

2F2H. Prevention of Abuse and Harassment Policy
Plymouth Congregational Church

I. SEXUAL EXPLOITATION, MINISTERIAL CONDUCT, AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

A. POLICY STATEMENT

1. Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment (See definitions.)

Plymouth Congregational Church, 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 Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC should be aware that the church is strongly 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.

2. Ministerial Conduct (See definitions.)

All persons engaged in the ministry of Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC, (including elected or appointed leaders, employees, volunteers, and authorized ministers) are responsible for knowing 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 parishioner(s) or other individual(s) by anyone engaged in the ministry of Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC, is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Because 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 Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC 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 the Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC, Application and Disclosure Form.

3. Member and Youth Protection Policy

Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC is committed to creating a safe and healthful environment in which young people and adults can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, we prefer that all people applying to be volunteers who work with minors, homebound adults, or in any other one-on-one contact will have been members for at least six months or friends of Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC, for one year. It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all youth activities. We expect all employees or volunteers who work with minors or in one-on-one situations to complete and submit the Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC, Application and Disclosure Form.

4. Member and Youth Protection Policy Implementation

a. Responsibility for Managing the Process

A member of staff will be assigned by the Senior Minister to ensure the following procedures are followed.

b. Process guidelines

- i. Forms will be renewed every 5 years
- ii. All clergy, staff and employees of Plymouth will complete a form and a background check will be done.
- iii. All members of Plymouth who work with children or one-on-one with adults will complete a form. Background checks will be done at the discretion of the Senior Minister or Personnel committee. Recommendations to conduct a background check should be directed to them.

c. Security guidelines

- i. Completed forms will be kept locked with access limited as for Evaluations.

d. Disposition of Completed Form

- i. Every form where a 'yes' is checked must be given immediately to the Senior Minister. The Senior Minister and Personnel will determine if an exception should be granted and allow the individual to serve as a volunteer, staff or employee. If a waiver is granted, the reasons for the exception must be put in writing, attached to the form and filed with all the other forms.
- ii. The results of every background check must be given to the Senior Minister for review with Personnel. A statement must be written stating the date the review occurred and who participated. This statement should then be attached and filed with their Personnel Records. A note should also be filed with the Disclosure Forms with the date of the Background Check so that there is a record to trigger the renewal in 5 years.

B. 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.

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'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 letter, notes, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits or sexual orientation, or 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 not permissible 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.

Have you ever had a ~~No~~ civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; ~~a~~ child abuse, or financial misconduct ~~has ever~~ resulted ~~ing~~ in a judgment ~~being~~ entered against ~~me~~you, ~~been~~ settled out of court, or ~~been~~ dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired?: ~~True~~ **Yes** ~~Not~~ **True**

If ~~yes~~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.)

~~Adopted September 8, 2003 Draft — last reviewed 12/8/03, approval pending final review and an implementation process staffed and in place~~
Adopted January 13, 2004

Have you ~~I have~~ never been **found** guilty of or terminated **my** employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had **my** employment, professional credentials, or authorization to had 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~~ Yes
 ~~Not True~~

If ~~not true~~ yes, 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~~ leading to your termination.)

Do you have a valid driver's license? ~~True~~ Yes ~~Not True~~
State where driver's license issued _____ Driver's license number _____

~~With respect to my driving record, I have not~~ Have you **every** had **my** driver's 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?:

~~Yes~~ 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~~ True ~~Not True~~

If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

The covenants between persons seeking employment 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/volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisions, 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.

Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC's hiring and recruitment process involves the distribution of information regarding applicants with those persons are responsible for screening and/or hiring and supervising the position I am seeking to fill. To that end, I authorize Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC, and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with my application to such persons for these stated purposes. Plymouth UCC will limit access to this information to what is that required to properly perform these functions properly. I understand that Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so. I understand that Plymouth Congregational Church, UCC will undertake a security check before approving employment, and may undertake a security check before extending ~~or~~ volunteer status.

Signature _____ Date _____

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Signature _____ Date _____
(Parent's or guardian's signature for applicants under 18)