

**Keawala'i Congregational Church
United Church of Christ (USA)**

SAFE CHURCH POLICY

Sexual Exploitation, Ministerial Conduct, and Child/Youth Protection

For explanation of terms used in this policy, see section D. Definitions.

A. Prohibition of Sexual Exploitation and Harassment

Keawala'i Congregational Church 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 Keawala'i Congregational Church 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.

B. Ministerial Conduct

All persons engaged in the ministry of Keawala'i Congregational Church, 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 Keawala'i Congregational Church is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Because ministers, including 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 Keawala'i Congregational Church 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 a disclosure document, and that authorized ministers and employees will consent to a background check.

C. Child/Youth Protection

Keawala'i Congregational Church is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, we expect that all people applying to be volunteers who work with minors will have been members for at least six months or friends of Keawala'i Congregational Church for one year. It is the policy of the church to provide adequate supervision for all children and youth activities. We also expect all employees or volunteers who work with minors to complete and submit a disclosure document and to consent to a background check.

D. 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 contact of a sexual nature constitute 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, coercive 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 participation in the life of the church.

For example, it is forbidden 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.

Filename: Bd of Trustees – Safe Church Policy