of Christ (the Area Conference Minister and the New Haven Association Committee on Ministry) of the allegation. Woodmont UCC will cooperate fully in any procedures of the United Church of Christ related to the person's ministerial authorization while retaining the right and responsibility to employ or designate leadership within Woodmont UCC as it determines best.
- f. If allegations of possible child abuse are included in the complaint(s), PPR or the delegated Response Team shall notify appropriate secular authorities and Woodmont UCC shall cooperate fully in any investigation. The progress of the investigation by secular authorities shall be monitored to determine the continuance of the individual(s) in leadership positions at Woodmont UCC.

**C.** A written summary of the proceedings in these cases will be maintained.

**D.** In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes sexual harassment or exploitation, consideration shall be given to the record of the alleged incident(s) as a whole and to the totality of the circumstances, including the context in which the alleged incident occurred.

**E.** Any person bringing a sexual harassment or exploitation complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.

**F.** If the complainant(s) or accused person(s) is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter, by PPR or the delegated Response Team, he or she has the right to appeal to the Area Conference Minister.

**Report suspected child abuse to: CT Department of Children & Families at 1-800-842-2288.**

## **Section 4 - Code of Conduct**

This Code of Conduct defines individual responsibilities as authorized ministers, leaders, employees or volunteers to meet the expectations of Woodmont UCC with respect to behavior or conduct in the service of the ministries of the church, especially those which serve children and vulnerable persons.

In our congregation, all people are welcome, but all behaviors are not. Church leadership reserves the right to name and address unwelcome behaviors with an individual who is behaving in an unsafe manner. If addressing the behavior does not work, church leadership reserves the right to remove an individual from church property, and to take other steps as needed.

### **A. General Requirements**

Each person subject to this Code shall:

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

### **B. General Prohibitions**

The following behaviors are prohibited at all times:

1. Display affection toward a child or vulnerable adult in privacy.
2. Use profanity or tell off-color jokes.
3. Discuss their sexual encounters with or around children or in any way involve children in their personal problems or issues.
4. Date or become romantically involved with children.
5. Drinking alcohol to excess or use of illegal drugs in the presence of children.
6. Possess sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography, on church property.
7. Have inappropriate secrets.
8. Stare at or comment on children's bodies.
9. Engage in inappropriate or unapproved electronic communication with children.
10. Work one-on-one with children in a private setting.
11. Abuse children or vulnerable persons in any way 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 children to engage in the following: hazing, bullying, derogatory name-calling, games of Truth or Dare, ridicule, humiliation or sexual activity
12. Manipulate or exploit a vulnerable person in any way.

### **C. Specific Interaction Standards**

Each authorized minister, employee or volunteer worker of Woodmont United Church of Christ shall conduct themselves in a manner that fosters understanding of safe conduct in the context of serving children and vulnerable persons. The standards articulated below serve two purposes:

- To protect children and vulnerable persons 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"> <li>• Side hugs</li> <li>• Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs</li> <li>• Pats on the shoulder or back</li> <li>• Handshakes</li> <li>• High-fives, hand slapping, fist bumps</li> <li>• Verbal praise</li> <li>• Pats on the head when culturally appropriate</li> <li>• Touching hands, shoulders, and arms</li> <li>• Arms around shoulders</li> <li>• Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)</li> </ul> <p>These are inappropriate <u>if unwanted</u>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unwanted kisses</li> <li>• Showing affection in isolated area</li> <li>• Wrestling</li> <li>• Piggyback rides</li> <li>• Tickling</li> <li>• Allowing a child to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg</li> <li>• Any type of massage given by or to a child</li> <li>• Any form of affection that is unwanted</li> <li>• Compliments relating to physique or body development</li> <li>• Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas</li> </ul>

**2. Verbal Interactions** - The manner of speaking with children establishes respect. The following guidelines apply:

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

\* This may be waived in the context of an educational or pastoral setting.

**3. Out-of-Program (Off-Site) Church Activities** - The following are appropriate and inappropriate:

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

#### **4. One-on-One Interactions**

##### **One-on-one Interaction Guidelines**

- 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, handshakes or fist-bumps.
- 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.
- 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.

#### **D. Social Media – Electronic Communications**

##### **1. General Social Media Policy**

No one shall create or use a media site (web, Facebook, YouTube, or similar) in the name of or purporting to represent the church without the permission 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.

##### **2. Social Media Communications**

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 Woodmont UCC Communications Team will manage and oversee the church's official website and social media pages.

During electronic communications, adults must follow the "rule of three" with minors by including at least one other adult in communications with youth and children. A "rule of three" includes at least one other adult in the communications. When this is not possible, every communication should be saved for documentation, and a copy of those documents should be given to the authorized minister, or another trusted adult leader in the church community.

##### **3. Social Networking Code of Conduct**

Each person who uses Woodmont UCC 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, bullying, or humiliating.
- Prohibit sexually oriented conversations or discussions about sexual activities.
- Prohibit posting inappropriate pictures (for example, sexually suggestive, exploitive, or voyeuristic) or inappropriate comments on pictures.
- Encourage parents to play a role in monitoring their children's interactions with employees and volunteers.
- Continuously remind children how to interact appropriately through social networking sites.
- Deny participation by individuals who violate the Code of Conduct more than once.

## **Section 5 – Ministry Standards**

These ministry standards are intended to provide a safe environment for children and vulnerable persons in a variety of circumstances. From time to time, it may not be possible to fulfill the standard to the letter. Permission is granted to persons in leadership to waive a standard with justification. If it is found that consistent fulfillment of a standard is not practicable, the matter shall be elevated to the Church Council for resolution or amendment of these standards. For all activities and classes involving children, at least one Screened Supervisor must be present with the assistance of an Authorized Volunteer when available.

### **A. Bathrooms, Locker Room and Out-of-the-Way Locations**

The following practices shall apply to supervision of bathrooms and changing areas:

1. During Sunday School class time, a Teacher or Hall Monitor will escort a student to and from the rest room door. Outside of Sunday School class time, it is the parent's responsibility.
2. Require children to ask permission before using bathrooms.
3. Persons may use bathrooms that align with their gender identity.

Closets and storerooms are to be locked at all times, except when in use by an adult.

**NOTE: Children under the age of twelve shall not play outdoors without adult supervision.**

### **B. Transportation of Children**

Transportation of children, whether on buses, motor coaches or private passenger vehicles, is a serious responsibility. Utmost care shall be taken in view of the risks associated with managing transportation.

For all Woodmont UCC sponsored programs/events, the following standards shall apply:

1. No employee or volunteer shall transport a single child that is not their own, except as may be required in an emergency with the approval of a supervisor. Communications shall be established to verify the whereabouts, expected arrival and change of custody of the child.
2. Any person who drives on behalf of Woodmont UCC sponsored programs shall be previously qualified under our transportation and driver qualification requirements (See Driver Form in the Appendix). The Pastor and the PPR Committee will review and approve/deny the driver.
3. All passengers are to be seated and to use safety belts.
4. When passengers must disembark at a rest facility or destination, care shall be taken to obtain a headcount on arrival and departure. All passengers shall be required to complete a trip on the same vehicle to assure accountability.

### **C. Off-site Activities (Day Trips)**

Off-site activities require special additional planning, taking into account the nature of the destination and exposure to the public at large. For example, attendance at a public venue, such as an amusement park, will require greater supervision than a visit to a sister church. Due to the increased risk of a child becoming lost or injured during an off-site activity, extra care shall be taken to assure adequate supervision.

The following are minimum requirements:

1. All off-site activities shall be approved in advance by the Church Council.
2. The trip leader shall provide a plan outlining transportation and supervision for the activity.
3. Parent/guardian permission shall be obtained. Permission forms are to identify the destination(s) and activities in which the child might engage (e.g., climbing wall, horseback riding, soccer, baseball, etc.).

4. Parent/guardian providing permission shall indicate who will receive the child on return if other than the person signing the permission.
5. The parent/guardian shall make the trip leader aware of any medical or physical needs.
6. Each employee or volunteer shall be assigned to a specific group of children to supervise. Head counts will be conducted routinely.
7. Standards for bathroom activities, transition time and transportation shall be maintained.
8. Parents/guardians shall be provided a means to make emergency contact with the trip leader.

**D. Over-night Activities**

As with off-site activities, over-night activities present an even higher level of potential risk to children than day trips, due to isolation from parents and the 24-hour supervision that is required throughout the activity.

The following standards will apply in addition to standards for off-site activities:

1. All overnight activities, whether on the church site or not, shall have prior approval of the Church Council.
2. All overnight activities include a minimum of two unrelated or non-partnered adult chaperones over 21 years of age.
3. All volunteers and employees under 18 years of age must be supervised at all times, with a point person designated overnight.
4. Parent/guardian permission shall be obtained. Permission forms are to cite the destination(s) and activities in which the child might engage (e.g., climbing wall, horseback riding, soccer, baseball, etc.).
5. The parent/guardian providing permission shall indicate who will receive the child on return, if other than parent or guardian.
6. Trip leaders or other designated adult shall conduct routine walk-throughs of high risk areas.
7. In the event of a building evacuation, an outdoor meeting point will be designated in advance.
8. A roster will be maintained of the room assignments for each child and adult.
9. A bed check will be conducted at a specific time known to all.
10. A daily schedule of events shall be maintained with supervisory duty assignments included.
11. Double-queen lodging is preferred at hotels, four to a room. Children in each room will be of similar age. No adult (except the child's parent) will share a bed with a child.
12. Adult rooms will be scattered among rooms occupied by children. There shall be at least one adult lodged on any floor on which children are sleeping.
13. Standards shall be maintained as the site circumstances and facilities may require.

**Section 6 – Registered Sex Offender Policy**

As a community of faith, serving by the example of Jesus Christ, we, Woodmont United Church of Christ, also seek to attend to the needs of all who seek healing, redemption, and fellowship among us. We shall be prepared to accept in our midst those who have violated the most sacred mores of our society at large, in order to provide them refuge, peace, example and support in their recovery and penitence. We commit to doing so with utmost care for the welfare of our congregation, collectively and individually, and the community we serve.

We accept that there are risks in our deliberate association with and ministry to sex offenders who are considered a pariah among the community-at-large as evidenced by the many constraints placed upon their interaction with the community. We agree to honor the needs of the congregation and our community to have reasonable assurance that a sex offender in our care will not have an opportunity to re-offend as a result of lapses in our management of the offender.

We shall consider limited participation or membership of a sex offender in our congregation with utmost care which shall include the following elements:

1. A documented understanding of the statutory limitations applying in the State of Connecticut to the movement and activities of a sex offender, taking into account the programs of the church or the operations of tenants. (Examples: Sunday school, day care, pre-school, sports leagues, seasonal camps and associations which serve children and other vulnerable persons).
2. An understanding and consideration of the nature of the crimes which have resulted in requiring an individual to register as a sex offender; the passage of time without repeated conduct or behavior; and the risk and opportunity of re-offending that is presented by the particular programs of our congregation.
3. Documentation of limitations and prohibitions placed upon the offender by courts and probation authorities. In all cases where probation is in force, we shall obtain the explicit approval of and conditions of participation specified by the probation officer. A recommendation by law enforcement or mental health professionals to deny participation to an offender shall be honored in all cases.
4. Understanding that, with respect to a person who is an employee, volunteer, or member, who has previously been convicted for acts of sexual misconduct as defined by insurance contracts, knowledge by church leaders and managers of such prior conviction will have the effect of voiding coverage for the individual employee, volunteer, or member and for the church for future acts of sexual misconduct by that person.
5. Given that criminal convictions are a matter of public record, there shall be no expectation of secrecy on the part of the offender. As a condition of participation in our faith community, the offender must agree that the leadership of the church shall make it known to the members and friends of the church that we have accepted among us a registered sex offender. The conditions and limitations that apply to participation in the life of the church shall be known to all.
6. With the advice of legal counsel, and in all cases, the conditions of participation by a registered offender shall be defined by a "limited access agreement," executed by the offender and church. Such agreement shall be approved by probation authorities as may be necessary according to paragraph 3, above. The agreement shall be reviewed annually to validate ongoing eligibility. Violation of the agreement by the offender shall be considered as grounds for immediate cancellation of the agreement.

The following additional considerations shall apply:

**Victims in the congregation** – In such case as the victim of a RSO (registered sex offender) is a member of the congregation, employee or is a client of other services provided by the congregation, the RSO shall not be permitted to attend the church or church activities.

**Clergy-penitent privilege** – "Clergy-penitent privilege" is a "Rule of Evidence" defining or limiting information which clergy may reveal in a court of law only. "Clergy penitent privilege" does not prevent clergy from informing the congregation of matters which may be relevant to their safety; it does not require clergy to hold information in secrecy.

Ordained clergy shall assume responsibility and take extraordinary care to understand the scope and limitations of clergy-penitent privilege in the State of Connecticut, and the parameters of confidence and privilege as defined by our denomination. Authorized clergy shall inform the leadership of the church of the general principles of confidence and privilege under which they perform their clerical duties.

**Escorts** – Conditions of limited access for a RSO will commonly require that the offender have an escort while on the church premises or at church events elsewhere. A person serving as an escort shall not be a spouse, partner or relative of the offender.

**Approval & Supervision** – With the advice and prior approval of the Church Council, a Limited Access Agreement with a Petitioner (known RSO) shall be signed by the Pastor and the Church Moderator.

The Pastor, Church Moderator and escorts named in the Limited Access Agreement shall be responsible for the general supervision of the Petitioner in all of the latter's activity in relation to the church. Elements of supervision shall include the following:

- Knowledge of the terms of the Limited Access Agreement, including activity limitations placed upon the Petitioner.
- Knowledge of the Petitioner's offense history sufficient to understand the risks of association with the church and its ministries.
- Willingness to assert activity limitations and to report any violation of restrictions placed upon the Petitioner.
- Willingness to intervene in any onset of a risky or problem behavior.
- Willingness to report all cases of non-compliance to the Pastor.

The Pastor shall assess, prior to selection, whether a proposed escort is willing to fulfill the above elements of supervision.

**Professional privacy** – Members who are employed in certain occupations may have a statutory obligation to maintain privacy around the criminal history of their clients who may also be parishioners. Such members shall decline to accept leadership roles which may put them in a position of decision-making regarding individuals who may be their professional clients.

**Juveniles** – While the criminal record of a juvenile is ordinarily concealed by the courts, the church may come to know the juvenile's history by other means. Honest disclosure by a juvenile and parents in the volunteer application and screening process may reveal that a record exists without knowing the specifics. While a Limited Access Agreement will be required for the juvenile, as for others, every precaution will be taken to preserve the privacy and confidentiality which the law affords a juvenile.

## Appendix A

### Employment/Authorized Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form

#### Woodmont United Church of Christ

NAME: (last, first, middle): \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: (street, city, state, zip code): \_\_\_\_\_

DAYTIME PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

EVENING PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

**REFERENCE #1 NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: (street, city, state, zip code): \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

**REFERENCE #2 NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: (street, city, state, zip code): \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

**REFERENCE #3 NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: (street, city, state, zip code): \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE: \_\_\_\_\_

**My previous experience in the past five years (paid or volunteer) related to the ministry I am seeking to fill includes (Attach additional page(s) as necessary.):**

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**Name of church where I am currently a friend or member:**

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**I have been a member of this church since** \_\_\_\_\_

**I have been a friend of this church since** \_\_\_\_\_

**I have never been found guilty, or pled guilty or no contest, to a criminal charge.**

True       Not true

If not true, give a short explanation of the charge. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the charge; where the charge was filed; and the precise disposition of the charge.)

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**Do you have a valid driver's license?**     Yes     No

**State where issued:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Driver's license number:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

True       Not true

If not true, give a short explanation of the lawsuit. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the lawsuit; where the lawsuit was filed; and the precise disposition of the lawsuit.)

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**I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had my employment, professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct.**

True       Not true

If not true, give a short explanation. (Please indicate the date of termination; name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination.)

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**With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.**

True       Not true

**Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?**

Yes       No

If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

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The covenants between persons seeking employment or sanctioned volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between employees or volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize Woodmont United Church of Christ and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, 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 state opinions regarding my background and character.

To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements made in good faith and without malice.

The hiring and authorized volunteer recruitment process of Woodmont United Church of Christ involves the distribution of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise the position I am seeking to fill. To that end, I authorize Woodmont United Church of Christ and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these stated purposes. I understand that Woodmont United Church of Christ will share with me information it has gathered about me if I request it to do so.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature (for applicants under 18): \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



I agree to abide by the rules that have been established for this activity by the group leaders and by Woodmont United Church of Christ. In particular, I agree to cooperate with my group leaders and chaperones, and behave in a way that reflects well on my family and my church. I will not engage in any prohibitive activities, such as smoking, drinking, or alcohol, improper language, bullying, physical violence, or sexual activity. I agree not to leave the activity without express permission of the group leader.

I also recognize that if I participate in any incidents of drug use, alcohol consumption, physical violence, property damage, or sexual activity, my parents will be contacted, and I could be sent home from the activity at the discretion of the leaders and/or relevant staff.

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Youth's Signature

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Date

**Appendix C**  
**Medical Release Form**  
**Woodmont United Church of Christ**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Parent/Guardian (*if participant is a minor*) \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian home phone number \_\_\_\_\_ cell \_\_\_\_\_

Name of emergency contact (*someone NOT on the trip*) \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact phone number(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Family Physician name and phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Allergies (specify) \_\_\_\_\_ Date of last tetanus shot \_\_\_\_\_

Health History: (*circle all that apply*)

Heart   Asthma   Other lung problems   Diabetes   Seizures   Stomach problems

Kidney problems   Bleeding problems   High blood pressure   Any other health concerns

Please give pertinent details of items circled above \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Medications (*List name, dose, number of times per day, and approximate times of day.*)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(over)

Food Allergies or Dietary Restrictions \_\_\_\_\_

If the participant is a minor, can your son/daughter be expected to take the right amount of medication at the proper time? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

\_\_\_ I give my child permission to administer his/her own medications.

*(If the answer is no, then arrangements must be made with the adult in charge.)*

Health Insurance Carrier \_\_\_\_\_

Policy Number and/or ID Number \_\_\_\_\_

Insurance customer service number \_\_\_\_\_

Subscriber's name and phone number \_\_\_\_\_

Statement of Consent:

In the event of an emergency, I the undersigned, do hereby consent to any exam, anesthetic, medical treatment and/or hospital services that may be rendered to myself.

If the participant is a minor: It is understood that this consent is given in advance of any specific diagnosis or treatment, and it is given to encourage those persons who have temporary custody of my child in my absence, and any medical personnel caring for my child, to exercise their best judgment as to the requirements of such medical treatment.

I understand that any and all medical expenses incurred are my responsibility and that medical insurance coverage is not provided by Woodmont United Church of Christ.

This consent will remain in effect for one year from signing unless otherwise specified.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name (*printed*) \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### Acknowledgement of Receipt

I have received a copy of the Woodmont United Church of Christ (WUCC) Safe Space Policy and accept my responsibilities as a staff member or volunteer of the church. I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the provisions set forth in this policy.

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Staff or Volunteer Name (please print)

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Staff or Volunteer Signature

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Date