



**St. Paul's United Church of Christ**  
**2173 Stoverstown Rd**  
**Spring Grove, PA 17362-7829**

God Is Still Speaking,

***Safe Church Policy Concerning Abuse Prevention***  
***Policies and Procedures***

**Policy Prohibiting Abuse, Exploitation and Harassment**

Gathered together as a family of faith, St. Paul's United Church of Christ of Stoverstown is committed to sharing God's love by inviting and welcoming all people of God's creation, by worshipping and praising God, by teaching and preaching the Good News, and by caring for the needs of one another, the community and the world.

At baptism, parents and sponsors promise to help baptized children live in the covenant of baptism and in communion with the church. Parents and sponsors promise faithfully to follow in the way of our Savior, to resist oppression and evil, to show love and justice and to witness to the work and word of Jesus Christ. It is the responsibility of parents and sponsors to participate in the life of the congregation, to grow in faith alongside their children and to help their children become faithful members of the church of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of this congregation's ministry with children and youth is to support parents in fulfilling these responsibilities and to provide an inviting atmosphere wherein children and youth who have not been baptized may come to be participants in the faith of this community.

Our congregation provides opportunities for children and youth to learn of and to grow in the Christian faith, to develop an identity as part of the Christian community, and to serve others, following the example set by our Lord Jesus Christ.

The above Mission Statement of our congregation along with our commitment to support parents and children in their baptismal promises leads us to the ministry of providing care and support to people of all ages. As Christ paid special care and attention to the most vulnerable persons in the world and blessed all the children who came to him (Mark 10:14-16), we recognize his call upon us to do the same by making sure our congregation is as safe a place as it can be for our everyone as we carry out our ministry.

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**Definitions** (for use within this document)

**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.

**Minister:** a person authorized by the church to carry out its ministry. **Ministers** include elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, Sunday School teachers, Youth Advisors, volunteers (both adult and youth), as well as **Authorized Ministers**.

**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 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**.

**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.

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

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, electronic communications, 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; or
- 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.

**Staff:** Employees, Sunday School teachers, and Youth Advisors

**Youth:** Minors under the age of 18 or developmentally challenged adults.

## Ministerial Conduct

It is important that all **ministers** 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 St. Paul's United Church of Christ of Stoverstown to encourage its **ministers** to nurture safety within **ministerial relationships** by being attentive to self-care, education, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

**Sexual Exploitation** or **Sexual Harassment** of parishioners or others by anyone engaged in ministry on behalf of St. Paul's United Church of Christ of Stoverstown is unethical behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

## Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Ministry

- Before beginning their duties, all new **employees** will be interviewed to assess the suitability of their character and qualifications for the position they seek.
- All new **adult ministers** will be required to submit a **PA Child Abuse History/Clearance** form as well as a **PA State Police Criminal Record Check** form or **background checks as required by state/federal laws**.
- Additionally, all new employees with a significant likelihood of regular contact with **youth** will be required to complete a **Federal Bureau of Investigation Criminal History Background Check**, or **background checks as required by state/federal laws**.
- **Authorized Ministers** of the church will attend boundary workshops required by York Association of the Penn Central Conference and any other clearances and certifications required by the Association, Conference, or the United Church of Christ.

## Additional Requirements for Child and Youth Ministry

St. Paul's United Church of Christ of Stoverstown 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:

- All **volunteers** who regularly work with children and youth will complete and submit a **PA Child Abuse History/Clearance** form as well as a **PA State Police Criminal Record Check** form or **background checks as required by state/federal laws**.
- 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, or at times other than Sunday School or Worship times, or at times when there are very few persons in the building, there will be no fewer than two adults present with children. **Youth** over the age of 12 may assist an adult in supervising children; however, such assistance does not alter the requirement that at least two adults be present.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the church property and for any overnight activities.

## Procedures for Integrating a Known Sexual Offender in the Ministry of the Church

Recognizing that all people need to find sanctuary in God, it is vital that as a Christian community we welcome the “least of these” in to the life of the church. (Mt.25:45) Like Jesus, we want to show our love and concern by providing a place of refuge, of hope, and safety for all of God’s children.

### Requirements for Known Sexual Offenders

A known sexual offender:

- Should expect the church to place conditions upon his/her participation in order to remain faithful to our baptismal covenant.
- Will be appropriately identified to the congregation both for his/her protection and for the protection of our **ministers, staff and youth**.
- Will need to have monitoring and enforcement guidelines in place in the form of a written covenant which both parties agree to and sign. This covenant will likely include that trained supervisors accompany the offender while on church property and that the church will provide a support group for the offender.

## Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment

### I. General

- A. A subcommittee of the **Pastor/Parish Relations Committee** with no fewer than two members, one male and one female, will be established each year in preparation for the possibility of hearing complaints under this policy. The subcommittee hereinafter referred to as “**The Response Team**,” will be familiar with the terms of this policy, as well as with the established procedures of the church for dealing with a complaint.
- B. Several approaches may be taken in addressing incidents of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment:
  1. The complainant can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the respondent, the individual accused of sexual exploitation or harassment.
  2. The complainant can report the incident to an **Authorized Minister**, in an effort to resolve the matter informally.
  3. If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the complainant may request that the **Response Team** institute formal proceedings which shall include the following steps:
    - The **Response Team** shall advise the **Authorized Minister** and the **Consistory President** of the receipt of all complaints and shall keep them apprised of ongoing steps and actions taken. If either the **Authorized Minister** or **Consistory President** is the subject of the complaint, this notice requirement shall not apply as to that person.
    - The **Response Team** shall gather statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged exploitation or harassment and from others who may have pertinent information, such as qualified professional consultants, and present such information to the **Pastor/Parish Relations Committee** or an appropriate subcommittee thereof.

- The **Pastor/Parish Relations Committee**, or an appropriate subcommittee thereof, shall make determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. These may include:
    - a. finding that sexual exploitation or harassment has occurred, and that the appropriate body of the church 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;
      - (ii) recommending or requiring psychological or psychiatric assessment, counseling and/or treatment;
      - (iii) probationary standing, with the terms of the probation clearly defined;
      - (iv) dismissal from employment or volunteer position.
    - b. finding that sexual exploitation or harassment did not occur.
  - The **Response Team** may seek the advice of legal counsel or others, including the **Committee on Ministry of the York Association of the Penn Central Conference of the United Church of Christ**, to advise it in performing its functions.
- C. A written summary of **The Response Team** proceedings in such cases will be maintained. Confidentiality will be of utmost importance.
- D. The person(s) toward whom the inappropriate behavior is directed need not be the complainant. Moreover, consent will not excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior, and the church may initiate or proceed with the formal complaint process.
- E. 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(s) occurred.
- F. 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 or church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.
- G. If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by **The Response Team**, he or she has the right to appeal to the **Consistory President**, or to the **Consistory Vice President** if the **Consistory President** is the subject of the complaint, who shall refer the matter to the **Consistory**. The subject of any such appeal to the **Consistory** shall be limited solely to whether the procedures of this policy were followed. The matter will not be reconsidered on the merits, and the decision of the **Consistory** will be the final resolution of the matter. If the **Consistory** determines that the procedures of this policy were not followed, it will refer the matter back to **The Response Team** to complete the processing of the complaint in accordance with these procedures.

## II. **Child Abuse**

Apart from any legal requirements, St. Paul's United Church of Christ of Stoverstown will make a report to appropriate authorities, including but not limited to the **Department of Public Welfare of the Commonwealth**, if at any time the church has reasonable cause to believe that a minor may be an abused or neglected child. Any **Minister** of the church who becomes aware of facts or circumstances that child abuse or neglect has occurred or that there exists a substantial risk that child abuse or neglect may occur in the reasonably foreseeable future shall immediately report the matter to the **Authorized Minister** and the **Consistory President** so that the church may take appropriate action in a timely manner. The **Childline and Abuse Registry** telephone number currently is: **800-932-0313**.

## III. **Clergy**

Apart from any disposition of the matter by the church, all allegations of behavior which call into question the fitness for ministry of any **Authorized Minister** will promptly be forwarded to the **Committee on Ministry of the York Association of the Penn Central Conference of the United Church of Christ**.

The **Penn Central Conference** may be contacted at: **717-652-1560** or **pccucc@pccucc.org**