

To members of the Congregation

As Christians we are called to love, care for, protect and provide places of justice and hospitality for all persons, especially children. Churches are to be holy places of sanctuary where all can gather for worship, study and service with the assurance that they are safe and secure in the community of faith. With these commitments Ivanhoe Congregational Church has created a Safe Sanctuary Policy.

Many of us were totally unaware at our baptism, what our parents and the surrounding community were doing for us: making us full members of God's faithful household. In witnessing the baptism of others, we are reminded of what was promised to us and what we, in turn, are promising to others. In the sacrament of baptism, the question is posed: "Do you who witness and celebrate this sacrament, promise your love, support and care to the one about to be baptized, as he/she live and grow in Christ? And with all honesty and intention "we promise our love support and care."

Then comes the hard part; living out those promises in the day to day swelter of life. We may fail and come far short of the love we originally intended, yet, it is our responsibility to make the best possible world for the most dependent and vulnerable among us . By taking seriously the threat of harm that child abuse poses and by responding in positive proactive ways we are living out our own baptismal vows as members of Christ's household of faith.¹

Why safe sanctuaries? In short, it's our job as disciples.

The Safe Church task force has crafted these policies in accordance with "Making Our Churches Safe for All" from the United Church of Christ insurance board. With our call to create places of sanctuary, the congregation is now committed to a more organized and thorough process of volunteer/staff recruitment through the use of these new policies and forms. For youth leaders, we are aware that such a form asks for your extra commitment and the sharing of personal information by you. Please be assured that all the information provided will be kept in strict confidentiality and will be seen only by the pastor and the appropriate board chair.

In this spirit, thank you for being a partner in ministry with our children and youth.

Peace in Christ
Safe Church Task Force

¹ Portions adapted from "Manna" by Rev. Gale O'Neal

The policy of nurture and care, the Safe Church Policy of Ivanhoe Congregational Church.

This policy consists of:

- A. Opening letter
- B. Statement of policy
- C. Rules to follow and Education and Training
- D. Code of Adult Behavior
- E. Youth Code of Behavior & Youth Covenant Statement
- F. Application and Covenant for Staff and Adult Volunteers
- G. Response Plan
- H. Forms
- I. Covenant
- J. References and Definitions and Harmonization

The policy of nurture and care, the Safe Church Policy of Ivanhoe Congregational Church.

Statement of policy

Ivanhoe Congregational Church strives to be a caring, nurturing, faith community. We believe that all persons are to be treated with respect and dignity. We believe that we have special responsibilities to protect our children, youth and adults by providing safe healthy environments.

All persons associated with Ivanhoe Congregational Church should be aware that sexual exploitation and harassment is prohibited by this church policy. Employees, volunteers and ordained ministers engaged in the ministries of Ivanhoe Congregational Church are responsible for knowing the possible impact of their actions and words caring for persons who come to them for help or over whom they have any kind of authority. Sexual harassment or sexual exploitation of the church member or other individual with whom the employee, volunteer or minister is engaged in the ministries of the church is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Ivanhoe Congregational Church is committed to creating a safe and healthy environment in which children and youth can learn about and experience God's love. In order to ensure this, it is expected that all people volunteering to work with children and youth will have been members or friends of Ivanhoe Congregational Church for five months. It is expected that all employees and volunteers who work with children and youth will complete and submit an application and Covenant form.

It is the intention and responsibility of the church to provide education and training to all who work with children and youth. It is imperative that employees and volunteers take responsibility to ensure they have adequate preparation and training.

We ask every member of the congregation to support this policy by committing to the covenant of nurture and care.

This policy shall be administered by the Youth ministry Program Director.

The policy of nurture and care, the Safe Church Policy of Ivanhoe Congregational Church.

Rules to Implement and Follow

The Two Adult Rule

The children and youth in both educational and youth fellowship program shall be under the care/supervision of two adults, one of whom may be a high school aide (5 years of age separation must occur between aide and youth). Exception would be the existence of constant visual access and frequent observation by person in authority.

No teacher, advisor, or aide shall put themselves in a compromising position by being alone with a child or children.

No teacher, advisor or aide shall be alone with a child in a bathroom for clean-up from art project, or for care of illness or injury.

Five Year Separation Rule: When utilizing high school and young adults in the church programs there shall be a five year separation between these young persons and those they supervise. Every attempt will be made first to use youth who have reached the age of 18 as workers with children and youth.

The five month rule

New members are required to be part of the worshipping community for five months before signing up to work with children and youth.

Windows and all classrooms

All classrooms, where we hope to teach children and youth about God's love should be welcoming, friendly, comfortable and safe. Safe sanctuary rooms should have windows or half doors. An isolated classroom with no visibility invites secrecy.

Creating Boundaries: Physical contact such as wrestling, horseplay, sardines or other high contact games are not appropriate recreational activity. No adult leader, staff or volunteer, should initiate or encourage physical or intimate contact with children or youth. Setting boundaries is the responsibility of the adults. A youth group is a group ministry. All participants are expected to remain with the group throughout the times listed in the activity description. No pairing, or otherwise separating off from the group to other parts of the Church grounds is permitted.

Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol

The use of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol products on or in congregational facilities during a youth event or at congregation sponsored youth events is not permitted.

Transportation

Staff and adult leaders cannot transport children and youth between church and home without current verbal parental permission. Transportation for field trips, to activities, or for events is always in groups and with written parental permission.

Bathroom Supervision for Small Children

Teachers, advisors, aides or employees who accompany a child to the bathroom should remain outside the bathroom while the child is inside. If a child needs assistance with zipping, buckling, clean-up or wiping, two adults need to be present, one of whom may be a high school aide. If it is impossible for 2 adult to be present, the bathroom door must remain open. Diapering of infants may be done in a classroom or nursery provided 2 adults or aides are present.

Some of these rules are repeated on the Code of Adult Behavior.

Education and training

Yearly training on this policy and youth protection is required for all volunteers and staff working with children and youth.

- ✓ Review Youth Code of Behavior with youth yearly.
- ✓ Review DCFS rules yearly for teachers.
- ✓ Training sessions to be held yearly for youth ministry leaders.

Code of Adult Behavior

Ivanhoe Congregational Church

Volunteers who have taken an active part in the life of the congregation may be invited to become involved with the educational and youth ministry programs at various levels of commitment. It is expected that all volunteers will accept the intentions provided by the following code.

The Two Adult Rule

The children and youth in both educational and youth fellowship program shall be under the care/supervision of two adults, one of whom may be a high school aide (5 years of age separation must occur between aide and youth). Exception would be the existence of constant visual access and frequent observation by person in authority.

No teacher, advisor, or aide shall put themselves in a compromising position by being alone with a child or children.

No teacher, advisor or aide shall be alone with a child in a bathroom for clean-up from art project, or for care of illness or injury.

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Discipline

The purpose of discipline with children and youth is to maintain order in a manner consistent with the teaching of religious responsibility, respect, and cooperation. No child shall be disciplined by the use of spanking, hitting, slapping, or any form of physical punishment. Verbal reprimands shall not include destructive criticism, insult, or shouting. All those working with children and youth are encouraged to listen to the child, communicate expectations of appropriate behavior and give alternative choices. A time-out should be used only as a last resort.

Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol

The use of drugs, tobacco, or alcohol products on or in congregational facilities during a youth event or at congregation sponsored youth events is not permitted. Participation of adults "under the influence" of illegal drugs or alcohol is not permitted.

Transportation

Staff and adult leaders cannot transport children and youth between church and home without current verbal parental permission. Transportation for field trips, to activities, or

for events is always in groups with written parental permission

Parental Guidelines

Parents are strongly encouraged, when on the church property with their children, to know at all times where their children are, who they are with, and what they are doing. It is strongly encouraged that children 10 and under do not play in unsupervised areas.

Overnight Rule

Any and all adult chaperones supervising overnight stays at our facility or on church sponsored trips must be approved to do so by a staff person. At least one adult male will dorm with boys and one adult female with girls; and should these adults be husband and wife, a third adult needs to be present. A signed written consent form which lists the names of advisors to be present is required.

Five Year Separation Rule: When utilizing high school and young adults in the church programs there shall be a five year separation between these young persons and those they supervise. Every attempt will be made first to use youth who have reached the age of 18 as workers with children and youth.

Creating Boundaries: Physical contact such as wrestling, horseplay, sardines or other high contact games are not appropriate recreational activity. No adult leader, staff or volunteer, should initiate or encourage physical or intimate contact with children or youth. Setting boundaries is the responsibility of the adults. A youth group is a group ministry. All participants are expected to remain with the group throughout the times listed in the activity description. No pairing, or otherwise separating off from the group to other parts of the church grounds is permitted.

During my educational and youth ministry programs I will:

- Not possess and/or use alcohol or other controlled substances nor purchase same.
- Respect the property of all other participants and advisors. This includes not touching things that are not mine.
- Join in group activities without undue complaint.
- Take my turn in the support and feeding chores of our community.
- Respect myself, God, the other members of our church, and the people we meet on our way.

Conduct included in such acts of respect would exclude:

- Self or other person directed put downs.
- Abusive or vulgar language.
- Derogatory statements regarding race, religion, nationality or sexual orientation.
- Inappropriate touching.
- Activity which separates an individual (or couple) from the group.
- Placing adult advisors in uncomfortable and potentially vulnerable situations.
- Any non-scheduled activity which has not received permission from an staff supervisor or his/her designee.

Youth Code of Behavior

Ivanhoe Congregational Church

A successful youth program is dependent upon the cooperation of all those participating in it. Please read the list of expectations and rules which have been designed to insure a good experience for all of us. The staff supervisor or designee is the person to interpret the boundaries of conduct.

To the parents of those 3rd - 6th grade students attending a church activity, you should share the information below with them in a way that they can understand. The signature of parents of youth and older children is required on the Covenant Statement so the information below should be discussed with your child/youth.

Thanks!

Transportation Rule: Staff cannot transport children and youth alone. Transportation for field trips, to activities, or for events is by groups with written parental permission.

Five Year Separation Rule: When utilizing high school and young adults in the church programs there shall be five year separation between these young persons and those they supervise. Every attempt will be made first to use youth who have reached the age of 18 as workers with children and youth.

Creating Boundaries: Physical contact such as wrestling, horseplay, sardines or other high contact games are not appropriate recreational activity. No adult leader, staff or volunteer should initiate or encourage physical or intimate contact with children or youth. Setting boundaries is the responsibility of the adults. A youth group is a group ministry. All participants are expected to remain with the group throughout the times listed in the activity description. No pairing, or otherwise separating off from the group to other parts of the church grounds, is permitted.

Youth Code of Behavior Ivanhoe Congregational Church

During my church activity I will:

- Not possess and/or use alcohol or other controlled substances nor purchase same.
- Respect the property of all other participants and advisors. This includes not touching things that are not mine.
- Attend and participate in all scheduled programs unless specific permission is given for me to be elsewhere.
- Join in group work, play, study, activities without undue complaint.
- Take my turn in the support and feeding chores of our community.
- Respect myself, God, the other members of our church, and the people we meet on our way.
- Conduct included in such acts of respect would exclude:
 - Self or other person directed put downs.
 - Abusive or vulgar language.
 - Derogatory statements regarding race, religion, nationality or sexual orientation.
 - Inappropriate touching.
 - Activity which separates an individual (or couple) from the group.
 - Placing adult advisors in uncomfortable and potentially vulnerable situations.
 - Any non-scheduled activity which has not received permission from an staff supervisor or his/her designee.

YOUTH COVENANT STATEMENT

Ivanhoe Congregational Church

Accepting this covenant statement assumes that we have clearly stated what we expect from children and youth and adult supervisors participating in a church activity. The expectations have been:

- Stated in writing,
- Sent to child/youth and their parents or legal guardian,
- Reviewed by a parent/guardian/youth,
- And shall be received by the Youth Programs Director of the church. In this way, any violation of the expectations may result in an immediate removal of the children and youth participation in the stated church activity.

Covenant Statement

We honor each person's integrity and worth as a child of God and strive to:

- provide a nurturing and safe environment for children and youth to grow socially and spiritually.
- continue to grow by nurturing our own personal faith.
- work in partnership with all staff and volunteers and Christ as a part of the larger Christian community.

Youth agreement

I have read the Youth Code of Behavior and understand what is expected of me when I participate in the church activity. I understand that failure on my part to live up to these expectations may end my participation in the church activity. Blatant disregard of these expectations may result in suspension of future experiences.

Print Name of Youth _____

Signature of Youth _____

Date _____

We have read the information provided and reviewed it with our child. We understand what is expected.

Signature of Parent / Legal Guardian

Date

**Application and Covenant for Primary Screening
Safe Church Policy
Ivanhoe Congregational Church**

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. It is being used to assist this church in providing a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. Information provided will be kept strictly confidential and shared only among ministerial staff and the appropriate chairperson.

Personal Information

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address _____

Home phone: _____

Cell phone: _____

Religious History and Prior Youth Work

Name of religious institution of which you are currently a member/attend: Member since:

List name and address of other religious institutions you have attended regularly during the past five years:

List all previous religious work involving youth/children (list each institution's name, type of work performed, dates and a contact person with his/her phone number).

List all previous non-religious institution work involving youth/children (list each institution's name, type of work performed, dates and a contact person with his/her phone number).

List any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for youth/children's work.

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime? Yes No
If yes, please explain:

Two Personal References (Not former or current employees or relatives):

Name: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Phone: _____

Applicant Commitment

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the Ivanhoe Congregational Church to contact any references or religious institutions listed in this application to obtain information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children or youth work.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Bylaws and Policies of Ivanhoe Congregational Church. I shall refrain from unethical conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church, and to the following covenant which governs children and youth work at Ivanhoe Congregational Church:

- **To honor each child's integrity and worth as a child of God.**
- **To provide a nurturing and safe environment for children and youth to grow socially, and spiritually.**
- **To continue to grow and nurture my own personal faith.**
- **To work in partnership with the professional staff, volunteers, and Christ as a part of the larger Christian community.**

I state that I have carefully read the foregoing code of behavior and covenant statement above and know the contents. I sign this application as my own free act. This is a legally binding agreement I have read and understand.

I further understand that if any of the information on this form is false, I may be removed upon such discovery from work with children and youth and possibly from the staff of the church.

Signature

Date

Response Plan Procedure for Handling Concerns and Complaints

- A.** A response team with no fewer than two members, one male and one female, shall be established in accordance with this Safe Church Policy, for the possibility of hearing concerns or complaints brought under this policy. The response team will consist of two volunteers from the Pastoral Relations Committee. One of the response team will have the duties of first respondent. The response team will familiarize itself with the policy as well as the procedures for response to concerns and complaints.
- B.** Options in Addressing incidents of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment:
1. If the concern does not involve a child, the person having concerns can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the individual.
 2. If an informal resolution of the concern or complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the person raising concerns may institute formal proceedings. At this point the pastor will offer pastoral care and concern to all those included in the investigation. The proceedings will include the following steps:
 - a. The response team will gather statements or other information from individuals involved in the harassment or exploitation or other incident of concern, and from others who may have pertinent information. (See form in Appendix)
 - b. The response team and pastor will make determinations and take appropriate actions to resolve the matter. [This includes guidance in sections C. D. E & F. below.] These may include:
 - i. Finding that sexual exploitation or harassment [or other serious misconduct covered by the policy] has occurred and that the appropriate body of the church is called upon to take action, which may include one or more of the following:
 - Formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior, with possible public notification;
 - Dismissal from employment or volunteer leadership position
 - ii. Finding that no sexual exploitation or harassment (or other infraction of policies) occurred. This may involve formal notification of those who had a "need to know" and thus were previously notified of the concern and investigation.
- C.** When concerns are raised about an authorized minister of the United Church of Christ
- All information is confidential and will be retained in locked files.

(ordained, commissioned or licensed), whether an employee or volunteer, the response committee will notify the Association minister of the Fox Valley Association of the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ. Ivanhoe Congregational Church will cooperate fully in any procedures of the United Church of Christ related to ministerial authorization, while retaining the right and responsibility to make decisions regarding employment and volunteer ministries within Ivanhoe Congregational Church as it determines best.

- D. When information is received regarding alleged abuse or mistreatment of a child, the response team will immediately determine if they have "reasonable cause" to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected. Then, if so, notify Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and cooperate fully in the investigation. These procedures will also be followed to determine whether the person under investigation will continue in their present position. The response team will follow the guidelines in the DCFS Manual for Mandated Reporters.

"Reasonable cause" is the criteria needed for a child abuse or neglect investigation:

* The alleged victim is a child under the age of 18.

* Did you observe evidence that some damage was done to the child? In physical abuse, this is most often some physical evidence of harm - a bruise, a fracture, or cuts. In sexual abuse cases, it is usually information from the victim about a specific incident of molestation, penetration, or exploitation. With neglect, there are concrete observations of failure to provide for physical needs.

* What communication has the child provided? Is the information consistent and plausible with what you have observed?

* If the explanation comes from someone other than the child, how credible and / or complete is the information?

* Since the signs of sexual abuse can be uncertain, if a child tells you he / she is being abused by a caretaker or person responsible for the child's welfare, report it.

* Have there been past incidents which, in retrospect, may have been suspicious?

Information the reporter should have ready to give to the Hotline:

* Names, birth dates (or approximate ages), races, genders, etc. for all adult and child subjects.

* Addresses for all victims and perpetrators, including current location.

* Information about the siblings or other family members, if available.

* Specific information about the abusive incident or the circumstances contributing to risk of harm. For example, when the incident occurred, the extent of the injuries, how the child says it happened, and any other pertinent information.

If this information is not readily available, the reporter should not delay a call to the hotline CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE NUMBER: 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873)

- E. A confidential written summary of the proceedings in all cases will be maintained.
- F. In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes sexual harassment or exploitation, consideration shall be given to the record of the alleged incident(s) as a whole and to the totality of the circumstances, including the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.
- G. Any person bringing a sexual harassment or exploitation complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment, church membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.
- H. If the person bringing the concern or complaint, or the accused person, is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the governing board, he or she has the right to appeal to the President of the church council who will refer the matter to the church council for resolution.

PRELIMINARY RESPONSE BY Response Team

- All allegations will be taken seriously.
- Response to allegations will be handled with due respect for everyone's privacy and confidentiality.
- Care and safety of alleged complainants (and family) will be our first priority.
- If appropriate, parent or guardian of alleged complainant will be notified immediately.
- When questionable or inappropriate behavior related to possible sexual misconduct or sexual harassment between adults is observed, it must be reported to a trained staff person or designated representative. In the case the accusation is made against the trained staff person or designated representative, it shall be reported to a trained member of the church's Youth Ministry Board.
- The incident will be documented by this staff person or designated person of the Youth Ministry Board who will investigate and make an initial response.
- When a case is reported, a trained staff person receiving the report will interview the primary supervisor of the staff person or volunteer to share all pertinent information with him/her.

- A low level, discrete investigation of the charges will be taken immediately. This will include speaking to both the alleged perpetrator and victim.
- All activity involved in handling the incident will be documented; notation of date, time, persons involved as well as the content of what was done. All documentation will be held confidential.

Abuse can include:

- Fondling
- Sexual remarks
- Watching any sexual activity
- Touching parts of the body which would be covered by a swim suit
- Showing pornography
- Inappropriate kissing
- Intercourse

If you are unsure whether or not your suspected case falls under this definition, it is strongly recommended that you err to the side of caution and report your suspicion immediately.

Forms

- **BACKGROUND CRIMINAL CHECK AUTHORIZATION FORM** Page 19
- **Application and Covenant for Primary Screening** Page 11
- Additional forms are in the forms addendum and may be modified per use depending on trip, activity, transport.
- Incident investigation
- Youth transportation
- Youth medical release
- Permission for trip or activity

BACKGROUND CRIMINAL CHECK AUTHORIZATION FORM
Safe Church Policy
Ivanhoe Congregational Church

Ivanhoe Congregational Church reserves the right to run and have access to a criminal records check if the need should arise. Signing and agreeing to this does not mean such a check will be run automatically. It may be run if deemed necessary by the minister and church board.

Date _____

Name: _____

Maiden Name: _____

List all aliases: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Years at address: _____

Last Previous address: _____

The policy of nurture and care, the Safe Church Policy of Ivanhoe Congregational Church.

COVENANT

One of the great joys of being a part of a faith community is learning from children and youth about what it means to be a child of God, no matter what our age. Youth give to adults the precious gifts of innocence, enthusiasm, and curiosity. They are the visible signs that God is not yet through with Creation.

Because they give so much to us, we as adults are asked to give to them. One way is through the adoption and implementation of the Policy of Nurture and Care (A Safe Church Policy), which includes this covenant:

- To honor each child's integrity and worth as a child of God.
- To provide a nurturing and safe environment for children and youth to grow socially and spiritually.
- To continue to grow as adults by nurturing our own personal faith.
- To work in partnership with all staff and volunteers and Christ as a part of the larger Christian community.

I affirm my desire to make the Ivanhoe Congregational Church a sanctuary, which is safe secure and nurturing. I will support the Policy of Nurture and Care.

References

Making Our Churches Safe for All:

An Introduction to Abuse Prevention for Local Churches
[United Church of Christ Insurance Board] 2005

Safe Sanctuaries

[The Wisconsin Conference UCC] 2003

Manna

[The Wisconsin Conference UCC] Fall 2003

For The Children

[Rhode Island Conference UCC] Third Edition

References will be available in the church office.

Definitions

Definitions are included as part of this document by reference. See ,
“Making Our Churches Safe for All:”
Appendix A

Harmonization

This policy is harmonized with the policy at Community Protestant Church. That is to say all sections that cover, Rules to follow, Code of behavior and Response plan need to be similar. Any changes made in either policy need to be included or noted in the other. This is essential to administer our joint youth groups.