

MVC Policy: Safe Church

(revision 3: 1/5/07)

Policy Prohibiting Abuse, Exploitation and Harassment

As a community of Christian faith, Manoa Valley Church is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. All persons associated with Manoa Valley Church should be aware that the church is strongly opposed to Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Harassment and that such behavior is prohibited by church policy. It is the intention and responsibility of the church to take whatever action may be needed to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

Ministerial Conduct

Consistent with our understanding of the priesthood of all believers, all Authorized Ministers, employees, elected and appointed lay leaders, and authorized volunteers are Ministers to the congregation.

It is important that every Minister of the church be adequately prepared and educated for the ministry in which they serve others, and to understand the way in which their use or misuse of authority may impact others.

It is the policy of Manoa Valley Church to encourage its Ministers to nurture safety within Ministerial Relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, maintaining appropriate boundaries, and the importance of referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Harassment, of parishioners or others, by anyone engaged in the ministry of Manoa Valley Church is unethical and unprofessional behavior and will not be tolerated within this congregation.

Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Ministry

Before beginning their duties, all Ministers will submit a disclosure form.

- Before beginning their duties, all Ministers will be personally interviewed to assess the suitability of their character and qualifications for the position they seek.
- The Church will conduct a registered sex offender review for each Minister by searching their name on the Department of Justice website at www.nsopr.gov and the Hawai'i Criminal Justice Data Center at www.Hawaii.gov/ag/hcjdc. This registered sex offender review will be repeated on an annual basis for all Ministers.
- Authorized Ministers of the church will attend boundary workshops as required by the UCC Oahu Association, or will attend at least one workshop on this topic every three years, whichever is more frequent.

Additional Requirements of Child and Youth Ministry

Manoa Valley Church is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love.

In order to promote this, we have established the following guidelines in addition to the general requirements (above) for ministry to the church.

- We expect that those who volunteer to work with minors will have been members of Manoa Valley Church for at least six months or, if not members, regularly and frequently associated with Manoa Valley Church for at least a year.
- All volunteers who regularly work with children or youth will complete and submit a disclosure document. (Attachment "A").
- Before beginning employment, all employees who work with children or youth will complete and submit a disclosure document. (Attachment "A"). As a condition to an offer of employment made to any individual (whether Authorized Minister or layperson), a comprehensive background check will be completed and, following a conditional offer of employment to such individual, a criminal records check, as well as driving and motor vehicles records check if position includes transporting children and youth, will be completed. The scope of the check will include the counties of residence and counties of work over the past ten years. The church will withdraw the conditional offer of employment if the prospective employee has a conviction record that bears a rational relationship to the duties and responsibilities of the position.
- All volunteers and employees who work with children and youth will receive orientation to the overall policy.
- It is the policy of this church to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for all youth activities. In any situation where participants are not readily visible to other church members, there will not be fewer than two adults present with children or youth. Youth over the age of 16 may assist an adult in supervising children and youth activities; however, this assistance does not change the requirement that at least two adults must be present.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian will be required for all activities off the church property and any overnight activities.

Definitions

Minister: A person engaged by the church to carry out its ministry. Minister includes elected or appointed leaders of the church, employees, and volunteers, as well as authorized ministers.

Authorized Minister: A person who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an association of the United Church of Christ or region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). An Authorized Minister is one type of minister within the meaning of this policy.

Ministerial Relationship: The relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the church and the one being served by that ministry.

Sexual Exploitation: Sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a Minister engaged in a Ministerial Relationship with another takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served by causing or allowing the participant to engage in sexual behavior with the Minister.

Sexual Harassment: Repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:

- Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any church activity;
- Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or church-related decisions affecting an individual; or
- Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in church activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or church environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, e-mails, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions;

- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed directly that the interest is unwelcome and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, church leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the church. It is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

Child Abuse or Neglect: The acts or omissions of any person who, or legal entity which, is in any manner or degree related to the child, is residing with the child, or is otherwise responsible for the child's care, that have resulted in the physical or psychological health or welfare of the child, who is under the age of eighteen, to be harmed, or to be subject to any reasonably foreseeable, substantial risk of being harmed. Hawai'i State law requires all Ministers, employees and volunteers to report:

- (1) When the child exhibits evidence of: (a) substantial or multiple skin bruising or any other internal bleeding; (b) any injury to skin causing substantial bleeding; (c) malnutrition; (d) failure to thrive; (e) burn or burns; (f) poisoning; (g) fracture of any bone; (h) subdural hematoma; (i) soft tissue swelling; (j) extreme pain; (k) extreme mental distress; (l) gross degradation; (m) death; and such injury is not justifiably explained, or when the history given concerning such condition or death is at variance with the degree or type of such condition or death, or circumstances indicate that such condition or death may not be the product of an accidental occurrence; or
- (2) When the child has been the victim of sexual contact or conduct, including, but not limited to, sexual assault as defined in the Hawai'i Penal Code, molestation, sexual fondling, incest, or prostitution; obscene or pornographic photographing, filming, or depiction; or other similar forms of sexual exploitation; or
- (3) When there exists injury to the psychological capacity of a child as is evidenced by an observable and substantial impairment in the child's ability to function; or
- (4) When the child is not provided in a timely manner with adequate food, clothing, shelter, psychological care, physical care, medical care, or supervision; or
- (5) When the child is provided with dangerous, harmful, or detrimental drugs.

Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation or Harassment

Anyone who feels that he or she has been subjected to, or is aware of, conduct that is prohibited by this Policy should immediately report the matter to Senior Pastor or the Moderator.

The Church will conduct a prompt investigation of all allegations of prohibited harassment in as confidential a manner as possible. The Church is committed to providing work, worship, or church related programs free of unlawful discrimination, harassment and retaliation but can only do so if employees with concerns or questions bring them to our attention.

If the Church determines that prohibited harassment has occurred, it will take corrective action reasonably calculated to end the prohibited harassment, including appropriate disciplinary action up to and including termination or exclusion from church programs.

Procedures for Cases, or Suspected Cases, of Child Abuse

Any Minister of the church who becomes aware of facts or circumstances that Child Abuse or Neglect has occurred or that there exists a substantial risk that Child Abuse or Neglect may occur in the reasonably foreseeable future shall immediately report the matter to the Moderator so that the church may take appropriate action in a timely manner.

Manoa Valley Church will make a report to appropriate authorities including but not limited to *Child Protective Services (CPS) 24-hour reporting line: Oahu, 808-832-5300; toll free, 1-800-494-3991; toll free fax: 1-800-399-1614.*

In an emergency situation where a child's life or welfare is immediately threatened or endangered, individuals are encouraged to call 911 or to make a report directly to CPS.

Procedures for Clergy Misconduct

Apart from any disposition of the matter by the church, all allegations of behavior which call into question the fitness for ministry of any Authorized Minister will be promptly forwarded to the Church and Ministry Committee of the Oahu Association of the United Church of Christ, by contacting the Conference Minister or any of the Associate Conference Ministers of the Hawai'i Conference.

Confidentiality

All application and disclosure information provided by volunteers and employees shall be kept in a confidential file. When investigating an allegation, those involved shall maintain complete confidentiality with respect to names and events. The guiding rule of confidentiality is to share information only with those who need to know and only what they need to know when that information enables them to make informed decisions that they are duly authorized to make. This rule of confidentiality shall be followed by all involved.

MANOA VALLEY CHURCH DISCLOSURE FORM

PERSONAL INFORMATION

NAME (LAST, FIRST, MIDDLE)				
HAVE YOU EVER USED ANY OTHER NAMES? IF SO, PLEASE PRINT. (For background and criminal conviction check)				
PRESENT ADDRESS		APT. NO.	CITY	STATE
				ZIP
DAYTIME PHONE:		EVENING PHONE:		CELL PHONE:
ARE YOU OVER THE AGE OF 18? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO		HOW MANY DAYS/HOURS PER WEEK ARE YOU ABLE TO VOLUNTEER?		CAN YOU MAKE A ONE-YEAR COMMITMENT TO THIS VOLUNTEER ROLE? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO
FIRST AID TRAINING? <input type="checkbox"/> YES Date completed: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> NO		CPR TRAINING? <input type="checkbox"/> YES Date completed: _____ <input type="checkbox"/> NO		ARE YOU AVAILABLE FOR PERIODIC VOLUNTEER TRAINING SESSIONS? <input type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO

PRIOR PLACES OF RESIDENCE

List all places of residence (the city, county, and state) for the past seven years.

#	CITY OR TOWN	COUNTY	STATE	DATES
1				
2				
3				
4				

REFERENCES

Give the names of one relative and three persons you are not related to, whom you have known at least three years, whom we can contact.

#	NAME	ADDRESS	RELATION/ YEARS KNOWN	DAYTIME AND EVENING PHONE NUMBERS
1				
2				
3				
4				

CHECK ONE:

- I have been a member of this church since _____.
- I am not a member of this church. I have regularly and frequently participated in this church since _____.

MISCELLANEOUS BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Explain why you want to volunteer with children and youth:

List qualities and experiences you have that help your work with children and youth:

Do you have a driver's license? YES NO

State issued: _____

Expiration: _____

Have you ever had your license suspended or revoked in the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance?: YES NO If yes, explain fully:

Have you ever been charged with, convicted of, or pled guilty or no contest to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violations)? YES NO If yes, explain fully:

Were you ever a defendant in a civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct where a judgment was entered against you, the case was settled out of court, or the case was dismissed because the statute of limitations expired? YES NO If yes, explain the date, nature, and incident leading to the lawsuit and the disposition of the lawsuit:

Have you ever been terminated from employment or a volunteer position or lost professional credentials for reasons related to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial abuse? YES NO If yes, explain the date, nature, and incident leading to the termination:

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the volunteer position you are seeking? YES NO If yes, please explain:

The covenants between persons seeking employment or sanctioned volunteer positions in the church require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the church. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission given in this Disclosure Form and/or during interview(s) may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill, regardless of when the misrepresentation or omission is discovered. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between employees or volunteers and the church they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize Manoa Valley Church 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 and state opinions regarding my background and character.

Manoa Valley Church's hiring and authorized volunteer recruitment process involves the distribution of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise the position I am seeking to fill. To that end, I authorize Manoa Valley Church 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 that Manoa Valley Church will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the Manoa Valley Church Safe Church Policy.

PRINT NAME & SIGN

DATE

PRINT NAME & SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN FOR APPLICANTS UNDER 18

DATE

For Church use only:

Sex Offender Registry (www.nsopr.gov ; www.hawaii.gov/ag/hcjdc) review performed by: _____ on: _____
Personal interview conducted by (name of staff): _____ on: _____
Reference inquiries completed by: _____ on: _____
Safe church awareness training and policy orientation performed on: _____

¹See MVC Safe Church Policy for persons required to complete the disclosure form.