

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

St. John – Hill UCC, Boyertown, PA

Policy Prohibiting Abuse, Exploitation and Harassment

As a community of Christian faith, St. John-Hill 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 this congregation should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to Sexual Exploitation and Sexual 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 such behavior.

Ministerial Conduct

The pastor, every employee, elected and appointed lay leaders, and every volunteer are all Ministers of the congregation. As such, each is responsible for understanding the ways in which their words or actions may affect others.

Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Harassment, of parishioners or others, by anyone engaged in the ministry of St. John-Hill Church is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

All Ministers of the church (as defined below) may sometimes deal with individuals who are emotionally or personally vulnerable in some way. It is also important that every Minister of the church be adequately prepared and educated for the ministry in which they serve others, and to understand the ways in which their actions may impact those who may be vulnerable to their use or misuse of power.

It is the policy of St. John-Hill Church to encourage its Ministers and Authorized Ministers, 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 application and disclosure document.

Child and Youth Protection Policy

St. John-Hill Church is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love.

In order to ensure this, we have established the following guidelines.

- We expect that those who volunteer to work with minors will have been members of St. John-Hill Church for at least six months, or if not members, regularly and frequently associated with St. John-Hill Church for at least a year.
- It is the policy of this church to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for all children. In any situations where participants are not readily visible to other church members, there will not be fewer than two adults present with children. Youth over the age of 12 may assist an adult.
- For youth activities, there will be no fewer than two adults present with children. For this purpose an 'adult' is defined as someone who is 18 years of age or older.
- All volunteers who work with children and youth will complete and submit a disclosure document
- All volunteers and employees who work with children and youth will receive orientation to the overall policy.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian will be required for all activities off the church property, and any overnight activities.

Requirements for ministry

Before an offer of employment is made to any individual (whether ordained, commissioned, licensed or other lay person), a comprehensive background check, including a criminal records check, will be completed. Suggested scope of check to include the counties of residence and counties of work over the past seven years.

- All Ministers of the church will complete an application/disclosure form before beginning their duties
- The Consistory will conduct a review of the registered sex offender registry for each new Minister and Authorized Minister, employee, or volunteer, by searching their name on the Department of Justice website at www.nsopr.gov. The registered sex offender registry will be reviewed on a quarterly basis for all Ministers and Authorized Ministers.

- Authorized Ministers of the church will attend all boundary workshops suggested or required by (name of Association or Region) or will attend at least one workshop each three years, whichever is more frequent.

Definitions

Minister: a person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. Minister includes elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, and volunteers, as well as authorized ministers.

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

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

Sexual Exploitation: sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a 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 with the minister.

Sexual Harassment: repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person 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, e-mails, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, 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. 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.

Adopted by the Church Consistory, September 19, 2006

SAFE CHURCH DISCLOSURE FORM
St. John – Hill Church, Boyertown, PA

Our insurance coverage and our concern for our children require us to take whatever steps necessary to protect our children and other vulnerable individuals from sexual and physical abuse. For that reason, all church employees and volunteers who have direct contact with children must complete this "disclosure form." This disclosure form should have a copy of the St. John – Hill Church Safe Church Policy. If it does not, please contact the person who asked you to complete this form, since the provisions of that policy are integral to this disclosure statement.

Name _____
Address _____
Telephone _____ E-mail _____

1. Have you ever been convicted of a crime involving sexual or physical abuse of any kind? (Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged, pardoned, or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state.)

Yes No

If yes, please briefly describe below the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction, and the legal disposition of the case. The Church will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The Church, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.

2. 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, physical and/or child abuse.

Yes No

If no, 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).)

3. 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.

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 given in this Disclosure Form and/or during interview(s) may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill, regardless of when the misrepresentation or omission is discovered. 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 St. John – Hill Church 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.

St. John – Hill Church’s hiring and authorized volunteer recruitment process 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 St. John – Hill Church 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 St. John – Hill Church will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I so request.

I have read the “Safe Church Policy” of St. John – Hill Church. I agree with its intent, and I agree to abide by it.

(Signature)

(Date)

Draft: September 19, 2006