

# Walker Community United Methodist Church

## Safer Church Policy

Reviewed by SPRC March 2013

### Guidelines for a Safer Community

- First and foremost this is a church for all of the community. Everyone brings their gifts to the table. Everyone is welcome, though our journeys are often very different.
- People are free and welcome to explore their spirituality. We are a historically Christian community, however many who travel with us understand and express their spiritual journeys through varied traditions and avenues. All are welcome to respectfully join together in our community.
- Please refrain from wearing scents or perfumes. As much as possible this is a scent free space. Candles must be scent free and incense may only be used if there is advance notice to alert those with allergy and breathing concerns.
- Please take time to think before you speak. The Walker Community honors one another by being gentle with our words. We also honor one another with honesty.
- Please welcome the people around you by respecting their physical space. Ask before hugging or embracing someone you do not know. Their journey may be enhanced by your touch, but it is their choice to decide if they are ready to receive your touch.
- Walker Community United Methodist Church intentionally welcomes all sexual orientations and gender identities, races and ethnicities, differing abilities, diverse economic levels, ages, and personal background.
- Walker Community United Methodist Church performs background checks on all people who are working alone with children and vulnerable adults. Please do not be offended if asked to agree to a screening.
- If at any time you feel your physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual safety has been violated please contact that Pastor at the church office at 612-722-6612 or by contacting the United Methodist District office at 612-230-6146

## Paid and Volunteer Staff

### Statement of Policy

- It is the policy of Walker Community United Methodist Church (Walker Church) to maintain an environment free of sexual harassment and sexual assault and inappropriate consensual sexual activity
  - by educating all employees, volunteers and members of the church community about what constitutes such conduct
  - by establishing procedures for addressing allegations of such conduct.
- Walker Church prohibits and will not tolerate sexual harassment or sexual assault or inappropriate consensual sexual activity on any church-owned property or in connection with any church-sanctioned event.

### Definitions

- **Sexual Harassment** is defined as any unwelcome sexual attention, including repeated sexual advances, repeated requests for sexual favors, sexually-motivated physical contact or other repeated verbal or physical conduct or communication of a sexual nature, and which in the case of church employees, affects the employee's employment status or is used as a basis for employment decisions, or which creates an offensive, intimidating or hostile work environment.
  - Examples of sexual harassment include, but are not limited to:
  - Preferential treatment or promises of special treatment for submitting to sexual conduct or adverse treatment of an employee for refusing to accept an invitation to enter into a personal or sexual relationship.
  - Subjecting an employee to unwelcome sexual attention or conduct or intentionally making the employee's job performance more difficult because of the employee's sex.
  - Intentional physical contact, which is sexual in nature; such as touching, pinching, patting, grabbing or brushing against another employee's body or physical assaults of a sexual nature.
  - Sexually-oriented gestures, jokes or comments directed at or made in the presence of an individual who does not welcome such conduct.

- **Sexual Assault** is sexual intercourse or any physical act of aggression, or inappropriate touching that includes a sexual act or which is done for a sexual purpose to or upon the person of another who does not consent or who, because of age or physical, emotional, mental or other incapacity, is incapable of informed and knowing consent to the act.
  - Examples of sexual assault include, but are not limited to:
  - Child sexual abuse
  - Same-sex assault
  - Sexual touching by a counselor or counselee
  
- **Inappropriate Consensual Sexual Activity** includes sexual overtures or actions of a sexual nature by a staff person toward a person in a subordinate relationship to that staff person, even if the advances appear to be welcomed.
  - Examples of inappropriate consensual sexual activity include, but are not limited to:
  - A supervisor giving sexual attention, such as touching or talking in a sexual manner, to a person they are supervising even when the person does not complain or seems to welcome the attention.

## Reporting Procedures

- Employees or members of Walker Church who feel they have been the victims of sexual harassment, sexual assault or inappropriate consensual sexual activity should:
  - Clearly inform the perpetrator that the behavior is offensive and unwelcome and request that the behavior stop; and
  - Document the offensive/unwelcome behavior (with date and explanation of behavior); and
  - Report the behavior to the Walker Church Pastor or the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

## **Disposition of Reported Charge**

- The Staff Parish Relations Committee will investigate all reported charges of sexual harassment and sexual assault, and will undertake such action that it deems reasonably necessary and appropriate to stop unwanted and inappropriate behavior that may violate this policy.
- In all cases, Walker Church may refer the reported charge to the civil and criminal authorities for further proceedings and action according to law.
- When a violation of a criminal statute has occurred (as in the case of child abuse) or when otherwise required by civil law, any person who has direct personal knowledge of such violation is to make a report to the appropriate governmental agency in addition to making a report to the Walker Church Pastor or the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.
- Walker Church will follow all state statutes around mandatory reporting.

## **Confidentiality**

- The right to confidentiality, both of the complainant and of the respondent, will be respected to the extent consistent with the legal obligations of the church and with the need to investigate the allegations and to take appropriate actions.
- No sanctions or other adverse action will be taken against a person submitting a complaint or report of possible sexual harassment, sexual assault or inappropriate consensual sexual activity except in cases in which the information supplied is determined to have been falsely or maliciously supplied.

## **Responsibility**

- It is the responsibility of all employees, members, volunteers and other agents of Walker Church to conduct themselves in a manner consistent with this policy while on church property and in connection with church-sanctioned events.

## **Training**

- Training will be provided to all paid and volunteer staff as part of their orientation and to other interested parties regarding this policy.

## **Adults working with Youth and Children and Vulnerable Adults**

### **Statement of Policy**

- It is the policy of Walker Church to maintain an environment in which children are protected from sexual abuse or assault
  - by educating and offering guidelines
  - by establishing procedures for addressing what constitutes such conduct
  - by screening persons who work with youth.

### **Guidelines**

- **Church Nursery Identification Procedure:**
  - Adults must sign in the child in their care at the nursery.
  - Children are only to be released to a properly identified and preauthorized adult.
- **Youth/Sunday School/Outreach:**
  - Whenever possible, a minimum of two adult staff or volunteers should be present during any church activity involving youth.
  - Church staff or volunteers must obtain the consent of the child's parent or guardian before going out alone with or spending time with the child in an unsupervised situation.
  - Supervision will be maintained before and after a youth event and until all children are in the custody of a parent or guardian.
  - All adult chaperones during an overnight youth event must be background checked and cleared in advance with the proper church leaders, volunteers and/or staff.

## **Training and Supervision**

- Any adults working with children and supervising youth will have agreed to the provisions of this policy.
- All new staff and volunteers must also fill out the Application for Staff or Volunteer for Children's/Youth Work.
- This form is to be completed by all applicants for any position whether volunteer or paid employee, minister or lay person, involving the supervision or custody of minors.
- This is not an employment application form.
- This form will be used to help Walker Church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and youth events.

## **Screening**

- As part of the screening process, background checks will be performed on all persons who will be working or volunteering with children and youth.
- Applicants will be asked to fill out and sign a consent form for a background check.
- Any information obtained in the background check will be kept confidential in a private file maintained by Walker Church.

## **Reporting (see Reporting Procedures)**

**Application for Staff or Volunteer for Children's/Youth Work**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phones \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate the position to be filled \_\_\_\_\_

Social security number \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's license number \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime? (Other than minor traffic offenses) YES NO If yes, please explain (attach a separate page if necessary.)

\_\_\_\_\_

When did you begin attending Walker Church? \_\_\_\_\_

**Children/Youth Work**

Indicate a **church** in which you have done previous work with children or youth:

Church Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person & phone \_\_\_\_\_

Type of work performed and date(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Indicate a **non-church organization** in which you have worked with children/youth:

Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Contact Person & phone \_\_\_\_\_

Type of work performed and date(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Personal references with Walker Church (non-relative):**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phones \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phones \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

### Applicant's Statement

- The information contained in the application is true/correct, and complete to the best of my knowledge.
- Any misrepresentation or omission on this application will be grounds for discharge from service whenever it is discovered.
- **I authorize Walker Community United Methodist Church to do a criminal background check on me.**
- I authorize any references of churches or organizations listed in this application to give you any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children/youth work.
- In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by Walker Community United Methodist Church, I hereby release any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply , with this authorization.
- I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application.
- Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the policies of Walker Community United Methodist Church, and to refrain from unscriptural conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.
- I further state that I have carefully read the forgoing release and the Walker Community United Methodist Church Safe Church Policy and know the contents thereof and I sign this release and know the contents thereof as my own free act.
- This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

Date\_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's signature\_\_\_\_\_

Witness' signature\_\_\_\_\_