SAFE CHURCH POLICY OF THE KINGSTON CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(APPROVED BY CHURCH COUNCIL NOVEMBER 29, 2006)

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

The Kingston Congregational Church's mission is to provide an environment, free of sexual misconduct or harassment, for the children and youth who are entrusted to our care. The policy is intended to protect our staff, volunteers and congregation as well. To help reach these goals we have adopted the following policies, procedures, and educational programs to reduce the possibility of any sexual or physical abuse, misconduct, or harassment from occurring in our congregation. The implementation of prudent policies should help safeguard our children, youth and members of our congregation. Although no policy can anticipate and prevent all possible instances of misconduct, they can state a purpose and provide guidance to achieve that purpose. These policies express our keen interest in protecting our children and youth, while maintaining the trusting atmosphere of our congregation for adults and children alike.

SECTION ONE: RECRUITING CONGREGATION WORKERS:

Our congregation welcomes staff and volunteers who have been part of our church family for at least six months to become involved with the Educational and Youth Programs at various levels of commitment. The Church School Director and/or the Senior Pastor shall be responsible for screening applicants for such volunteer and staff positions.

1. **PRIMARY SCREENING PROCEDURE:** All teachers, youth group leaders, volunteers, and staff who will have appointed or frequent contact with children or youth must undergo the primary screening procedure by reviewing this policy and completing the attached application form. Volunteers, paid staff or anyone anticipating regular contact with youth or children must complete a screening application and authorize a **Criminal Records Background Check.**

   The appropriate Staff person will review the submitted forms and conduct a personal interview as necessary. They will arrange for a Criminal Records Background Check when applicable, and will check the references listed on the application. Once all the information is compiled, the appropriate staff person will review the materials. The Pastor alone will review the applicant's Criminal Records Background Check. Any questionable applications will be reviewed by the Pastor and the personnel committee.

2. **SECONDARY SCREENING PROCEDURE:** Applicants who will have limited contact with children or youth over the course of a year, such as the occasional nursery assistant or youth group driver, are asked to review this policy and its code of behavior, and return a signed acknowledgment indicating such a review to the appropriate staff person.

Any person known to have committed previous acts of sexual misconduct shall be strictly prohibited from serving our children or youth.

All persons will have read and agreed to abide by all Policies and Procedures herein. Signature upon the appropriate application denotes a willingness to remain in compliance with these policies or their successors.

SECTION TWO: EDUCATION AND TRAINING. The Pastor or his/her designee will be responsible for the implementation of procedures designed to educate volunteers, staff and the congregation regarding these policies and procedures. As part of each new employee's orientation, each employee will review these policies, procedures and code of behavior. The Pastor will insure that the Board of Christian Education define and implement procedures designed to further the intent of these policies, and educate volunteers and staff on these procedures through regular training programs. The Trustees shall design and maintain procedures related to building use, which upholds the intent of this policy. Annual training programs will teach staff and volunteers how to recognize and prevent sexual misconduct, and how and when to report such incidents to the Pastor. A Code of Behavior, Application Process and Response Plan will be appended to this Policy and are subject to annual review.

SECTION THREE: MAINTENANCE OF RECORDS. Records of all actions required by this policy and any material pertinent to it, including reports, workers' surveys, and application and acknowledgment forms, shall be kept for a legally appropriate time in a secure and confidential place, the location and security measures to be determined by the Pastor and Advocacy Panel.

SECTION FOUR: ADVOCACY PANEL. In the event that a volunteer, congregation member or staff member is uncomfortable reporting an allegation of sexual misconduct to the Pastor that person may take the allegation or concern to the Advocacy Panel.

The Panel will be composed of three people, including at least one female, one male, and one lawyer, appointed by the Pastor for indefinite terms. The panel will be a formally constituted congregation committee that reports to the Church Council and its members may serve on other boards or committees. Panel members will be noted on documents related to this policy and changes will be announced promptly in congregation publications. The panel shall assist the Pastor in carrying out the response plan. All members of this panel shall maintain a strict code of confidentiality.

CODE OF BEHAVIOR:

Volunteers who have taken active part of the life of the congregation for at least six months may be invited to become involved with the educational and youth programs at various levels of commitment. During this time, those planning to be directly involved in the life of the congregation shall receive training and accept the intentions provided by the following code of behavior. New employees, having satisfied the primary screening

process, employed to work with children and youth, may assume their position immediately. They shall pay close, if not restrictive attention to the code of behavior.

Two Adult Rule: The children and youth in both the educational and youth fellowship program of our congregation shall be under the care and supervision of two adults, one of whom may be a high school aide. An exception in the education department would exist if classes are so constructed as to provide constant visual access and frequent observation by the department's director, superintendent, or their designee. Furthermore, no teacher, advisor, aide, or anyone else working with our children or youth should place themselves in a compromising situation by being alone with a child or with children out-of-sight of other teachers, advisors, aides, or parents. Finally, no teacher, advisor, or aide shall be alone with a child in the bathroom for purposes of full, clean-up from craft or art projects, or care of illness or injury.

Bathroom Supervision of Educational Department Children: Normally teachers, advisors, or aides who accompany a child to the bathroom, should remain outside the bathroom while the child is inside. If a child needs assistance with zipping, buttoning, buckling, clean-up, wiping, etc., two adults need to be present, one of whom may be a high school aide. A note describing the help needed and the people present shall be hand-delivered to the department supervisor. If, for any reason, a teacher or aide is left alone in a classroom, the teacher in the nearest or neighboring classroom should be so informed. Diapering of infants and toddlers may be done in the classroom if two people are present, one of whom is an adult. If anything unusual occurred during this assistance, a note describing the help given and persons present should be written and handed to the department supervisor at the close of the educational program day.

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. Teachers, advisors and aides and others helping in the classroom are encouraged to listen to the child, communicate expectations of appropriate behavior, use time-outs or give alternate choices. If a child is disruptive, a teacher or aide from the class or a neighboring class may be sent to locate the Director of Education. If the DE is not readily available, a parent should be contacted and brought to the room.

Leaving and Locking: The last three people, including the staff person locking the door, will leave our facilities together. We avoid situations where one adult and one youth or child is left at the facility's door waiting to be picked up by parents at the end of an evening activity. Parents are encouraged to respect concluding times.

Drugs, Tobacco, Alcohol: The use of any drugs, tobacco or alcoholic products on or in congregation facilities or at congregation sponsored youth events including those events held in private residences is not permitted.

Reporting Responsibilities: Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between an adult worker and a child or youth shall be promptly reported to the Pastor or member of the advocacy panel.

Parental Guidelines: We strongly encourage parents, when on the premises 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 or under do not play in unsupervised areas.

Visitors On-site: The staff or volunteers serving our congregation shall be aware of who is visiting our facilities. Visitors are welcomed and shall be accompanied on their visit to the areas frequented by our youth and children by a member of our staff.

Church sponsored or sanctioned trips or events:

Pre-planning

- Advisors and chaperones for all events must meet the criteria set forth in the safe church policy
- All participants will sign the covenant regarding behavior during trip/event. This will include the policy that the use or possession of any drug (prescription and OTC exempt with pre-trip disclosure and written permission), tobacco or alcoholic product is not permitted during any church sponsored youth trip/event.
- All trips and events will be presented to the Board of Christian Education with a complete itinerary and list of all participants for approval at least 40 days prior to the scheduled event. Any changes to roster will be submitted to CE chair at least 1 week before event.
- All participants (or parent if minor) will complete a medical release form giving permission for medical treatment if needed. A medical conditions form and listing of any medications needed (both prescribed and OTC) will be completed by all participants. All medications to be taken during trip will be held by the designated medical/first aid person.
- All parents of youth participants will be required to sign a permission slip prior to the beginning of any trip/event. This will include an emergency contact person and their phone number.
- Parents will be supplied with names and phone numbers of all participants, complete itinerary, and list of rules designed by the participants (advisors and youth), copies of covenants, and phone numbers where the group can be reached during trip/event in case of emergency.
- Any and all adult chaperons supervising overnight stays at our facilities or on congregational sponsored trips shall have been cleared to do so by the Pastor or other designated official. At least one adult male will dorm with boys and one adult female with girls; wherever possible a third adult should be present. Further, a signed written consent form is required, which lists the names of advisors to be present. Last minute substitute or additional advisors (from

approved volunteer list) are permissible as long as parental permission of child/youth participants is secured (either signed or witnessed phone contact).

General rules during trip/event

- No child under the age of 13 may be transported in the front seat of a vehicle.
- Staff and adult leaders or teachers cannot transport children or youth between congregation facility and home. Transportation for field trips, to activities, or for events is by groups and to/from the congregation facility except with written parental permission.
- Each passenger must have and wear a functioning seat belt at all times during vehicle transport.
- Any person providing transportation will carry proper insurance as defined by the Church's insurance carrier.
- Appropriate ratios of adults to children will be maintained at all times. The nature, location, duration of the trip/event and age of participating youth will determine these ratios. At all times any group of youth must be accompanied by at least two sanctioned chaperones (exceptions may be made for transport in convoy). If trip/event involves multiple worksites the ratio will be adjusted to insure that each location has a minimum of two sanctioned adults present.
- Specific guidelines, rules, and requirements will be determined for each trip/event.
- 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. All participants are expected to remain with the group throughout the times listed in congregation publication. No paring or otherwise separating off from the group to other parts of the building or grounds is permitted.

If you suspect a violation of the code: If a suspected case of abuse has either been reported to you or is suspected by you to have occurred at a congregational-related function or program, immediately contact the Pastor and this person only. In the case where this person cannot be contacted, call the judicatory head of your conference or diocese. If the alleged abuser is the Pastor, report the allegation to a member of the advocacy panel and the judicatory head of the conference or diocese.

Abuse can include:

Fondling
Sexual remarks
Watching any sexual activity
Touching the body on private parts
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.

RESPONSE PLAN

Preliminary Response:

- All allegations will be taken seriously.
- Alleged complainants must not be held responsible in any way.
- Response to allegations must be handled with due respect for everyone's privacy and confidentiality.
- Care and safety of alleged complainants (and family) are the first priority. Extend whatever pastoral resources needed. Notify parent of alleged complainant if appropriate.
- The Senior Pastor or Advocacy Panel upon receiving a report may consult with the Christian Education (CD) director or Youth Ministries Department and share all pertinent information with him/her. A low level, discrete investigation of the charges is to be taken as soon as possible by the Senior Pastor. This will include speaking to both the alleged perpetrator and victim.
- Document all activity involved in handling the incident; note date, time, persons involved as well as the content of what was done. All documentation will be held confidential.

When Necessary:

- If, after an initial investigation by the Senior Pastor or Advocacy Panel, the charges are deemed valid, steps will be taken to immediately comply with all state laws. All incidents involving children shall be reported to the Rhode Island Department of Children, Youth and Families (RIDCYF), the congregation's insurance writer and attorney and the judicatory head of the conference shall also be notified.
- Should it become necessary, full cooperation will be given to civil authorities under guidance of the congregation's attorney. The attorney must be present while any investigative questions from the police or applicable agencies are being answered by anyone. If a report is made to RIDCYF, the Advocacy Panel must carefully document all steps taken, contact legal counsel, congregation president, the Conference Head, and the congregation's insurance agent.
- Treat the accused with dignity and respect and offer support. If the accused is a congregation worker, he/she should be relieved temporarily of his/her duties until the investigation is completed. If the accused is a paid employee, a decision will be made to maintain or suspend his/her income, as appropriate, until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
- The Advocacy Panel will appoint one official congregation spokesperson to deal with any and all media inquiries.
- The spokesperson should be prepared to issue a public statement to inform the congregation and respond to press inquiries. This statement should communicate that the congregation regards these allegations seriously and offers responsible action, concern, and support for all involved. No details of the accusation will be released. Do not deny that the incident occurred; do not assign blame; do not minimize the situation. No statement will be issued until it has been approved by the congregation's attorney.

- When it is deemed prudent, the investigative team should share appropriate information, with the wider congregation, in all cases respecting the privacy of the individuals involved.

INCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT FORM

Name of person reporting incident:_____

Phone Number:_____ Relationship to Congregation:_____

Date of Incident:_____ Time of Incident:_____

Date of Notification:_____ Time of Notification:_____

In what manner was the incident reported:_____

Name of person(s) involved in incident: (Name, address, phone number)

☐ Minor ☐ Adult _____
_____

☐ Minor ☐ Adult _____
_____

Location of incident:_____

Witnesses to incident: (Name, address, phone number)

Witness #1: _____
_____

Witness #2: _____
_____

Witness #3:_____
_____

Description of incident:

Incident report completed by(name/date):_____
Accepted by (name/date):_____

The following actions were taken:

☐ An informal interview with the alleged perpetrator and victim was held.

☐ Since the alleged victim was under 18 years of age, his/her parents were notified and were present at the interview of the alleged victim.

☐ It was determined that the allegation was unwarranted and all parties concurred.

☐ It was determined that there was sufficient evidence and concern to report the incident to the:

- ☐ Appropriate authorities
- ☐ Senior Pastor
- ☐ Advisory Panel
- ☐ Head of the Judicatory Office of the Conference

☐ The alleged perpetrator was notified of this action.

Date the incident was reported to the appropriate authorities:_____

The following space records the participation of the appropriate parties of the church during the ensuing investigation and outcome: (make date notation for each entry)

Screening Form for Children or Youth Work

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 congregation 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 Christian Education chairperson. It is the policy of this church that applicants must have been members of the church for six months prior to taking a position involving the supervision or custody of minors.

Date:_____

Name:_____
(Last) (First) (Middle)

Present Address:_____

Phone Number:_____
(Home) (Work) (Cell)

Email:_____

List all previous work involving youth/children:

Have you ever been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime involving a minor?:

☐ Yes ☐ No If yes, please explain:

Do you have a current driver's license? ☐ Yes ☐ No

If yes, please list driver's license number:_____
(Number) (State)

Insurance Policy number:_____

Personal references:

Name:_____ Name:_____

Address:_____ Address:_____

Phone:_____ Phone:_____

Applicant's Statement

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize the Kingston Congregational Church to contact any references or religious institutions listed in this application to obtain information 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 the Kingston Congregational Church.

I state that I have carefully read the Safe Church Policy, know the contents thereof, and agree to abide by it. I further understand that if any of the information on this form is false, I will be removed upon such discovery from work with children and youth. This is a legally binding agreement I have read and understood.

_____

(Signature) (Date)

POLICE BACKGROUND CHECK
AUTHORIZATION FORM

For the protection of our children, a police background check will be required for all teachers, teacher's assistants, or volunteers who, in any capacity, work with the youth of our church.

Name: _____

Address: _____
Town Zip Code

Previous Residence: _____

Home Phone: _____ Social Security Number: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth (City, State, Country): _____

Do you possess a license to operate a motor vehicle? Yes_____ No_____

If yes, please list driver's license number and State: _____

I agree that the facts set forth in this police background information form are true and complete. By signing below I expressly grant permission for a background review to be conducted by The South Kingstown Police Department and shared with the staff of The Kingston Congregational Church.

_____ _____
Signature Date

Office Use Only

Police Background Check completed by: _____

_____ Nothing on his/her application indicates a need for further investigation.

_____ I have found information that needs further review. Please contact me.

_____ _____
Signature Date

MEDICAL RELEASE

I_____, hereby authorize Kingston Congregational Church to arrange for medical examination and/or treatment of my child – _____ should a medical emergency arise while my child is participating in a Kingston Congregational Church Program or sponsored activity. It is understood that a conscientious effort will be made by the Kingston Congregational Church to contact me at the emergency numbers I have provided below, before any medical action is taken.

Dear Sir,

In the event of an accident or illness, and in the event I cannot be contacted, I give permission for my child to be treated for a medical emergency at a State Licensed Hospital.

_____ _____ _____
Parent or Guardian Signature Home Phone Business Phone

_____
Cell Phone

_____
Address Town Zip Code

Alternate Emergency Contacts in case you cannot be reached:

Name:_____ Phone #_____

Relationship to child: _____

Name:_____ Phone #_____

Relationship to child:_____