

## **Safe Congregation Policy Unity Church of North Easton**

### **SECTION ONE: PREAMBLE**

Unity Church, as a spiritual community, takes seriously its responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for all who come to it. We recognize that we often are in a unique position to learn of circumstances in the lives of children and adults where there may be a need for intervention and healing.

Always encompassing the seven principals of Unitarian Universalism, the Safe Congregations Committee has created the following policy and procedure while recognizing the following:

- We recognize that religious communities, which should be dedicated to the creation of safe environments for all their members, are particularly vulnerable to incidents of abuse because of the high level of trust, the welcoming spirit, and the strong reliance and need for volunteers, especially in children and youth programs.
- We recognize the inherent importance in a religious community of those very factors of trust, welcome, and volunteer commitment and the necessity to adopt "reasonable precautions" as a watchword for any ensuing guidelines and requirements regarding the issue of abuse. We further realize that institutions operating in the best possible manner with all due concern cannot guarantee an absolutely risk free setting.
- We recognize the painful nature of this situation, and we realize that to adequately address it, it will mean change and a sacrifice of some convenience to which we have become accustomed; yet we know our responsibility to respond to these realities. Our faith calls us to do all we can to make our world a better place to live.

In this spirit, we at Unity Church, adopt this policy statement. We urge all our members and friends to confront the issue of abuse and its potential source in religious communities and to take appropriate action. By overcoming the secrecy involved in this subject and by providing a forum for possible problems and concerns, we will create an opportunity for victims and survivors to gain the power necessary to pursue their search for help and to support perpetrators in their treatment.

We believe that our response can help change the voices of denial that proclaim "It can't happen here!" to voices of affirmation that pledge "We will do all we can to see that it won't happen here!"

### **SECTION TWO: THE SAFE CONGREGATION COMMITTEE (SCC)**

The Safe Congregation Committee shall consist of three members who shall elect a chairperson from amongst themselves. The Executive Committee of Unity Church will appoint the members of the Committee to 3-year, rotating terms. Committee members will be eligible to serve for a total of 2 terms (6 consecutive years). The Parish Minister shall serve as an ex-officio member of the committee. The SCC will seek to promote safety at Unity Church in accordance with the Safe Congregation Policy. It will review the policy for changes at least once per year and shall serve in all roles that the policy foresees, including:

- Submit and evaluate CORI checks
- Investigate Safe Congregation concerns/complaints
- Care for and file Safe Congregation paperwork in coordination with Office Manager and Committees
- Assist Lifespan RE Committee with Safe Congregation trainings, filling out appropriate forms, and in other ways which this policy impacts that committee.

The SCC will meet at least biannually and/or on an as-need basis when its services are requested. Members of the Safe Congregation Committee shall not be expected to be professionally trained in any field related to the policy. To contact the SCC, please call the Church office for up-to-date contact information, or find the current chairperson of the committee listed on the Sunday order of service cover, or on the church website.

### **SECTION THREE: SIX DEFINITIONS OF TERMS USED IN THIS POLICY**

- I. **Child Abuse:** The non-accidental commission of an act by a caretaker upon a child under the age of 18 which creates a substantial risk of serious physical or emotional injury and/or distress, and/or sexual contact or exploitation which constitutes a sexual offense under the laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This definition is not dependent upon location (i.e. abuse can occur while the child is in an out-of-home or in-home setting.)
- II. **Sexual Abuse or Molestation:** sexual contact or involvement with any person, including, but not limited to, a person who is a minor or who is legally incompetent. Also, unwanted sexual contact or involvement with an adult, through force or exploitation.
- III. **Sexual Harassment:** a situation where there is an employment, mentor, or colleague relationship between the persons involved, including, but not limited to, undesired or inappropriate sexually-oriented humor or language; inappropriate questions or comments about sexual behavior or orientation; undesired physical contact; inappropriate comments about clothing or physical appearance; conduct or communication which has the purpose or effect of creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive environment.
- IV. **Neglect:** includes abandonment, denial of medical care, nutritional deprivation, lack of proper food/clothing/hygiene, exposure to health hazard, permitting chronic truancy or failure to enroll child in school.
- V. **Sexual Exploitation/Misconduct:** including, but not limited to, the development of, or the attempt to develop, a sexual relationship between ministers, counselors, youth leaders, church school teachers, and other adults, and a person with whom they have a care taking role, whether or not there is apparent consent from the individual.
- VI. **Mandated Reporter:** Massachusetts Law requires that persons in certain enumerated occupations ('Mandated Reporter') file reports of abuse or neglect toward children, the elderly and people with disabilities with the Massachusetts Department of Social Services or other appropriate agencies. A report is required when the mandated reporter has reasonable cause to believe that a child under 18 years of age, any adult over the age of 60, or any adult with physical and/or mental disability is suffering physical or emotional injury resulting from abuse inflicted upon the person which causes harm or substantial risk of harm to the person's health or welfare, including sexual abuse or neglect. Reports of abuse or neglect must be filed immediately. A failure to file a report may be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars. In addition, any person who knowingly files a report of child abuse that is frivolous may be punished by a fine of not more than one thousand dollars.

Mandated Reporters in our congregation are:

1. **Clergy:** This means a member of the clergy or person acting in that role.
2. **Persons Performing a Pastoral Role:** Person(s) performing official duties on behalf of a church or religious body that are recognized as duties of clergy.
3. **Persons Working with Children:** Any person employed by the church or religious body, or any person volunteering for said groups, to supervise, educate, coach, train, or counsel a child on a regular basis.

All mandated reporters from Unity Church will receive mandated reporter training.

## SECTION FOUR: SAFETY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

### I. Supervision Guidelines:

- There will be a minimum of two adults supervising each RE class, youth group or youth sponsored event. In the event that there aren't two adults available to teach an RE class or event, it will be cancelled.
- It is the responsibility of Adult leaders of RE classes to inform the DRE (or the minister if the DRE cannot be reached directly) if they will not be present at a scheduled event at least one day before the event so that every effort can be made to find a substitute.
- For the purposes of this policy a "group" is defined as those minors who have been assigned to a nursery, pre-school, or individual elementary class or specific program or activity within the context of that class, as well as youth who are taking part in a planned, organized component of their program.
- The number of childcare providers or babysitters needed for a particular event – aside from Sunday morning activities - will be left to the good judgment of the adult leaders of the event, with the understanding that the number of children in need of supervision should guide their decision.
- For the purposes of this policy, "supervision" is defined as the reasonable exercise of thoughtful action and responsibility by adults working with their respective age groups, realizing that the immediacy of such direct supervision will vary with the ages of those in a group and the context of the activity.
- Parents are responsible for meeting their Nursery-age through Kindergarten-age children at Holly House after the worship service is over on Sunday mornings in a timely manner. Children in First grade and higher will be escorted to Coffee Hour where their teachers will remain with them until their parents arrive, in a timely manner, at Coffee Hour. Parents are responsible for supervising their children once the Sunday worship service is over.
- Corporal punishment will not be used under any circumstances.
- If an adult other than the parent or guardian has a private one-on-one meeting with a child or youth, the Minister, Director of RE or other classroom or youth volunteer should be notified about the meeting, either before the meeting or immediately afterwards.
- No adult, other than parent or guardian, is to have unmonitored contact – out of sight and sound for more than two minutes – with a child or youth without the parent or guardian's knowledge.
- There must be no use of alcohol or illegal drugs at events involving children and youth.

### II. Building and Classroom Safety:

- All classroom doors must have glass openings, clear for viewing into and out of room.
- A first aid kit must be readily available on each floor of Holly House, Parish Hall, the Chaffin Room and the Sanctuary.
- A review of first aid skills must be part of RE teacher and youth group training.
- Fire escape plans need to be placed in public areas and all staff, including RE volunteers must be trained in fire evacuation of both Holly House and the Church building. Fire exits must be clearly posted and Unity Church's fire safety policy will be adhered to.
- The RE Committee must conduct a Sunday morning fire drill annually.

### III. Field Trips:

- Parents or guardians must sign permission slips when children and youth are participating in church sponsored outings. The destination and expected time of return must be posted near Holly House's entrance and be given in writing to the parent or guardian.
- Permissions slips will include specific information about medications and allergies of participants.
- Adults supervising the specific outings must have a list of all participants' names, emergency contacts and medical conditions with them at all times.

- There must be a minimum of two adults with the group and at least one supervising adult must carry a cell for or have access to a telephone at all times in the event of an emergency.
- All drivers must be at least 25 years of age and must have a valid driver's license and up to date car insurance. A copy of the driver's insurance policy and driver's license will be filed confidentially in the church office. Only the Minister, DRE and Church Secretary will have access to the document.
- All participants must wear seat belts and children under 4 years must be in appropriate car seats.
- A First Aid box will travel with the group.

#### IV. Youth Group Conferences/Overnight Events

- Are subject to the same guidelines as "Field Trips"
- The adult/youth ratio must be at least 1:7, with a minimum of two adults.
- No illegal drugs, alcohol, dangerous materials, or firearms.
- Sexuality is an important and healthy part of young people's lives. However, inappropriate behavior (i.e. sexual intercourse or sexual harassment) is not permitted. The community reserves the right to deem any behavior inappropriate. Parents/guardians are invited to discuss this policy with their youth.
- Same sex sleeping quarters will be provided at all overnight gatherings. Lights out/quiet hours will be observed in these areas.
- No leaving or arriving at the designated conference area without permission from the registrar.
- It is expected that all attendees (youth *and* adults) will participate in the program. Adequate free time will be scheduled for fellowship and socializing.

### SECTION FIVE: ETHICS OF STAFF MEMBERS

#### I. All Employees of the Church

All persons seeking paid employment at Unity Church of North Easton including (but not limited to) the Church Secretary, Director of Religious Education, Music Director, Sexton, and Minister will complete an application for employment that will include: **Document A: The Sexual Misconduct and Abuse Questionnaire for Employment** and **Document B: The Code of Ethics for Working with Children and Youth**. They will be screened by the appropriate hiring committee who will contact references, record the contact, conduct a formal interview with the candidate, and conduct a CORI and/or other appropriate criminal background checks. The application forms will be considered confidential. They will be kept in a locked file in the church office to be viewed only by the appropriate hiring committee.

Persons already employed by the church will also be asked to complete Documents A and B.

#### II. Professional Minister(s)

Unity Church of North Easton requires its minister(s) to be a member of the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association and to be in Fellowship and in good standing with the Unitarian Universalist Association. Our minister(s) is accountable to the UUMA's Code of Professional Practice which states in part:

*As a sexual being, I will recognize the power that ministry gives me and refrain from practices which are harmful to others and which endanger my integrity or my professional effectiveness. Such practices include sexual activity with any child or with an unwilling adult, with a counselee, with the spouse or partner of a person in the congregation, with interns, or with any other exploitative relationship... I will remember that a congregation places special trust in its professional leadership and that the members of the congregation allow a minister to become a*

*part of their lives on the basis of that trust. I will not abuse or exploit that trust for my own gratification... I will not engage in sexual activities with a member of the congregation who is not my spouse or partner, if I am married or in a committed relationship. If I am single, before becoming sexually involved with a person in the congregation, I will take special care to examine my commitment, motives, intentionality, and the nature of the activity and its consequence for myself, the other person, and the congregation...*

and the Rules of the UUA's Ministerial Fellowship Committee which, in part, states:

*The status of Fellowship of a minister in the Unitarian Universalist Association may be terminated... when a minister's performance and/or behavior in a society or in any other professional position is found by the Committee to be conduct unbecoming a minister or for other specified cause.*

(Complete copies of these two documents are available in the Church Office)

### III. Director of Religious Education (DRE)

Unity Church of North Easton requires its DRE to be a member in good standing of the Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA) and to abide by its Code of Professional Practice which, in part, states:

*I recognize that as a religious leader in whom trust and power have been placed, I am both morally and legally in a professional relationship to which I am called to be faithful (a fiduciary relationship). I must never abuse the authority of my position by manipulating others to satisfy my personal needs, which may include, but are not restricted to, sexualized behavior with any child, adolescent, or vulnerable adult seeking advice or comfort; with any adult in another committed relationship; with interns or with youth advisors. Nor will I engage in any other exploitative relationship that abuses the power and damages the trust that a specific individual, a congregation, or an institution has placed in me. As a religious education professional, I have the responsibility to be aware of, to advocate, and to live by this Code of Professional Practices, and to expect that my colleagues will do likewise. I accept the responsibility to confront a colleague's misuse of power or to report concerns about suspected misconduct to a LREDA Good Officer. Furthermore, I will be aware of and observe the legal requirements of my State or Province regarding reporting of physical or sexual misconduct.*

(A complete copy of this document is available in the Church Office)

## **SECTION SIX: ETHICS OF ADULT LEADERS**

### I. Criteria

Workers who provide direct care or supervision to children or youth at Unity Church of North Easton events or programs must meet the following criteria:

- Advisors for youth and volunteer Religious Education (RE) teachers must be active participants at Unity Church for at least six months. Active participants are church members or contributing friends who are involved with church committees, activities and/or events.
- All RE volunteers fall under the direction and supervision of the Director of Religious Education, and procedures for interviewing and choosing prospective leaders may be created at the DRE's discretion.
- All RE Volunteers will undergo a training conducted by the DRE. The SCC will assist the DRE in training volunteers about Safe Congregation issues.
- Advisors for High School Youth and Middle School Youth must be at least 21 years old and all other volunteer religious education teachers must be at least 16 years old.

- Workers under 18 years old may be used as paid helpers for event childcare as long as they have completed the Red Cross Babysitter's Training or equivalent course. An adult meeting the above criteria will supervise them throughout the event.
- All compensated workers and volunteer religious education teachers and volunteer youth advisors and mentors must complete an application form (**Document C**) and read the policy and sign **Document B: The Code of Ethics for Working with Children and Youth** and undergo a CORI check. The SCC will evaluate any "findings" from a CORI check based upon the criteria used by the Massachusetts Office of Child Care Services. A CORI check shall be valid for 3 years, at which time another CORI check shall be undergone.
- Occasional volunteers, parents or church members or adults who substitute in the classroom or during an occasional program, must read and sign **Document B: The Code of Ethics for Working with Children and Youth** before assuming their duties and are not required to undergo a CORI check unless their responsibilities become more regular. The DRE and volunteer religious education teachers will supervise these volunteers.
- All compensated workers, please see **Section Five** (above)

## II. Conduct for Adults working with Children and Youth

Adults who work with children and youth at Unity Church are expected always to have the best interests of children and youth at heart. They are expected to nurture their physical, emotional and spiritual growth by fostering an environment of kindness, trust, respectfulness, and hopefully, fun. No one's enjoyment should ever be at the expense of another person's health or self-esteem. Their charge is to encourage kindness and genuineness among the children and youth, and to discourage unkindness and falseness. In this manner, we hope to create an environment in which children and youth will be able to explore the spiritual and religious nature of their lives, both as individuals and as communities. To accomplish this there are specific expectations that our congregation has for employees and volunteers:

- *"Friendship" with Youth*

Although we hope that youth and adults will have genuine fondness for one another, any adult who looks to youth for friendship is not sufficiently mature to be in a position of responsibility over them. A "friendship" is reciprocal, where neither person has more responsibility for the health of the relationship than the other. This assumes primary responsibility for maintaining appropriate boundaries and cultivating an atmosphere of health and trust. Therefore, it is the adult volunteer or compensated worker's responsibility to avoid or discourage inappropriate friendships.

- *Unofficial Contact with Youth*

Sometimes a genuine mentoring relationship will develop between a youth and an adult. These relationships can be healthy and transformative for both. However, it is our concern that someone, who might not have the best interest of the youth at heart, might seek to develop an unhealthy relationship with a youth through mentoring. Therefore, if an adult wishes to be in contact with a youth outside of the normal channels of church events, it is imperative that their behavior *both be and appear to be* above reproach. Any relationship developed between an adult and a youth outside of Unity Church activities must be with the knowledge and consent of the youth's parents. This is for the protection of the youth and the adult. Adults will best protect themselves from false accusations of misconduct by keeping the parents informed of their actions.

- *Sexualized Behavior*

It is never appropriate to engage in any manner of sexualized behavior with a child or youth. This refers not only to explicitly sexual behavior, but also to sexually provocative behavior or language. It is inappropriate to tell jokes with sexual content, for instance, or to make "double entendres." Physical expressions of affection such as hugs certainly have their place, but it is best to allow

the child or youth to initiate them, and the adult must be sensitive not to allow them to be prolonged.

- *Confidentiality*

Adults who work with children and youth under the aegis of Unity Church of North Easton are responsible first to the children and youth, but to the church as well. Sometimes an adult will learn that a child or youth is the victim of abuse, is suicidal, has a serious drug problem, etc. It is Unity Church's policy that information be communicated to the Church's professional staff immediately. For this reason, please try never to give children or youth the impression that you will keep secrets for them. **Confidentiality is not Secret Keeping.** For the most part, a covenant of confidentiality will mean that you do not repeat information told to you in confidence. However, when the information is of a major, crisis nature, encourage the child or youth to seek help from a parent or other authority figure. Consult with a person of greater authority in the church, the minister or the DRE, about an appropriate course of action.

- *Acceptance with this Policy and Code of Conduct*

Any church employee or volunteer working with children or youth who disagrees with any provision of this Policy or **Document B: The Code of Ethics for Working with Children and Youth** is free to discuss their opinions with the leadership of the church, but must abide by the Code as written. Signing the Code indicates the signatory has read this Policy and the Code and agrees to abide by them. The signatory further acknowledges that failure to abide by the Code or the provisions of the Policy will result in dismissal from either paid or volunteer positions involving children and youth at Unity Church.

## **SECTION SEVEN: REPORTING AND RESPONSE PROCEDURES**

### **I. Procedure for Filing A Complaint Of Sexual Harassment Or Professional Sexual Misconduct**

1. The complainant should bring the concern to any one of the following first contacts: the Minister, the Director of Religious Education, the Chairperson of the Safe Congregations Committee (SCC).
2. If illegal actions are suspected by any of the people involved at any stage of the procedure the police should be contacted.
3. The SCC should investigate the concern, by confidentially speaking to all those concerned in the complaint. The team then may recommend one of the following actions or others as appropriate to the Executive Committee for a decision:
  - a. A restriction or ban on communication between the parties involved
  - b. Counseling as required
  - c. Withdrawal of membership for the accused
  - d. Dismissal of the complaint
4. If the complaint concerns the Minister, the person initially contacted or the President shall inform the Committee on Ministry. The President shall also call on the Department of Ministry of the UUA and the regional Good Offices Person of the UUMA for support and guidance.
5. Any person who may be affected by this process has the right to petition the Executive Committee for appeal. The Board will convene within ten days to consider the petition. The decision of the Board in this regard is final upon a majority vote at a legally constituted meeting.

### **II. Procedure for Reporting Abuse of Children**

If a child discloses physical or sexual abuse to any adult at Unity Church, that adult must contact the Minister, the DRE, or one of the members of the SCC immediately. This person(s) will help the adult

through the process of following the reporting law of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Support will be given to the family members and to the alluded victim; however all interviews of the child must be done by a member of DSS. All religious education teachers are mandated reporters and will receive mandated reporter training.

### III. Procedures for Reporting Harassing Behavior

It is the goal of Unity Church to provide an environment that is free from any type of harassment. This procedure applies to situations where threatening, abusive, or harassing behavior of an individual within the church building or at church-sponsored activities results in Members voicing concerns about one or more of the following:

- Perceived threats to the physical and emotional safety of any adult;
- Disruption of church activities to the effect that people feel compelled to leave an event or refuse to attend further church functions because of fear or intimidation;
- Significant diminishment of the Church's appeal to its existing or potential membership because of threatening, abusive or harassing behavior.

The situations referred to above shall NOT include any expressed concerns based in sexism, racism, homophobia, or other prejudices inconsistent with the principles and purposes of Unitarian Universalism. This policy shall not supersede any other policies or covenants adopted by the Congregation that recognize the inherent worth and dignity of all individuals and that promote diversity and tolerance.

The following is the policy of Unity Church of North Easton in addressing these issues:

1. If an *immediate* response is required, this will be undertaken by the Minister or an officer of the church, if available, and/or the leader of the group or activity involved. This may include asking the person or persons to leave the premises or suspending the meeting or activity until such time as it can be safely resumed without disruption. If further assistance is required, the Police Department may be called. Any time any of these actions are undertaken without the Minister being present, the Minister and President of the Congregation must be notified. A follow-up letter to the individual(s) detailing what steps must be taken before returning to the activities involved will be sent by the Minister or President.
2. Situations not requiring an *immediate* response will be referred to the Safe Congregation Committee (or, if required to assure impartiality, an ad-hoc committee appointed by the Executive Committee). Any Member of the Congregation with a concern about any of the above threatening or harassing situations should direct their concerns to the Safe Congregation Committee. The Safe Congregation Committee, the Minister, and/or the Executive Committee may consult with resources outside Unity Church (ie., UUA, BCD, etc.) to insure objectivity, fairness, and/or to obtain advice for resolution.
3. The individual who has caused the alleged offending behavior shall be notified verbally and/or in writing of the complaint by the Committee.
4. The Committee will conduct a thorough, confidential inquiry which includes, but is not limited to, interviews with the alleged offender, as well as with the complaining parties, and any other person(s) with pertinent information.
5. If the Committee determines that the complaint has validity, the following points will be considered in evaluating the problem:
  - CAUSES – Why is the disruption occurring? Is it a conflict between the individual and others in the church? Are there extenuating circumstances?
  - HISTORY – Is this an isolated incident or a continuing, chronic pattern of behavior?

- PROBABILITY OF CHANGE – How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?
6. In determining the necessary response, the following points will be considered:
- DANGEROUSNESS – Is the individual the source of a threat or perceived threat to persons or property.
  - DISRUPTIVENESS – How much interference with church functions is occurring and what is the impact on existing members?
  - AUTHORITY – Does the alleged offender hold a position of authority in the Church?
7. The Committee will decide on the necessary response on a case-by-case basis. If the Committee, in its judgment, determines the situation warrants action, it may implement one of the following:
- LEVEL I – The Committee shall inform the Minister of the problem and either the Minister or a member of the Committee shall meet with the individual to communicate the concern.
  - LEVEL II – The individual is excluded from the church and/or specific church sponsored activities for a defined period of time, with reasons and the conditions of return made clear. (These actions may be appealed to the Executive Committee)
  - LEVEL III – If after making all reasonable attempts and if the problem seems irresolvable, the individual is permanently excluded from the church and all church-sponsored activities. Before this is carried out, the Committee will consult with the Executive Committee and the Minister, and someone from outside the immediate church community, such as a representative from the UUA or BCD. If it is decided that expulsion will take place, a letter will be sent by the Minister or the President explaining the expulsion.

Unity Church of North Easton strives to be an inclusive community, affirming our differences in beliefs, opinions, and life experiences. Concern for safety and well-being of the congregation as a whole must be given priority over the privileges and inclusion of the individual. To the degree threatening or harassing behavior compromises the health of the congregation, our actions as people of faith must reflect this emphasis on security.

## **SECTION EIGHT: HEALING AND JUSTICE MAKING**

I. The following is adapted from ‘The Elements of Justice-Making’ published by the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence. It will provide guidance to the Safe Congregation Committee. It describes some elements in the healing process following abuse.

1. Truth-telling: This is element of justice making is concerned with breaking the silence that usually surrounds abuse, the silence that allows it to continue. Truth-telling is not the same as fact-finding. By ‘truth’ we mean not only the facts about the abuse, but also the emotional, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the person’s experience. When people speak out about abuse, the abuse loses some of its potency.

2. Acknowledging the Violation: The victim must be heard and know that they are heard. The individuals and institutions to whom the victim tells the truth must listen, and then acknowledge that what happened was abusive and should never have happened. If the individuals and the institution listen to the victim’s account but never condemn the alleged behavior, they are in part sanctioning the behavior and participating in the injustice. Acknowledging the violation means, in essence, saying ‘We believe you. You have been harmed by these actions. The behavior was wrong and should never happen. We regret that it happened to you. It was not your fault.’ Setting in motion the appropriate response procedures as soon as a disclosure or complaint is made can provide a partial acknowledgment of the violation.

3. Compassion: Compassion means ‘suffering with’. When we hear accounts of others’ suffering, we often try to take action too quickly, try to explain it away, minimize it, or avoid dealing with their emotions

so as to avoid our own anger or pain. If we can instead listen empathically and communicate our emotion about what the person tells us, and be witnesses to the pain, we can help counteract the isolation which victims and offenders feel. Compassion creates a connection between ourselves and the victim. This connection is the first step toward healing the damage brought about by the abuse.

4. Protecting the Vulnerable: Once we are aware of the potential for abuse, we must do whatever we can to prevent it. If someone is accused of abuse, steps must be taken to prevent possible further harm. If we do not do so, we are colluding in the harm which may already have occurred.

5. Accountability: Institutions rightfully hold their representative accountable for their actions in their institutional roles. When individuals violate their role, the institution should confront them officially and, based on their misconduct, impose consequences. If the consequences are minimal, the behavior may continue. Holding an abuser accountable for their actions provides them with an opportunity to acknowledge the repercussions of their actions and to begin to take responsibility for them. Holding an abuser accountable is an important step in the restoration of their health and is also part of the victim's healing process.

6. Restitution: What is lost or damaged when abuse occurs can never be fully restored. Nevertheless, some restitution can and must be made. Restitution does not mean "fixing"; it is a "returning to the rightful owner what was taken away" or "payment for damages". Restitution is a tangible means of acknowledging the harm done while contributing to the repair of the damage. In addition to its symbolic value, it is helpful in material sense, since victims may incur expenses such as therapy costs, medical bills, and time lost from work.

7. Vindication: Vindication for a victim is the ultimate goal of justice. The key to physical, emotional, and spiritual healing is to be set free from the multiple layers of suffering created by the abuse.

II. The Safe Congregation Committee will hold a yearly "healing" service or other worship services that seem appropriate.

## APPENDICES

### I. CONTACT INFORMATION

#### **Department of Social Services (DSS)**

(508) 947-1133 or 1-800-792-5200

#### **Easton Police Department**

(508) 230-3322

#### **Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA)**

Executive Secretary of the Ministerial Fellowship Committee or  
Director of Department of Ministry and Professional Leadership Staff Group  
25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108 (617) 742-2100

#### **UUA Ballou Channing District (UUA-BCD)**

District Executive

325 West Elm Street, Brockton, MA 02401 (508) 559-6650

#### **Unitarian Universalist Minister's Association (UUMA)**

BCD UUMA Good Offices

(for current information, check with District Executive of UUA-BCD - (508) 559-6650)

UUMA continental address: 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA 02108

#### **Liberal Religious Educators Association (LREDA)**

LREDA Good Offices

(for current information, check with District Executive of UUA-BCD (508) 559-6650)

LREDA continental address: P.O. Box 691254, San Antonio, TX 78269

#### **Rev. Eric Cherry, Parish Minister**

(508) 238-6373 or (508) 238-1915

#### **Beverly Tricco, Director of Religious Education**

(508) 238-6373 or (781) 963-7549

#### **Safe Congregation Committee**

The current chairperson of the committee is listed on the Sunday order of service Cover and in the "Church Leaders" section of the Church website: [www.unity-church.com/leaders](http://www.unity-church.com/leaders)  
(Contact Church office (508) 238-6373 for up to date contact information)

#### **Red Cross Babysitter Training**

contact the Children's Museum in Easton

(508) 230-3789

**II. DOCUMENT A – EMPLOYMENT QUESTIONNAIRE**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

**Telephone & email** \_\_\_\_\_

**References**

Please list those who are familiar with your character as it relates to working with children and youth, and as it relates to working with adult volunteers.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Please answer the following questions (see Notice below):**

A. Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

B. Have you ever committed or has any civil action ever been filed against you for reasons related to sexual misconduct or child abuse? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

C. Have you ever resigned from employment or been disciplined or terminated by an employer for reasons related to sexual misconduct or child abuse? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, please explain. \_\_\_\_\_

I understand that the information I have provided may be verified, if necessary, by contacting persons or organizations named in this application, or by contacting any person or organization that may have information concerning me. I hereby release and agree to hold harmless from liability any person or organization that provides information. I also agree to hold harmless Unity Church of North Easton, the trustees, the employees, and the volunteers thereof. In signing this application, I affirm that the information I have given is true and correct.

Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**NOTICE**

A. You may refuse to answer or may answer “no record to any question, or eliminate any information regarding:

- (1) an arrest, detention, or disposition with respect to a criminal *matter* where there is no conviction;
- (2) a first conviction for drunkenness, simple assault, speeding, minor traffic violations, affray or disturbance of the peace; or
- (3) any conviction of a misdemeanor where the date of such conviction or the completion of any period of incarceration resulting there from, whichever date is later, occurred five or more years prior to the date of this employment application, unless~ you were convicted of any offense in the past five years.

Unity Church of North Easton does not request you to furnish, and will not make or keep a record of any criminal information prohibited by Law.

B. Conviction of a crime is not an automatic bar to your employment—all circumstances will be considered

C. Lying or giving false answers with respect to convictions may be grounds not to hire you.

**SEALED RECORDS NOTICE**

An applicant for employment with a sealed record on file with the Commissioner of Probation may answer “no record” with respect to any inquiry herein relative to prior arrests, criminal court appearances, or convictions relating to any such record.

In addition, any applicant for employment may answer ‘no record’ with respect to any inquiry relative to prior arrests, court appearances, and adjudication in all cases of delinquency or as a child in need of services which did not result in a complaint transferred to the Superior Court for criminal prosecution.

**AUTHORIZATION AND RELEASE**

I hereby authorize Unity Church of North Easton to contact my previous employers and/or other individuals concerning my background, and authorize my previous employers and other individuals to provide such information about me. This information is to be used solely for the purpose of evaluating my application for employment by Unity Church of North Easton.

I agree to hold harmless Unity Church of North Easton, and the officers, the trustees, the employees, and the volunteers thereof, and those who provide information to Unity Church of North Easton pursuant to this Authorization from any liability arising from the release of this information.

Signature of Applicant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **III. DOCUMENT B – CODE OF ETHICS FOR PERSONS WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

#### **1. The Role of Adult Leaders**

Adults working with children and youth in the context of our Unitarian Universalist faith have a crucial and privileged role, one which may carry with it a great deal of power and influence. Whether acting as youth advisor, chaperone, child-care worker, teacher, minister, or in any other role, the adult has a special opportunity to interact with our young people in ways which are affirming and inspiring to the young people and to the adult. Adults can be mentors to and role models for children and youth. They can be teachers, counselors and ministers. To help our children grow up to be caring and responsible adults can be a meaningful and joyful experience for the adult and a lifetime benefit to the young person.

While it is important that adults be capable of maintaining meaningful friendships with the young people they work with, adults must exercise good judgment and mature wisdom in using their influence with children and youth and refrain from using young people to fulfill their own needs. Young people are in a vulnerable position when dealing with adults and may find it difficult to speak out about the inappropriate behavior of adults. Adult leaders need to possess a special dedication to working with our young people in ways which affirm the UUA Principles. Good communication skills, self-awareness and understanding of others, sensitivity, problem-solving and decision-making skills, and a positive attitude are all important attributes. Additionally, in recruiting adult leaders we should also seek persons who 1) have a social network outside of their religious education responsibility in which to meet their own needs for friendship, affirmation, and self-esteem, and 2) are willing and able to seek assistance from colleagues and religious professionals when they become aware of a situation requiring expert help or intervention.

It is ultimately the responsibility of the entire congregation, not just those in leadership positions, to create and maintain a climate which supports the growth and welfare of children and youth.

#### **2. Code of Ethics**

With the aforementioned in mind, the following statement is submitted as a “Code of Ethics” for adults working with children and youth:

Adults and older youth who are in leadership roles are in a position of stewardship and play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of both individuals and the community. It is therefore especially important that those in leadership positions be well qualified to provide the special nurturing, care, and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility. The relationship between young people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect if the positive potential of their relationship is to be realized.

There are no more important areas of growth than those of self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth. Wisdom dictates that children, youth and adults suffer damaging effects when leaders become sexually involved with young persons in their care; leaders will therefore refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children and youth. Neither shall they sexually harass youth nor engage in behavior with children or youth that constitutes verbal, emotional, or physical abuse.

Leaders shall be informed of the code of ethics and agree to it before assuming their roles. In cases of any violation of this code, appropriate action will be taken.

I hereby agree to abide by this Code of Conduct

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**IV. DOCUMENT C - RELIGIOUS EDUCATION TEACHER VOLUNTEER QUESTIONNAIRE**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone home \_\_\_\_\_ work \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

Are you 18 years of age or older? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

Position sought \_\_\_\_\_

Previous volunteer experience \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Experience / working with children \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Motivation for volunteering \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This congregation is committed to providing a safe environment for all children. As a teacher I agree to treat all children respectfully and report any suspected child abuse to the Director of Religious Education and Department of Social Services.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

Start Date \_\_\_\_\_ Finish date \_\_\_\_\_