

**SAFE CHURCH
POLICIES
SUMMARY**

**Memorial Congregational Church of
Sudbury, Inc.
(United Church of Christ)
Sudbury, Massachusetts**

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SAFE CHURCH POLICIES - SUMMARY

A. INTRODUCTION

The following is a summary of the Safe Church Policies adopted by Memorial Congregational Church of Sudbury, Inc., hereafter referred to as “MCC” or the “Church.” These Policies are the foundation of the Safe Church Procedures practiced by the Church in seeking to create a safe environment for our members, friends, employees, volunteers, guests, and renters. The policies and procedures can be found together in the MCC Policies and Procedures Manual.

A.1 PURPOSE

As is stated in our Covenant and reflected in our Constitution and our By-Laws, we, the members, and friends of Memorial Congregational Church “unite for the worship of God and the service of humanity.” Every effort will be made to ensure that all who participate in our church life, whether adults or children, whether members, friends, employees, volunteers, guests, or renters, be able to pursue this Purpose in an environment that is safe, secure, and nurturing.

However, we recognize that we cannot eliminate all risks, but we can strive to reach that goal by taking intentional and direct actions. It is in this spirit that the MCC Safe Church Policies and Procedures were created. We consider this to be a living document which will be amended over time as new issues arise. Although there are sure to be omissions, we hope this document will provide guidelines to create a safer environment.

A.2 SAFETY

Safety means that a person’s spiritual, emotional, and physical self is protected from injury.

1. Spiritual Safety
 - a. People have the freedom to express their faith appropriately, and
 - b. people’s beliefs are treated respectfully.
2. Emotional Safety
 - a. Kindness and civility are the norm,
 - b. people refrain from personal attacks and gossip, and
 - c. confidentiality is honored.
3. Physical Safety
 - a. Door code and key holders agree to abide by safe church policies,
 - b. facilities are clean and well lit,
 - c. exits are clearly marked and free of debris,
 - d. fire alarms are kept in working order, and
 - e. food preparation areas are clean and in compliance with health department regulations and guidelines.

A.3 WEAPONS

Unless otherwise allowed by MCC, weapons, of any kind, are NOT permitted on MCC property, either within the buildings or on the grounds. Weapons discovered on MCC property will be reported to the Sudbury Police Department, and/or confiscated and disposed as is deemed appropriate by MCC. A

weapon includes any type of gun, knife, bow/arrow, sword, stun device, spray or any other instrument or device capable of inflicting harm. This weapons policy does not apply to current law enforcement personnel legally permitted to possess firearms or other types of weapons in Sudbury, Massachusetts.

A.4 SCOPE OF POLICIES

The policies included in this document apply to all activities which take place within the building and properties of MCC, as well as programs, activities, or events scheduled as part of the ministry of this church which take place elsewhere. The policies apply to all members, friends, employees, volunteers, guests, renters of the church and renters of church property.

A.5 LOCATION OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

This outline of the Safe Church Policies is included as part of the MCC Safe Church Policies and Procedures Manual, copies of which are kept in binders in three locations, as well as posted on the church website:

1. the Church Office;
2. the Christian Education resource area; and
3. the Church Library located in the Church meeting room.

B. BUILDING SAFETY

It is the responsibility of MCC to maintain physical safety of the church building.

B.1 GENERAL

MCC will endeavor to maintain building safety in the following manner.

1. Maintain the building upkeep to preserve physical safety.
2. Maintain the fire alarm system, fire extinguishers and first aid kits.
3. Create and post floor plans indicating emergency exits, fire extinguishers, first aid kits and emergency phone numbers.
4. Provide users of the building a process by which to report any safety issues to the Properties Ministry.
5. Follow health department guidelines for food preparation and comply with local board of health inspection requirements.

B.2 OPEN DOOR POLICY

1. Memorial Congregational Church has an open-door philosophy, meaning that all rooms, with the exception of rest rooms, are to be open and visible from outside of the room at all times.

B.3 ACCESS CODE AND KEY POLICY

If a person wishes to be given an access code or a key to the MCC building, they may request the same of the Properties Ministry. A Code/Key Registry will be maintained by the Properties Ministry with the help of the church's Office Administrator. The access code or key will be issued if the following conditions are met.

1. The person requesting of an access code or a key must have a clearly stated reason for the request. The request will be considered and approved by the Properties Ministry before a code or a key will be issued.
2. The person requesting the code or the key must sign the Code/Key Registry and a Statement of Compliance prior to receiving the code or key.
3. Keys shall be returned when they are no longer needed to the Properties Ministry or the Church Administrator and the return documented accordingly.
4. Codes are not to be shared with any unauthorized persons. Keys are not to be loaned or given to any unauthorized persons. Keys are not to be duplicated, or kept beyond the time that they are needed. Authorized code/key holders may only share or loan their code or key to/with a spouse if the spouse has signed the Code/Key Registry and a Statement of Compliance.

B.3 OUTSIDE GROUPS

All outside groups who rent or use the church facilities will receive a copy of the Safe Church Policies Summary. Prior to being given access to the church, the group must agree to comply with its provisions as pertain to their use of the building, and to sign the Statement of Compliance form acknowledging that they have become familiar with the safe church policies and will abide by them.

B.4 CHURCH EVENT MONITORS/DE-ESCALATORS

Church event monitor(s)/de-escalator(s) will be in attendance at church worship services and church sponsored events taking place in the church sanctuary, Ames Hall and/or the church school wing, to greet, become aware of and observe people attending the service or the event, focusing in particular on people who are not known to the monitor/de-escalator.

The event monitor(s)/de-escalator(s) will watch for potential situations that could result in conflict, disruption or danger and take whatever actions that they deem appropriate to defuse the situation.

The Deacons are responsible for the creation and administration of monitoring/de-escalation procedures related to church worship services.

The organizers of other church sponsored events are responsible for the creation and administration of monitoring/de-escalation procedures related to these events.

The sponsors and/or organizers of events not sponsored by the church, whether or not the church is a participant in these events, are responsible for the creation and administration of monitoring and de-escalation procedures related to these events.

C. SCREENING AND HIRING

MCC practices the screening of prospective employees and youth program volunteers prior to engaging them for services to the church. The screening process includes an application process, reference checking, CORI checks, and the requirement that staff and youth program volunteers sign a statement that they have become familiar with and will abide by the Safe Church Policies.

D. YOUTH PROTECTION AND SUPERVISION

D.1 YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

MCC is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love. Therefore, we will provide supervision for all activities and programs involving youth, and employ practices that provide for the safety of all youth participants, as well as teachers, leaders and helpers who serve in the youth ministry.

The use of the word “youth” refers to anyone under the age of 18.

D.2 YOUTH PROTECTION PROCEDURES

1. Two Adult Policy

The two adult policy is intended to protect youth and prevent adults from encountering a situation where they could be wrongfully accused. Therefore, no adult will be alone in the church, or at a church approved activity, with a youth that is not his or her own or a relative, without written permission of the youth's parent(s). If a second adult cannot be located, the class or activity will be canceled, and the youth will be returned to their parent(s) or guardian(s).

2. Five Year Older Rule

All teachers, volunteers, helpers, chaperones and/or drivers for youth activities whether held at the church or off-site must be at least five years older than the oldest participant in the class, group, or activity.

E. INTERNET SAFETY

1. Digital media are an integral part of daily life offering many exciting and ever changing opportunities for communication. The use and abuse of digital media can also disproportionately shape the lives of young people. Behavior in the digital world is never private. Posted content may be used out of context and out of the control of the originating individuals and organizations creating the potential for harm and abuse in adult/adult, adult/child, adult/youth, and youth/youth relationships. In an effort to mitigate the above referenced potential for harm and abuse the MCC policy regarding the use of digital media follows. MCC Safe Church Policies and Procedures apply to all actions that transpire in digital communications, just as they apply to actions that transpire in the physical world.
2. All digital communications (email, social networking sites or platforms, notes, texts, or posts, etc.) are considered NOT to be confidential and will be treated accordingly.

3. All private digital communication between adults and unrelated children or youths, including the use of social networking websites like Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, instant messaging, texting, and the like, is prohibited.
4. All digital interactions are to be transparent: done in such a way that it is easy for others to see what has transpired in the interaction.
5. All laws regarding the reporting of suspected abuse, neglect, or the exploitation of children or youth apply to digital interactions in the same way that as they do to physical interactions.

F. SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

F.1 REPORTING AND RESPONSE POLICY

If there is a reasonable cause to believe that child abuse has occurred the allegation must be reported to the Massachusetts Department of Children and Families (DCF). All members of the church community, including members, friends, staff and volunteers, as well as renters and other people or organizations using the church facilities are obligated to report reasonable suspicions of child abuse.

F.2 REPORTING SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE

1. Standard for Reporting: Anyone with “a reasonable cause to believe” that a child is suffering or has suffered from abuse or neglect will follow the response and reporting policies and procedures contained in the MCC Safe Church Policies and Procedures Manual or as mandated by Massachusetts Department of Children and Families, see the Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting, A Mandated Reporter’s Guide, which can be found on-line at <https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcf-mandated-reporter-guide>.
2. Preventing Imminent Harm:
 - a. Any circumstance of abuse that poses imminent risk of serious harm will be reported to 911 and the Sudbury Police Department or 978-443-2121. Because of the vulnerability of these individuals their right to our protection supersedes a right to confidentiality of the parties involved.
 - b. Call an ambulance if the injury is severe.

G. ADULT CONDUCT

MCC wishes to create and maintain a community free of all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation for church members, friends, staff, and volunteers worshiping and working together and for renters and individuals and organizations using the church facilities.

G.1 DEFINITIONS

1. Harassment: repeated misconduct, whether verbal or physical, that creates an environment that is uncomfortable, unwelcoming, discriminating, or intimidating, or leads to an atmosphere in which a person's ability to participate in worship and activities at the church is compromised.
2. 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, subjecting the person to public discrimination, or unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones. Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome – and using sexualized behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another.

3. Elderly Person: as defined by Massachusetts General Laws MGL c.19A, § 14, an individual who is sixty years of age or over.
4. Vulnerable adult: Any person aged 18 or over who is or may be in need of assistance by reason of physical, mental disability, age, emotional illness, and who is unable to take care of or to protect him or herself against significant harm or serious exploitation which may be occasioned by the actions or inactions of other people.

G.2 ADULT CONDUCT

As a matter of Church policy, the Church will not tolerate sexual exploitation or harassment of any kind. Such behavior is expressly prohibited. It is the intention of the Church to respond to allegations of said behavior as deemed necessary, including the discipline of persons alleged to have been involved and to report said allegations to the appropriate authorities.

If sexual exploitation or harassment occurs while the church facilities are being used by renters or other outside parties it is the responsibility of those parties to respond to allegations of said prohibited behavior and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who are alleged to have been involved and to report the allegations to the appropriate authorities.

The above notwithstanding, any individual has the right to report allegations of sexual exploitation or harassment directly to the appropriate authorities if they choose.

H. COMPLAINTS OF SUSPECTED ADULT MISCONDUCT

Any person may bring forward a concern or complaint concerning suspected adult misconduct. Such concerns or complaints will be investigated and action(s) taken as deemed appropriate by the church. The utmost respect shall be given to the confidentiality and privacy of all parties. Any person who makes a report or assists in investigation of such a report, will not be adversely affected either as to the terms and conditions of their employment, or engagement by the church, or their membership or involvement with the church, or otherwise discriminated against.

I. TRAINING AND EDUCATION

Every effort will be made to train all employees, mandated reporters, and volunteers as deemed appropriate regarding the safe church policies and procedures. Mandated reporters, as well as staff and volunteers who have regular direct contact with youth should also receive education about child abuse awareness. Anyone who will have regular contact with children and anyone who will be given access to the Church by way of a key or an access code will be asked to read and sign a Statement of Compliance acknowledging compliance with Safe Church Policies and Procedures or Safe Church Policies, as applicable.