

THE BRIARCLIFF CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Safe Church Policy

Purpose

As a community of Christian faith, The Briarcliff Congregational Church (“BCC” or “The Church”) is committed to creating and maintaining an environment in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation, and where children and youth are protected from any actions or behaviors that may be detrimental to their wellbeing. The purpose of this policy is to make clear that BCC takes seriously its commitment to provide a safe, non-threatening environment for all persons, and will take whatever actions are necessary and appropriate to ensure that prohibited actions and behaviors are prevented and/or corrected.

Definitions

Ministerial Staff: The Pastor, Interim Pastor, Associate or Assistant Pastor of the Church, as defined in Article IV of the By-laws.

Staff: Persons hired and paid (or eligible to be paid) by the Church to perform specific duties related to the work of the Church. Staff includes all Program Staff as defined in Article V of the By-laws, plus the Office Administrator, Sexton and/or Custodial Staff and any other positions authorized by Church Council or the Board of Trustees, Finance and Facilities.

Youth Activities Volunteers (YAV): Unpaid individuals who assist in the provision of programs and services designed for children and youth (under the age of 18), and unpaid individuals who routinely provide church-related services in the general vicinity of child and youth programs, whether or not such services directly involve youth programs. YAVs include, but are not limited to, Sunday School teachers, Nursery caregivers, host parents for church-sponsored youth programs, etc.

Sexual Abuse: any contact or interaction, or attempted contact or interaction, by an adult with a child in which the child is, or is intended or encouraged to be, used for the sexual stimulation of the adult or another person.

Sexual Exploitation: sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a member of the Ministerial Staff takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served by causing or allowing that person to engage in sexual behavior with the such member or any other member of the Ministerial Staff.

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 written, verbal, physical or visual 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 work or church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

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.

Policy

The Briarcliff Congregational Church expressly prohibits Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Harassment and all

other behaviors and activities that are not in keeping with the Church's commitment to provide a safe and nurturing environment in which all people may learn about and experience the love of God. Staff, Ministerial Staff and Youth Activity Volunteers are required to read, understand and adhere to this policy. The facts and circumstances of any known or suspected case of Sexual Abuse, or any activity, behavior, situation or condition that may endanger our young people, must be promptly reported to the proper Church authorities, who will immediately take appropriate action including making reports to civil authorities as necessary. All Members and other persons associated with the Church are encouraged to report cases of possible Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment in accordance with this policy.

Application of This Policy

1. Prior to making any final offer of employment, the Church will provide the selected candidate for any Staff or Ministerial Staff position with a copy of this policy and require the candidate to complete a disclosure form acknowledging receipt and understanding of this policy and authorizing the Church to conduct a background and sex offender check, in accordance with New York law. The results of these checks will be reviewed by the Pastor and the Personnel Coordinator prior to making a final offer of employment to determine whether any information contained therein would disqualify the person from serving, except that the results from the checks of candidates for Pastor shall be reviewed by the Chairperson(s) of the Pastoral Search Committee.
2. Persons seeking to serve in a Youth Activity Volunteer position must have been members of BCC or regular attendees and participants in BCC worship and activities for at least six (6) months prior to serving as a YAV. They will be provided with a copy of this policy and must complete the Youth Activity Volunteer Application Form (Attachment A), including the names of two persons (preferably members of the Church) who can vouch for the character and suitability of the candidate for the desired position, except that such references shall not be required for those already serving in YAV position at the time this policy is adopted. A sex offender check shall be conducted by the Church for all applicants.
3. Persons continuing to serve in Youth Activity Volunteer positions shall have an updated sex offender check conducted every three (3) years.
4. The results of sex offender checks on YAVs will be reviewed by the Pastor and Personnel Coordinator to determine whether any information contained therein would disqualify the person from serving in the YAV position.
5. Persons serving in Ministerial Staff positions must also meet all requirements established by the United Church of Christ on a Denominational, Conference and Association level as related to safe church standards, including but not limited to attendance at Boundary Awareness Training classes as specified by the UCC, Conference and/or Association.

Requirements for Youth Activities

1. Whenever practical, youth activities should take place in open rooms, readily visible areas or with more than one adult present.
2. Minor children must have written permission from a parent or legal guardian to participate in overnight events or Church-sponsored activities that take place off Church property.
3. Any one-on-one interaction between an adult and a child must take place in an open area or room with the door open.

Procedures for Handling Complaints

1. Complaints regarding possible violations of this policy may be made by the alleged victim or any other person who has knowledge or reason to believe that a transgression has occurred. The initial complaint may be made to the Pastor or, if notification to the Pastor is not possible or appropriate, to the Moderator or Personnel Coordinator.
2. Whenever possible and appropriate, an informal resolution to the complaint should be sought through counseling and education.
3. When informal resolution is not successful or appropriate, the Pastor shall report the complaint to the Moderator, who shall appoint a two-person Investigative Team consisting of representatives (other than the Chairpersons) of the

Board of Deacons, Board of Trustees and/or Board of Education, as appropriate. If the complaint alleges Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Harassment, this team must consist of one male and one female. The Personnel Coordinator shall act in an advisory role to this Team.

4. The Investigative Team shall gather statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged complaint and from others who may have pertinent information, such as qualified professional consultants, and present such information to a Review Committee consisting of the Pastor (unless the Pastor is directly involved in the complaint), Moderator and Chairpersons of the four Boards of the Church. This Committee shall make determinations of whether a violation of Church Policy has occurred, with the clear understanding that neither consent nor acquiescence will excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior.
5. If the Review Committee finds that Church Policy was violated, appropriate and necessary action will be taken. Such action may include:
 - a formal reprimand, with defined expectations for changed behavior;
 - recommending or requiring psychological or psychiatric assessment, counseling and/or treatment;
 - probationary standing, with the terms of the probation clearly defined;
 - dismissal from employment or from participation as a Youth Activity Volunteer. If such action is directed at the Pastor, such action will consist of a recommendation to terminate the Pastor, which must be confirmed by majority vote of the congregation in accordance with the By-laws;
 - a recommendation to the Board of Deacons that membership in the Church be terminated, in accordance with the By-laws.
6. If the Review Committee finds that no violation of Church policy has occurred, the matter shall be considered closed.
7. Either the Investigative Team or the Review Committee may seek the advice of legal counsel or other professionals to advise it in performing its functions.
8. All records and documents related to the complaint, including reports and documents prepared by the Investigative Team and Review Committee, shall be kept confidential to the extent possible.
9. No person bringing a Sexual Abuse, Sexual Harassment, Sexual Exploitation or other complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment or church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged as a result of their actions in this case.

Ministerial Misconduct

Apart from any disposition of the matter by the Church, all allegations of behavior which call into question the fitness for ministry of any member of the Ministerial Staff will be promptly forwarded to the Ordination and Ministerial Standing Committee of the Metropolitan Association of the United Church of Christ.

Child Abuse or Mistreatment

Apart from any legal requirements, the Church will make a report to appropriate civil authorities if at any time there is reasonable cause to believe that a minor may be an abused, mistreated or neglected child. Anyone 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 Pastor and/or Moderator so that the church may take appropriate action in a timely manner.

Responsibilities

1. The Board of Trustees will be responsible for periodically reviewing and updating this policy.
2. Church Council will be responsible for approving the policy and any subsequent changes and revisions.
3. The responsible Board or Committee shall be responsible for ensuring that the proper disclosure forms are completed for new hire and continuing employees and volunteers under their jurisdiction.
4. The Personnel Coordinator shall be responsible for securely maintaining all confidential records related to this policy, and for providing guidance and assistance to responsible parties in the application of the policy.

5. The Moderator and Pastor shall be jointly responsible for oversight to ensure that this policy is uniformly and consistently followed.
6. Questions and requests for clarification of this policy should be directed to the Moderator, Pastor or Personnel Coordinator.

Attachment A

The Briarcliff Congregational Church
Youth Activities Volunteer Application Form

Position being applied for: _____

Name: _____ Date of Birth: ____/____/____
Last First M.I. Month Day Year

Address: _____ City: _____ State: ____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ Alt. Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Personal References: Please provide the name and contact information for two personal references, not members of your immediate family. If possible, one or both should be members of The Briarcliff Congregational Church.

Reference #1: Name: _____
Contact Info: _____

Reference #2: Name: _____
Contact Info: _____

I understand that I am applying for a position as a Youth Activities Volunteer of The Briarcliff Congregational Church ("BCC"), and that Youth Activities Volunteers are not employees of BCC and are not entitled to any compensation or benefits of any form whatsoever. As a volunteer, either BCC or I can terminate my service at any time with or without cause.

I understand that BCC is committed to providing a safe, non-threatening environment for all persons, including the children and youth in the congregation, and that if I am asked by BCC to serve as a Youth Activities Volunteer, I will be in a position of responsibility towards the children and youth who participate in the programs and services for which I volunteer. To that end, I acknowledge that I have received a copy of The Briarcliff Congregational Church Safe Church Policy, and I have read and understand the same. In accordance with the Safe Church Policy, I understand that BCC will conduct a search to determine whether I am listed on any public Sex Offender Registry.

Acknowledged and agreed as of the date set forth below.

(PRINT NAME & SIGN) DATE

(PRINT NAME & SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN FOR APPLICANTS UNDER 18) DATE

*****FOR CHURCH USE ONLY*****

- Sex Offender Registry (www.nsopr.gov) review performed on _____
Personal interview conducted by staff on _____
Reference inquiries completed on _____