

Safe Church Policy Concerning Abuse Prevention

Policy Prohibiting Abuse, Exploitation and Harassment

As a community of Christian faith, Groveland Congregational Church (hereinafter known as GCC) 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 GCC should be aware that the church is sternly opposed to all forms of Exploitation and Harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention of the church to take action in an attempt to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

Ministerial Conduct

Consistent with our understanding of the priesthood of all believers, all Authorized Ministers, employees, elected and appointed lay leaders and authorized volunteers are considered Ministers to the congregation.

It is important that every Minister to the church be adequately prepared and educated for the ministry in which they serve others, and to understand the ways in which their use or misuse of authority may impact others.

It is the policy of the GCC to encourage its Ministers to nurture safety within Ministerial Relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and to be able to refer those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

Any form of exploitation or harassment of parishioners or others by anyone engaged in ministry on behalf of GCC is unethical behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Ministry

- Before beginning their duties, all Ministers will submit a disclosure form.
- Before beginning their duties, all Ministers will be personally interviewed to assess the suitability of their character and qualifications for the position they seek.
- The church will conduct a State CORI review for each authorized Minister and by searching their name on the Department of Justice website at www.nsnopr.gov. These reviews will be repeated on a three year basis for all Ministers.
- Authorized Ministers of the church will attend all boundary workshops required by MACUCC or will attend at least one workshop on this topic every three years, whichever is more frequent.

Additional Requirements for Child and Youth Ministry

- GCC is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love.
- In order to promote this, we have established the following guidelines in addition to the general requirements for ministry to the church.
- We expect that those who volunteer to work with minors will have been members or of GCC for at least six months or, if not members, regularly and frequently associated with GCC for at least six months.

- All volunteers who regularly work with children and youth will complete and submit a Volunteer Form as well as a CORI.
- Before beginning their duties, all prospective employees will undergo a background check, including but not necessarily limited to inquiries of references and criminal history verification by a third party vendor and a CORI.
- All volunteers and employees who regularly work with children and youth will receive orientation regarding safe church policy and procedures.
- It is the policy of this church to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for youth activities. In situations where participants are not readily visible to each other, there will be no fewer than two adults (to include a high school aide) present with children.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the church property and any overnight activities.

Definitions

Minister: a person authorized by the church to carry out its ministry. Ministers include 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). An Authorized Minister is one type of minister within the meaning of this policy.

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

Exploitation: sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister engaged in a ministerial relationship with another takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served by causing or allowing that person to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.

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/or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or 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 decision 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, invitations or text messages;
- 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.