

Relationship with another that takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served, including, but not limited to, repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes including behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination, including, without limitation (a) written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, e-mails, texts, tweets, Facebook or other social media postings or invitations; (b) verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions; (c) physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and (d) visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines. Abuse is defined as: An act committed by a Responsible Adult engaged in a Ministerial Relationship with another that takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served that harms or threatens to harm that person, including physical, sexual, emotional or social mistreatment.

III. Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Child and Youth Ministry

WUCC 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, the Church has established the following guidelines:

- a) WUCC requires that Responsible Adults who volunteer to work with Minors will be (1) members of WUCC, or (2) a friend from the central Vermont area who is regularly and frequently associated with WUCC, or (3) a friend who is known and recommended by a member or the Pastor of WUCC.
- b) All Responsible Adults who regularly work with Minors will complete and submit a disclosure document in a form substantially similar to the sample attached hereto as Exhibit A to be kept on file by the Church Council. The Church Council may, at its sole discretion, request a Responsible Adult to update his/her disclosure document at any time and refile it with the Church Council. At any time the Church Council may require that a Responsible Adult undergo a background check, including but not necessarily limited to inquiries of references and a criminal history verification by a third party vendor, the costs of such verification to be paid for by the Church.
- c) In order for WUCC to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for activities involving Minors, there will be no fewer than two adults present with Minors during all activities. Teenagers (someone between the age of 12 and 17) may assist an adult in supervising activities with Minors; however, such assistance does not alter the requirement that at least two adults be present. The sole exception to this requirement is for Sunday School, which occurs on Sunday morning while parents/guardians are on church premises attending worship service, and occurs in an open area and is easily visible at all times. In this limited instance of Sunday School, one Responsible Adult and one Teenager who is 16 or older may supervise Minors.

- d) Written consent of one parent or guardian of a Minor will be required for all activities off the Church property and any overnight activities.
- e) If the situation arises where a Responsible Adult is going to be working with Minors who does not meet any of the criteria in subsection a) above, then, as directed by the Church Council, before beginning such work with Minors, the Responsible Adult will undergo a background check, including but not necessarily limited to inquiries of references and a criminal history verification by a third party vendor, the costs of such verification to be paid for by the Church. The Church may also conduct a registered sex offender review for such Responsible Adult by searching his/her name on the Department of Justice website at www.nsopr.gov.
- f) The Church Council will have the sole authority to decide whether any Responsible Adult is approved for working with Minors.

IV. Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation or Abuse

- a) When a complaint is made, the Church Council will immediately form:
 - i. A Response Team of two people who, in their opinion, will be well suited to assist families in making a report to the appropriate law enforcement agency for investigation of the alleged incident and provide support through the process. The Response Team, with approval of the Church Council, may seek the advice of legal counsel or others to advise it in performing its functions. The Response Team shall document everything and advise the Pastor and Moderator of ongoing steps and actions taken, but otherwise all reports and conversations shall remain confidential. A written summary of the Response Team's proceedings in such cases will be maintained.
 - ii. A Congregation Support Team of two people who, in their opinion, will be well suited to assist the WUCC church family in providing support and to help process feelings and to reflect faithfully on the issue at hand with the hope of healing and reconciliation. The Congregation Support Team is encouraged to seek advice and support from staff at the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ.
- b) The person(s) toward whom the inappropriate behavior is directed need not be the complainant. Moreover, neither consent nor acquiescence will excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior. At any time, the Pastor, or a team appointed by the Church Council, may initiate conversations seeking more information and will then make a prompt decision on whether further reporting action is warranted.

V. Physical Plant Accommodations

To support this Policy, the physical church building will be upgraded and modified so that doors will contain a window, sized for easy visibility, where there are gathering of people. This requirement does not pertain to outside doors or doors to the bathrooms.

VI. Clergy

Apart from any disposition of the matter by the Church, all allegations of behavior which call into question the fitness for ministry of any Pastor will promptly be forwarded to the Vermont Conference Minister and the Ministerial Standards and Standing Committee of the Vermont Conference of the Vermont Conference of the United Church of Christ, whose contact information is: 36 North Main Street Randolph, VT 05060 (802) 728-4999.

Waitsfield United Church of Christ
Village Meeting House
4355 Main Street, P.O. Box 16
Waitsfield, VT 05673
802-496-3065 • info@waitsfieldchurch.org



An Open and Affirming
Congregation

Exhibit A

Liability and Disclosure Form

Name: Last		First	Middle
Address: Street		City/State	Zip code
Daytime Phone	Evening Phone	Email	
Date of Birth (for background check)			

References: One reference should be related to you and the other reference cannot be related to you.

Name			
Address	City	State	Zip code
Telephone	Email		

Name			
Address	City	State	Zip code
Telephone	Email		

- I have been a member of this church since _____
- I have been a friend of this church since _____
- I am not a member or friend of this church

I have never been convicted of, nor pled guilty or no contest to, a crime. (Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state)

- True Not True

If not true, please briefly describe the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. The Church will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The Church, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?

- Yes** **No** *If yes, please provide a brief explanation.*

A. I understand that I am responsible for issues or concerns that might arise here while conducting _____ [name program or activity]. I waive my right to pursue the Waitsfield United Church of Christ for any liabilities related to my conduct or program(s).

B. The Waitsfield United Church of Christ has a policy that there are to be two adults present when there are Minors participating programs at the Village Meeting House, with the exception of Sunday School where one adult and one Teenager 16 or over will suffice. It is the program leader's responsibility to make these arrangements and to uphold the policy.

C. As a community of Christian faith, the Waitsfield United Church of Christ, Inc. d/b/a Village Meeting House, located at 4355 Main Street, Waitsfield, Vermont, is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, staff, volunteers and visitors can worship, learn and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. In particular, it is our goal to provide a safe environment for the children and youth who are entrusted to our care. All persons associated with WUCC or use the Church building should be aware that the Church is strongly opposed to Sexual Exploitation or Abuse (as defined in the Safe Church Policy Concerning Abuse Prevention¹) and that such behavior is prohibited by Church policy and will not be tolerated.

Acknowledgement

____ I acknowledge that I have read, understand and will uphold the requirements listed in paragraphs A-C above.

(PRINT NAME & SIGN)

DATE

- Sex Offender Registry (www.nsopr.gov) review performed on _____
- Personal interview conducted by: _____
- Reference inquiries completed on: _____
- Background check (<https://secure.vermont.gov/DPS/criminalrecords/>) completed on: _____

¹ Definition from Safe Church Policy Concerning Abuse Prevention: **Sexual Exploitation or Abuse:** Sexual Exploitation is defined as: Any sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a Responsible Adult engaged in a Ministerial Relationship with another that takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served, including, but not limited to, repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes including behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination, including, without limitation (a) written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, e-mails, texts, tweets, Facebook or other social media postings or invitations; (b) verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions; (c) physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement, assault, coercing sexual intercourse; and (d) visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines. Abuse is defined as: An act committed by a Responsible Adult engaged in a Ministerial Relationship with another that takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served that harms or threatens to harm that person, including physical, sexual, emotional or social mistreatment.