

Safe Conduct Policy

New Ark United Church of Christ

Approved: February 8, 2009

PREAMBLE

As a community of faith committed to Jesus Christ, we strive to extend a generous welcome to all who enter our doors and to treat them with the love and dignity that God bestows upon each and every one of us. We want our church to be a safe place for everyone.

Unfortunately, we cannot simply assume that our church is a safe place. We must take intentional and direct actions to achieve this goal. Our congregation wants people of all ages to be able to deepen their relationship with God and each other in an environment that is safe and secure. We want to create an environment where the vulnerable are protected and opportunities for inappropriate behavior are minimized. Therefore, we the members of the New Ark United Church of Christ have created this Safe Conduct Policy (SCP) to help us provide a safe and nurturing environment for all who participate in its programs.

POLICY

New Ark United Church of Christ, Newark, DE, hereafter referred to as "the Church," prohibits all forms of physical, emotional and sexual abuse on its premises and in any activities sponsored by the Church.

Abuse can occur anywhere, and removing the opportunity for abuse is a key step in prevention. It is the intention and stated policy of the Church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to our policy of prohibiting abuse. These actions include screening and orienting staff and volunteers, setting guidelines for working with youth, publicizing reporting procedures, and responding effectively to reports of abuse.

This policy may be reviewed as needed by the Church's Coordinating Committee to ensure its continued effectiveness. Suggested changes will be taken to the congregation for approval.

WHY SAFE CHURCH POLICIES ARE NECESSARY

1. Child Safety

The most important and obvious reason for establishing a Safe Conduct Policy is to provide for the safety and wellbeing of our children during church functions. As a part of the village that is helping to raise our children to be healthy adults able to live full lives, it is vitally important that we take an active role in providing an environment

where children are safe and well protected while in our care. As we share responsibility for the welfare of our children, we strengthen our community, thus becoming the village it takes to raise a child.

2. Insurance Liability

The second most important reason for establishing a written SCP is to comply with the terms of our insurance policy.

3. Public Life is Not an Indicator of Personal Behavior

Experts tell us that predators, especially those who prey on children, go to great lengths to set up a double life: a public life that often encompasses community leadership and a private, hidden life involved in problematic behavior that threatens the wellbeing of children.

In a search of state newspapers during the year 2006, individuals in the following professions were accused and convicted of sexual assault:

- doctoral candidate
- day-care owner
- attorney
- military personnel
- medical doctor
- adult female high school worker
- internet café manager
- religious bookstore owner
- high school girls' basketball coach
- certified nursing assistant
- corrections officer

Often these people are respected members of the community, people we would assume to be "safe." Because of their positions in our community, predators are often falsely assumed to be trustworthy individuals.

4. Additional Reasons

While the above reasons are arguably the most vital reasons for adopting an SCP immediately, the following reasons are also valid in considering why an SCP is not an option, but a requirement. In adopting an SCP we hope to:

- keep faith with parents/guardians concerning the safety of their children.
- prevent ruined and broken lives
- prevent public embarrassment of the congregation
- prevent lawsuits claiming our church did not do all it could to be a safer environment ensure our ability to attain sufficient liability insurance.

ATTITUDES THAT PREVENT CHURCHES FROM ADOPTING AN SCP

Sexual abuse experts deem churches to be high-risk sex abuse environments due to attitudes actively fostered in religious communities. These attitudes include, but are not limited to:

- thinking the best of every person in the church
- valuing forgiveness of "mistakes"
- adopting over-confidence in being able to deter abusers through detection
- subscribing to the myth that it "happens elsewhere, but not here"
- considering background checks and SCPs to be an affront to the close ties in the church family

As a result of the above assumptions, worship centers have become the last major social institutions to react to the threat of sexual predators, and for this reason have become venues for predators wanting easy access to children.

DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are used in this Safe Conduct Policy. These are not legal definitions. For a full account of Delaware laws on child abuse and sexual assault, see the Delaware Criminal Code on the web <http://delcode.delaware.gov/title11/c005/sc02/index.shtml>.

1. What is safety?

Safety means that a person's spiritual, emotional and physical self are protected from seen and unseen injury. To further clarify what is meant by "safety," the following were considered:

- a. Spiritual safety**
 - People have the freedom to express their faith.
 - People's beliefs are treated respectfully.
- b. Emotional safety**
 - Kindness and civility are the norm.
 - People refrain from personal attacks and gossip.
 - Confidentiality is honored.
- c. Physical safety**
 - Anyone interacting with children must agree to abide by this Safe Conduct Policy.
 - Facilities are clean and well lit.
 - Exits are clearly marked and free of debris.
 - Fire extinguishers and smoke detectors are clearly visible and in working order.
 - Chemicals and poisons are properly labeled and stored.

- Food preparation areas are clean and health department guidelines for food preparation are followed.

2. What is Child Abuse?

Child Abuse takes place when a child (a person younger than eighteen years of age) is harmed by someone else physically, psychologically, or through acts of neglect. Acts of abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Inflicting, or allowing to be inflicted, serious physical injury to the child.
 - Creating, or allowing to be created, a substantial risk of serious physical injury to the child.
 - Committing, or allowing to be committed, Sexual Abuse (see below for definition) against the child.
 - Promoting the illegal use of alcohol or drugs by anyone, or allowing a child to use alcohol or illegal drugs.
- **What is Sexual Abuse?**
Sexual Abuse includes Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment.

- **Sexual Assault** is a broad term that refers to any unwanted sexual touching, which can include, but is not limited to:
 - Rape, sodomy, incest, sexual battery (forcible touching), molestation, or attempts to commit these assaults.
 - Intentional unwanted physical contact which is sexual in nature, such as pinching, patting, caressing, poking, grabbing, brushing against another person's body, or violating another person's space.
 - patronizing, promoting or permitting prostitution; and using a child in a sexual performance, such as promoting a sexual performance by a child in person, on video, on computer, or in a still photo

- **Sexual Harassment** includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature. Sexual Harassment can include, but is not limited to:
 - Sexually oriented gestures, leering, noises, remarks, jokes, or comments directed at or made in the presence of any person.
 - Exposure to sexually explicit material available on the Internet, in magazines or other print media, on videos, or posted in a public space.
 - Sexual Harassment can include sexual assault.

4. What is Child Maltreatment (Including Neglect)?

Maltreatment occurs when a child's parent or another person legally responsible for the child impairs (or places the child in imminent danger of impairment) a child's physical, mental or emotional condition by failing to exercise a minimum degree of care. Examples of maltreatment include, but are not limited to:

- Failing to provide sufficient food, clothing, shelter, education.
- Failing to provide proper supervision, guardianship, or medical care (refers to all medical issues, including dental, optometric, or surgical care).
- Inflicting excessive corporal punishment, abandoning the child, or misusing alcohol or other drugs to the extent that the child is placed in imminent danger.

Poverty or financial inability to provide the above is not considered maltreatment.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAM GUIDELINES

In order to protect children, who are especially vulnerable to abuse, the following guidelines will be observed:

1. Leadership

Youth Group meetings, Christian Education classes for minors, Children's Choir, and any other activities involving children, will be planned so that there are **two** non-related **adult leaders** present, whenever possible. For the purposes of our youth and children's programming, an adult leader is a person 18 years of age or older AND 5 years older than the oldest youth participant.

Adult leaders should avoid being alone with a child who is not their own and should avoid being out of sight of other adults and children. When there is only one adult leader present to supervise children and youth, parents will be notified. If a child has not been picked up on time by parents, two adult leaders will remain with the child whenever possible. Children will not be driven home by a lone adult leader without parental permission.

Middle-school and high-school aged youth who wish to help out in caring for young children may do so, in addition to the two adult leaders. However, older youth should never be left alone in the room to care for children without an adult leader present.

2. Meeting Spaces

Meetings with children and youth shall be held in well-lit public spaces. Doors should be unlocked and have windows. If there is a need for a private conversation, the door should be open and the participants visible to others. Children will not be released to anyone other than a parent without parental permission.

When Youth Group functions are held in spaces other than the church building, parents of the youth must sign permission slips and two adult leaders must accompany the group to the function and remain with the group at all times.

If a Youth Group function requires transportation, the youth should be transported via a contracted transportation provider (bus service), public transportation, or by their

parent/guardians. If youth are transported by anyone other than parent/guardians, an additional permission slip regarding transportation must be signed by the child's parent or legal guardian.

3. Overnight Events

When a function involves an overnight stay, there shall be at least two adult leaders, one for each gender. Privacy will be provided for washing and dressing. Trips and overnight meetings require written permission and insurance information from parent or guardian for emergency medical treatment.

4. Education of Children and Youth

New Ark UCC is committed to the prevention of child abuse through education of our children and youth. On a regular basis, the Christian Education Committee offers the *Our Whole Lives* comprehensive human sexuality curriculum. *Our Whole Lives* provides youth with accurate, age-appropriate information on sexual health, human development, sexual behavior, relationships, communication, boundaries and safety, and personal skills in the supportive setting of their faith community. Our children and youth only participate in the program with full written consent and commitment from their parents.

GUIDELINES FOR DISCIPLINING AND INTERACTING WITH CHILDREN

A. Guidelines for Interacting With Children

1. Speaking With Children

When speaking with children, adults and youth leaders should use appropriate language and avoid making sexual references, sexual jokes, sexual innuendos, and references to drinking alcohol or using illegal drugs (except as part of alcohol or drug abuse education). Children and teenagers shall be encouraged to refrain from sexual talk or inappropriate references to drug or alcohol use.

2. Touching Children

When touching children, adults will follow these guidelines:

- Adults will touch children only in appropriate ways and places such as on the hand, shoulder or upper back, avoiding discomfort or over-stimulation of the child.
- Adults will not touch children against their will except to protect the child or other people.

- Adults will not touch a part of a child's body that would be covered by a bathing suit, except in cases of clear medical necessity or when changing a diaper or helping young people or people with disabilities use the toilet.
- Adults will not initiate or encourage physical contact such as wrestling, horseplay, or any other high-contact games.

3. Toileting Young Children

When toileting young children:

- All adults will wait outside the bathroom door for children while they are performing personal sanitary functions.
- When able, a child should take care of her or his own clothes after toileting. When a child needs help, the adult should have the child step out of the stall into an open area.
- Any adult who is helping a child go to the bathroom should inform the other adult leader in the room that this is what they are doing.
- When helping children to clean up from crafts and to wash hands, the door to the bathroom should be left open.

B. Guidelines for Disciplining Children

Discipline must be administered in such a way as to help each child develop self-control and assume responsibility for his or her actions through clear and consistent rules and limits appropriate to the ages and development of the children in care. Adults in charge must use acceptable techniques and approaches to help children solve problems.

- Verbal reprimands will not include destructive criticism, insults or shouting, threats, or intimidation.
- When an adult encounters a particularly difficult situation, he or she should seek assistance from the parents of the children involved.
- Any discipline used must relate to the child's action and be handled without prolonged delay on the part of the staff. This ensures that the child is aware of the relationship between his or her actions and the consequences of those actions.
- "Time Out" in a chair in the same room but off to the side is acceptable. However, other means of isolating the child, such as in a closet, darkened area, or any area where the child cannot be seen and supervised by an adult, is prohibited.
- Where a child's behavior harms (or is likely to harm) the child, other people or property, OR when it seriously disrupts (or is likely to seriously disrupt) group interaction, the child may be separated briefly from the group. The child should only be separated from the group for as long as is necessary for the child to regain enough self-control to rejoin the group. The child must be placed in an area where he or she is in the view of, and can be supervised and supported

by, an adult. Interaction between an adult and the child must take place immediately following the separation to guide the child toward appropriate group behavior.

- Corporal punishment is prohibited. Corporal punishment means physical punishment inflicted directly on the body including, but not limited to: spanking, biting, shaking, slapping, twisting or squeezing; demanding excessive physical exercise, prolonged lack of movement or motion, or strenuous or bizarre postures; and compelling a child to eat or have in the child's mouth soap, foods, hot spices, or other substances.
- Withholding or using water, food, rest, or sleep as a punishment is prohibited. Methods of discipline, interaction, or toilet training which frighten, demean, or humiliate a child are prohibited.

REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO CHILD & YOUTH ABUSE

A. Guidelines for Reporting Abuse

Abuse is a crime that will be reported to the appropriate authorities. Church leaders, teachers and laypersons who suspect that abuse has occurred at New Ark UCC will adhere to the following reporting guidelines:

- Any and all incidents will be reported immediately (within 24 hours of the incident) to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the child (assuming the perpetrator is not the parent).
- The incident will also be reported immediately (within 24 hours of the incident) to one or more of the following members of the church (assuming they are not the perpetrator): the Pastor, the Child Care Coordinator, the Christian Education Committee Chair, or the Convener.
- The witness, or parents of the witness, will provide a written report of the incident within 24 hours to the pastor or Convener, who will gather the Ad Hoc Response Team (AHRT), explained in "B" below.
- Every allegation of sexual, physical and/or emotional abuse or sexual harassment will be treated seriously. Every allegation will be responded to in a prompt and professional manner.
- Every effort will be made to comfort and protect the victim of the alleged abuse and to ensure that the victim's needs are being met.
- The accused will be treated with respect and dignity during the process.
- Confidentiality of all involved parties will be respected.

B. Formation and Activity of the Ad Hoc Response Team

- Once an abuse has been reported to the above church officials, the pastor or convener will form an Ad Hoc Response Team (AHRT) within 24 hours. The AHRT will include at least 4 of the following: the witness to the incident, the

parent(s)/ guardian(s) of the child, the Pastor, the Child Care Coordinator, the Christian Education Committee Chair, the Convener and/or other church officials. If any of these persons were involved in the incident, then a suitable alternative member of the AHRT will be found.

- The AHRT will meet as soon as possible to implement an appropriate response. The AHRT may choose to end the response process at this point if it is clear that no violation of the Safe Conduct Policy has occurred. However, additional steps will be taken if one or more members of the AHRT feels the incident warrants further response.
- Additional AHRT actions may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Evaluating the incident, including interviews with the alleged victim and the accused.
 - Monitoring the accused, and documenting contacts with the accused.
 - Discussing with the accused to ensure he/she understands and respects appropriate limits of behavior.
 - Immediately removing the accused from any church position involving children or youth pending completion of the investigation.
 - Recommending the person who observed the incident report it immediately to appropriate authorities.
- The AHRT may also notify:
 - The Church's insurance carrier;
 - The Church's legal counsel to ensure all legal requirements are met in the response process;
 - The congregation as appropriate;
 - The Regional Associate Conference Pastor of the alleged incident if the pastor or church leader is involved in the allegation.
- The AHRT will function until the incident is deemed resolved.
- If the AHRT concludes that no violation of the Safe Conduct Policy has occurred, the team will document how they arrived at this conclusion. In order to preserve confidentiality in these matters, a secure place will be determined where these documents can be kept.

C. Observation of a Person Who May Be a Danger to Others on Church Grounds or at Off-site Church Functions

1. Notification

In the event that a member of New Ark United Church of Christ becomes aware that a person (or persons) who may be a danger to others is attending our services and/or other church functions and may interact with the children, it is the member's duty to notify the Pastor of this person's presence. The identification may be made from a web site, news article, Sex Offender Registry, or other source. The Pastor will form an AHRT. If anyone who would normally serve on the AHRT is identified as the potentially dangerous person, then a suitable alternative member of the AHRT will be found.

2. Steps Following Notification

Once notification has taken place, the following steps will be taken immediately:

- Confirmation of the information and an assessment of whether or not this person poses a threat. Charges and/or convictions that would indicate a threat include, but are not limited to: rape, assault, endangering the welfare of a child, kidnapping, and child molestation.
- The AHRT will determine an appropriate plan of action. This may include, but is not limited to, such steps as prohibiting any access to Sunday School and its classrooms, prohibiting participation in any youth activities, limiting the individual to Sunday services and fellowship in Wells Hall after services, or taking no action at all.
- The person involved will be informed of the plan of action that will also be communicated to the staff by the Pastor or a designated member of the Church. It is incumbent upon the AHRT to ensure that the plan of action is being followed.

D. Procedures When A Person With an Acknowledged Prior Conviction that May Indicate a Threat Wants To Become Affiliated With Our Church

1. The Pastor will form an AHRT.
2. The AHRT will make an assessment of whether or not this person poses a threat.
3. The AHRT will determine an appropriate plan of action as indicated in section C 2 b & c above.

PERSONNEL GUIDELINES FOR PAID STAFF AND ALL VOLUNTEERS WHO WORK WITH MINORS

A. Screening process

1. All paid staff, regardless of their position, and all volunteers who work with minors, will complete the relevant forms. Completed forms will be kept in a locked file, access to which is restricted to the Pastor, the Convener, and the Child Care Coordinator (who is responsible for recruiting, selecting and training paid child care employees).
2. Paid staff will complete the following forms:
 - a. Job Application
 - b. Criminal Records Check Consent Form
 - c. Disclosure Form

The Child Care Coordinator will be responsible for screening applicants for paid positions pertaining to child care.

3. Volunteers who work with minors will complete the following forms:
 - a. Volunteer Application
 - b. Disclosure Form

The Christian Education Committee will be responsible for screening applicants for volunteer positions. The CE Committee will check applicants on Sex Offender Registries.

B. Selection criteria

- An individual who has a criminal history that indicates a threat to children will not be considered.
- 2. Volunteers who work with minors are limited to church members or persons who are regular attendees. Regular attendance is defined as attendance at Sunday services an average of twice a month. Persons who are regular attendees must have been involved with the church for at least 3 months.

C. Staff & Volunteer Orientation

- All paid staff and volunteers who work with minors will be given a copy of the Safe Conduct Policy and will sign a form acknowledging that they have received, read, and agree to abide by the document.
- To encourage safe church practices, volunteers who wish to be trained in First Aid and Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) will be reimbursed by the church for the cost of taking these classes.
- Adult leaders and volunteers must be aware of the nearest emergency exit. A safe location outside of the building will be identified for each classroom by the Child Care Coordinator and the Christian Education Committee. In addition, the adult leader will be shown the location of First Aid supplies and the location of the nearest fire extinguisher. Fire drills will be conducted and smoke detectors will be tested as required by the church's insurance company.

The Safe Conduct Policy will be made available to all members and prospective members of the Church and will be included in the *New Ark Handbook*.

Approved 2/08/09

**CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAM VOLUNTEER
INFORMATION FORM
NEW ARK UCC, 300 EAST MAIN STREET, NEWARK, DE 19711**

Volunteer Position:

Name: Last First Middle Birth Date: mo/day/yr

Address: Apt./Number Street City State Zip

Phone Work Cell Email

Member of this Church? Yes No How long attending _____

1. Please note any specific talents and/or skills you have that would be interesting or helpful to share with the congregation either in this volunteer position or with the church in general.

2. Do you have a valid driver's license?
 Yes No

3. Have you been charged with reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance in the last five years?
 Yes No If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

4. Have you been convicted of any criminal offenses in the last five years?
 Yes No If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

5. Have you ever been convicted of a sexual offense?
 Yes No If yes, please note date _____ and provide a brief explanation.

I certify that the answers herein are true and complete to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the investigation of all statements contained herein as may be necessary. I agree to abide by the Safe Conduct Policy and all other New Ark UCC policies and procedures.

Signature

Date

COVENANT BETWEEN VOLUNTEERS AND THE CHURCH

The covenants between persons volunteering and the church require honesty, integrity and truthfulness for the health of the church. I attest that the information set forth in the Volunteer Information Form is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for dismissal from the volunteer position for which I completed this form. I acknowledge that it is my duty to amend in a timely fashion the responses and information I have provided if such amendments become necessary.

I authorize New Ark UCC and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made and to comment on the stated opinions regarding my background and character. To encourage such person and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comment, and statements made in good faith and without malice.

The New Ark UCC's process of engaging volunteers involves the distribution of information regarding applicants to those persons supervising any volunteer assignment in which they are to serve. I authorize the New Ark UCC and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these stated purposes. I understand the Church will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

I understand that the Church has the right to conduct a criminal records check. I consent to the Church's use of the information I provided for such a purpose. The Church has informed me that I have the right to review and challenge any negative information that would adversely impact me. In addition I have been informed that I will have an opportunity to correct any mistaken information. Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, I have been advised that upon request I will be provided the name, address and telephone number of the reporting agency as well as the nature, substance and source of all information. I consent to the Church's repeating this criminal history background check at its discretion.

I hereby certify that I have read, understand and agree to the conditions noted above.

Signature

Date

CONSENT AND RELEASE FROM LIABILITY

New Ark United Church of Christ

300 East Main Street, Newark, DE 19711 (302) 737-4711

office@newarkucc.org

_____ has my permission to participate in all activities of the New Ark United Church of Christ (NAUCC) and to be transported by private car or leased van/bus to attend church activities. I understand all events will have adult supervision. In consideration of the benefits to be derived from these activities, I hereby voluntarily waive any claim against the NAUCC, the sponsors, and the owner/or driver of the car or van/bus furnishing transportation to any event. I further agree to direct my son/daughter to conform to the fullest with the directions and instructions of the sponsors in charge. This consent and release is in effect until I give the NAUCC written notice to the contrary.

Parent/Guardian signature: _____ Phone: (____) _____

Street: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____ Date: _____

Parent/Guardian e-mail address _____

Student e-mail address _____

Current Youth member school _____

MEDICAL CARE PERMIT

In the event of illness or injury during any sponsored activity of NAUCC, I hereby authorize emergency medical care or first-aid treatment as needed for _____

This permit is in effect until I give NAUCC written notice to the contrary.

Parent/Guardian signature: _____

Health Insurance Company: _____ Subscriber's Name: _____

Policy Number: _____ Insurance company's emergency phone: _____

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

	Parents	Other Relative	Neighbor
Name			
Address			
Phone			

Please print (use the back of the form if necessary)

Has he/she had any surgery or serious illness within the last 3 years? ____yes ____ no. If yes, explain:

Is he/she required to take any medication? ____yes ____ no. If so, for what reason and how often?

Does he/she have any allergies or allergic reaction to any medication? ____yes ____ no. If yes, explain.

Is he/she presently under a doctor's care? ____yes ____ no. If yes, explain.