

Spring Hill United Church of Christ - Policy on Safe Conduct: Creating a Safe Place for Youth and Children's Ministries

Biblical Background:

"Instead, as he who called you is holy, be holy yourselves in all your conduct."
(1 Peter 1:15)

"He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?"
(Micah 6:8)

"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me"
(Matthew 18:5)

"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones. . . , it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea"
(Matthew 18:6)

But Jesus said, *"Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs."*
(Matthew 19:14)

"But let justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream"
(Amos 5:24)

"You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry."
(Exodus 22:21-23)

Each reference above is from the New Revised Standard version.

As a community of Christian faith, the Spring Hill United Church of Christ (SHUCC) is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community 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. The congregation of SHUCC supports principles of SafeConduct, which include individual responsibility to fulfill the highest standards of personal conduct toward others and to lead and guide the congregation in fulfillment of the standards set by our Christian faith. SHUCC strongly opposes and prohibits "sexual exploitation", "sexual harassment" or any form of exploitation or abuse of others regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, sexual identification or mental capacity. It is the intention of our congregation to affirmatively nurture good behavior, and to prevent

and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, as necessary, discipline those persons who violate this policy.

Every member of the Congregation, whether clergy, leader, lay staff, volunteer or parent, has a role to lead those who look to them individually for guidance, to monitor their behavior, and to redirect them as they cross boundaries of SafeConduct. Our congregation shall nurture good conduct as demonstrated by personal behaviors that are consistent with our Christian values. As we might conduct an orchestra, we shall guide and lead in ministry.

Guidelines

SHUCC 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:

- All teachers, substitutes, and assistants must submit a completed application/disclosure form. The SHUCC fingerprint policy is an acceptable way to complete a background check.
- Anyone who volunteers to work with children or youth must be a member of the congregation for at least six months.
- All volunteers will receive orientation regarding safe church policy and procedures.
- No volunteer who has been convicted of child abuse (sexual, physical, emotional) will be permitted to work with children or youth. The use of physical discipline or verbal abuse is prohibited.
- No child, youth, or adult is allowed to loiter in the hall, building, or on the grounds during worship service.
- A parent, family member, or guardian must pick children up at their classrooms immediately following the worship service.
- Windows on classroom doors may not be covered.
- There is no church-sanctioned event that permits an adult to be alone with one or more child or youth at any time. No unauthorized persons should be in classrooms.
- No teacher/authorized volunteer may take a child or youth outside of the building during church school without consent of the parents (preferably written permission) and with knowledge of the Faith Formation Team, if possible.
- Primarily because of allergy concerns, no food or drink should be offered during church school without first consulting individual registration forms (or asking permission of parents). From time to time, curriculum lessons call for a specific food or drink to be used with the lesson. A director of Faith Formation would be familiar with the content of the lessons well ahead of time and could obtain necessary permission.
- Teachers, aides, or volunteers who accompany a child to the bathroom must remain outside the bathroom while the child is inside. If a child needs assistance, two authorized volunteers must be present. Smaller children should be walked to the bathroom in the nursery and older children could be accompanied to the handicapped bathroom. Parents should be asked if they wish to be called to make diaper changes. If they do not wish to be called, two authorized individuals must be present to make the change.
- If a medical emergency arises, call 911, then parent (which means that authorized individuals must have cell phone access).

- No unauthorized person is allowed in the nursery or church school classrooms - this includes friends, parents, and siblings of assistants. Parents are welcome to be with their own children in the nursery, but church school aged children may not join them.
- In the event that an authorized individual suspects child abuse the moderator and/or pastor must be notified.
- Behavioral Expectations: Teachers will support children in creating a covenant outlining appropriate behavior.
- Content of all lessons must be consistent with church traditions and appropriate to age and dynamics of class.

Procedures for Handling Complaints

- A sub-group of the Faith Formation Team will attempt to resolve incidents informally if possible.
- If an informal resolution is not possible or does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the Faith Formation Team will advise the Pastor and Moderator who will take actions appropriate to resolve the matter.