

## First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC

### **SAFE CHURCH POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

*Since early 2003, First Church has been engaged in an ongoing process to provide a safe and secure environment for those who participate in our programs and use our facilities. Recommendations and procedures were developed by the initial Safe Church Task Force, the Board of Christian Formation, and the Executive Council of First Church. Ongoing revisions have taken place since and have been reviewed and endorsed by the Christian Formation for Children & Youth Committee and the Executive Council.*

**“Covenant for a Safe and Welcoming Community”:** Developed in the spring of 2005 over a series of meetings held on Sunday mornings and open to all church members, the “Covenant for a Safe and Welcoming Community” is a document that articulates guidelines for safe and respectful behavior for children at First Church. All First Church adults are encouraged to speak with any child (or their parents) when the child is disregarding this communal covenant. The Covenant is made available for viewing and downloading on our website, and hard copies of the Covenant may be requested from the church office. Every September, at the beginning of the church program year, parents are asked to indicate that they have read and discussed the Covenant with their child.

**"Two Adult Rule":** During FCC-sponsored programs for minor children, such as church school, scheduled child care by nursery staff or volunteers, youth group outings, and other formation programs, it is the church's recommendation that two unrelated adults supervise each group as much as possible. At all other times, including fellowship hour after church school and nursery care have ended, the supervision of children is the responsibility of their parents. Parents should be aware that First Church does not own or maintain the play equipment in Sage Hall, nor does it maintain the outdoor play equipment. It is the church's recommendation that children not be permitted to play in these areas or other parts of the church unattended. Parents who want to allow their children to use Sage Hall or the Newtowne Playground are encouraged to arrange for two unrelated adults to be with the children while they are playing.

**Digital and Social Media Guidelines:** The digital and social media guidelines of First Church have been developed to follow the same principles of conduct as expressed in other sections of our Safe Church Policy, including the Covenant. These principles should be applied when church staff members use digital and social media on behalf of the congregation and when volunteers use social media in relation to their volunteer service with minors in the congregation.

An additional principle applies specifically to digital and social media: the way staff present themselves online in forums where congregation members engage should be in keeping with the way staff members present themselves in person at church functions. If your online presence specifies your affiliation with First Church, you are seen as a representative of First Church.

First Church's "Two Adult Rule" applies to digital and social media communication between adults and minors. Digital and social media should not be used for one-to-one extended communication between an adult (staff member, church school teacher, or youth leader) and a minor. Any communication that is sent via digital means (e.g. email, social networking notes or posts, instant messages, texts, etc.) is not confidential and may be reported or shared with others. Weighty or emotional matters are best discussed in person rather than by email or other digital means.

First Church follows a Privacy Policy with regard to personal information shared with the church via our website and computer database. You can find the full text of the policy on our website, both in the public domain and in the password-protected Members Area. Hard copies of the Privacy Policy may be requested from the church office.

**Examples of First Church's Safe Church Policy in action in the digital world:**

- A staff member would not engage in extended texting conversations with an individual youth. Generally, when texts are sent to youth, they should be sent to a group of youth plus other group leaders and/or parents.
- Staff members who accept Facebook Friend requests from members of the congregation, including minors, should keep in mind that even on Facebook, church staff members are perceived as representatives of the church.
- The FCC Facebook page and the FCC website are maintained for the purpose of publicizing events endorsed by the congregation or a committee of the congregation. Exceptions to this guideline are the Blog and Prayer Request sections of the website. However, administrators of the church's website and Facebook page may delete any inappropriate content from these venues.

**CORI and SORI Checks:** First Church has been certified by the Criminal History Systems Board of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for access to criminal offender record information (CORI), including conviction and pending criminal case data. First Church has also decided to access the national public database of sexual offender record information (SORI). Volunteers working with minors are required to sign a form acknowledging that First Church will check for a criminal history before allowing involvement in the leadership of our children and youth programs. CORI and SORI checks are completed at the beginning of the church program year (September) or at the time when a volunteer begins their service. Volunteers working directly with minors are required to complete acknowledgement forms once per year, for as long as they continue to serve the church in this capacity. The church reserves the right to do additional CORI and SORI checks should there ever be a serious concern about a volunteer. For information on CORI and SORI checks of employees, please refer to the Employee Handbook.

**Incident Report Forms:** If something suspicious and/or unsafe occurs while volunteers or employees are caring for minors, teachers and leaders are asked to complete a Safe Church Incident Report Form. Completed forms are submitted to a Minister or the Director of Creative Worship & Arts and copies are provided to the parents/guardians of the injured child, as well as to the reporter of the incident.

**Medical Information:** Basic medical information is collected as part of the Children & Youth Program Registration. The Director of Creative Worship & Arts reads all registrations and the forms are filed in a locked drawer in the director's office. If there is pertinent information about a student that the classroom teachers need to know, the Director will make sure that information is given to the teachers in writing. Emergency information from the child's parents will also be given to teachers (as in the case of a severe allergy to peanuts, the use of an Epi-pen, etc.). Parents/guardians will be reminded to update medical information as needed.

**First Aid Kits:** In case of emergency, there is a large first aid kit in the Church Kitchenette as well as in each classroom.

**Security Doors and Cameras:** In 2005, and at the request of the Newtowne School, a cooperative nursery school that rents space at First Church, a security door and camera system was installed at First Church. These cameras and doors are engaged 24-7, offering an added layer of protection and awareness of who is coming and going from our building. The Building & Grounds Committee worked with Newtowne School in 2011 to augment and upgrade the system, including purchasing new security cameras. The installation was completed in January 2012. The number of people who have access to the recorded images is extremely limited.

**First Church Emergency Evacuation Policies and Procedures:** In 2010, First Church adopted explicit policies and procedures for evacuating the building in an emergency. The Church staged its first fire drill under the new policy in August 2010. Future fire drills will take place on a twice-yearly basis. All Church School Teachers are trained in the procedures as pertaining to the evacuation of the Church School. See the orange-colored manual for details.

## First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC

### ***OUR COVENANT FOR A SAFE AND WELCOMING COMMUNITY***

First Church has become a second home to an increasing number of children. On Sunday mornings, the church is usually abuzz with kids in church school classes, in the sanctuary, in Margaret Jewett Hall, in the library, on the playground in the halls. Their God-given energy brings life to First Church. We believe they should feel more than welcome to be themselves! We also believe, by virtue of the congregational vows we make as children are baptized, that parents and all First Church adults share a responsibility to nurture and care for our children.

First Church is doing its best to be a safe church and we've already instituted policies like a "two adult" rule for all First Church sponsored events. We are also aware that there are many times, like after worship on Sunday morning, when we are together as a multigenerational church family and when there is no designated supervision of children. After the structured activity of worship and Church School programs, our children understandably want to move around during our social time in Margaret Jewett Hall. Because we are a community of people of all ages and abilities, however, some guidelines of behavior are necessary for ensuring both safety and hospitality for kids and adults alike. We are also mindful of our church's liability. How do we allow kids to be themselves at church given all these considerations?

**At busy times when our church is gathered together in a less structured and multigenerational event like "coffee hour," the following guidelines are strongly encouraged. Any member of First Church, whether parents or other adults, should feel welcome to remind all children (and each other) of the following:**

#### ***Behavioral Guidelines for Children and Caregivers at First Church***

**In Sage Hall and on the Playground:** These spaces are designed to accommodate more energetic play. At times like after worship on Sunday morning, parents and other adults should take responsibility for arranging "two adult" supervision on the playground (if it's nice out) or in Sage Hall in the basement. Many Sundays, there is childcare provided by our Nursery staff from 12:30 to 2:00 pm in Sage Hall, but parents should confirm this by accompanying their children to Sage Hall to meet the staff. When outside, children should avoid climbing on the ancient Yellowwood trees (the limbs are hollow!) and also stay off the fence surrounding the playground.

**In Margaret Jewett Hall:** Children are welcome to mingle with adults during large events and coffee hours. Considering the amount of adult "traffic" in the area though, there should be no running or moving too quickly. The stage is a great place for play, but there should be no jumping off the edge. And we also ask that children (and adults!) refrain from playing the piano in MJH during large events and coffee hours.

**In the Library:** Quiet play is welcome in the library. Games and toys are available in the large cabinet under the counter. Parents and other adults are encouraged to step in and out of the library to monitor children's safety. There will be no climbing on the spiral stairs, counters, or on other furniture.

First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC

***OUR COVENANT FOR A SAFE AND WELCOMING COMMUNITY***

**In the Sanctuary:** During worship, children are encouraged to sit quietly with their parents or other designated adult. There are books and activity packets available in the Children's Worship Book Corner. If activity packets are used, please return them to where you found them. If children are disrupting the service, parents are encouraged to take their children to the Hastings Room where they can hear the service through speakers.

**IN ALL PLACES:** Children should always be encouraged to be safe with their bodies, to speak to each other respectfully, and to be mindful of those of every age and ability with whom they are sharing space. If children are being disruptive, adults are encouraged to help them find their parents or some other supervision.

*This Covenant was first adopted  
by the Executive Council of First Church in Cambridge  
in June 2005.*

# First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC

## ***OUR COVENANT FOR A SAFE AND WELCOMING COMMUNITY***

### **Children's Version**

First Church is full of people, and many of those people are kids!

First Church loves its children and wants to help you be safe and happy while you are here.

To be a good church family, it is important that we all follow rules to make sure that we show respect and care for everyone else.

At busy times like Coffee Hour/Cookie Time, Church Lunches, and Potluck Dinners, there are several places where kids can talk, play, or just hang out.

Here are the rules for each place:

#### **Margaret Jewett Hall**

You are welcome to talk, eat cookies or a meal, and hang out in MJH with our whole church family. Since there are usually lots of people in MJH, it is important to WALK SLOWLY and to not bump into people holding hot coffee! You may play on the stage, but PLEASE don't jump off the edge. And while the piano in MJH is so fun to play, we ask that you NOT play it while we're gathered as a big group; the music makes it hard to hear each other talk.

#### **Library**

This is a great place to eat (have an indoor picnic on the floor!), talk with your friends, or play board games. There is NO CLIMBING on the furniture, cabinets, or the spiral staircase.

#### **Sage Hall and the Playground**

This is where you can really move around and play! Make sure you have permission from your parents to be here and be sure to bring TWO adults with you to watch if there are no Nursery staff members present. There is NO CLIMBING on the fence around the Playground or on the very big and very old Yellowwood trees.

#### **Sanctuary**

When you are in worship, you should be sitting with your parents or with another adult. You can find books and activity packets in the Children's Worship Book Corner. If you need to talk to someone, it is important to whisper, because lots of people are trying to listen, pray, and sing. If it gets really hard to be quiet in the Sanctuary, you may go to the Hastings Room with an adult, where you can hear the service through speakers.

Everyone in our church family is learning these rules and is trying to follow them. Sometimes other adults—not just your moms, dads, or grandparents—might remind you of the rules.

It is important to remember that First Church is a place where we listen to each other and work together to make a safe and happy church.

First Church in Cambridge, Congregational, UCC

SAFE CHURCH INCIDENT REPORT FORM

This form is to be used to register all injuries or mishaps to children that take place during church programs or events on or off church premises. It is also to be used for all suspicions of child abuse or neglect.

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_  Male  Female

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Town/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Reporter: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Town/Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (home/work/cell): \_\_\_\_\_

1. Briefly describe the nature and extent of the injury, accident or abuse. Include specifics such as date, time and location.

---

---

---

---

---

2. Describe the circumstances under which you became aware of the incident. Include names of witnesses.

---

---

---

---

---

3. Indicate action taken by church staff and/or members/volunteers, and include their names.

---

---

---

---

4. Please give other information that you think might be helpful in establishing the cause of injury and/or the person(s) responsible for it. If known, please provide the names(s) of the alleged perpetrator(s).

---

---

---

---

Please return the completed form to a Minister or to the Director of Creative Worship & Arts within 24 hours of the incident.

Thank you.

**FOR OFFICE USE ONLY**

Date Report Received: \_\_\_\_\_ Report Received by: \_\_\_\_\_

Copy submitted to parents/guardians (if injured person is a child).

Date submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Copy submitted to reporter.

Date submitted: \_\_\_\_\_

Submitted by: \_\_\_\_\_

Further Action:

---

---

Comments:

---

---