Draft Document 5

Congregational Policy for Sex Offenders

Congregational Policy on Sexual Misconduct

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ United Methodist Church

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, Michigan

Date:

**Preamble**

As part of a denomination dedicated to “making disciples for Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world”, the lay leadership and the congregation of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ United Methodist Church establishes these guidelines for sexual offenders. These guidelines are meant to balance the need of all sinners in need of God's grace to attend worship and grow in their faith, while maintaining a safe and protected environment for all persons, especially children and youth. All persons attending \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ United Methodist Church shall be safe within the church environment from sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, molestation, or unwanted sexual advances of any kind.

**General Guidelines**

The offender must be open with the congregation, lay leadership, and Pastor regarding his/her past.

The congregation must be aware of and abide by the terms of the offender's parole, probation, personal protection orders, bond conditions, or any other court requirements.

The offender must attend meetings with the congregation, pastor, and/or lay leadership that addresses any problems that arise about his/her presence in the church.

The offender cannot accept or support anyone in the congregation minimizing the seriousness of his/her offense, or encouraging him/her to break the terms of their parole/probation. [Example: church member tells offender, “It happened so long ago. I’m not worried---please watch this child for me.”]

The offender shall remain in the company of an assigned member of the congregation at all times when s/he is on the church property.

Adult members of the congregation must be willing to be assigned to accompany the offender. This shall not be the sole responsibility of the church leadership.

The offender may attend any adult activity at the church that will deepen his/her relationship with God.

The congregation shall participate in activities created for the above purpose, such as prayer meetings, Bible study, discussion groups, etc.

The offender shall only use the bathroom off the Fellowship Hall.

The offender cannot enter the education wing of the church or any areas specified for children or youth activities. This includes the second floor of the education wing, and the basement youth/Open Arms room. The offender shall not enter any area of the church currently in use by children or youth for an activity (such as the Fellowship Hall during event preparations).

It is understood the pastor will be in contact with the offender’s probation/parole officer, and their name and phone number shall be given to the pastor as necessary. Any change of parole/probation status, court requirements, or supervising parole/probation officer shall be immediately communicated to the pastor.

**Responsibilities of the Sex Offender**

S/he shall always abide by the terms of probation/parole, and will never attempt to develop a relationship or be with children or youth at church.

S/he shall openly acknowledge the nature, severity, and duration of the offense, and shall not minimize or deny the offense or its impact on victim(s) and their families. S/he will not allow anyone at church to minimize or deny the offense or its impact on victim(s) and their families.

S/he will remain in the company of the assigned church member who is supervising at all times.

S/he will not have access to the church computers, internet, or smart phones.

S/he will cooperate with the pastor and lay leadership.

**Responsibilities of the Congregation and Adult Church Volunteers**

All church volunteers shall undergo a background check through public resources such as ICHAT.

The congregation and adult church volunteers must be aware of and abide by the terms of the offender’s probation/parole, bond conditions, or other court conditions. This information may be published in the church newsletter and/or posted on the bulletin board.

Supervision of the offender at church shall be a joint responsibility of the congregation and the lay leadership of the church.

The congregation and adult volunteers shall not minimize or deny the nature, severity, and duration of the offense or the life-long impact upon the victim(s) and their families.

The person responsible for the sex offender shall not leave him/her or ignore him/her while the person is on church property, nor make exceptions to any guidelines, rules, or probation/parole terms.

It is the responsibility of any church member, church volunteer, or adult in the church to immediately report suspected sexual misconduct, child molestation, etc. to the pastor. Failure to do so may result in removal of church office, removal as a Sunday school teacher, possible disciplinary action as governed by the current edition of the Book of Discipline, and possible criminal/civil action.

The congregation shall treat all persons with respect and in accordance with Jesus’ teachings to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you” and to “love one another”.

**The Responsibilities of the Lay Leadership**

The lay leadership will undergo education and training on sexual abuse and molestation within a church context and be aware of any legal requirements for reporting.

The SPRC will coordinate supervision of the sex offender.

The SPRC and council will annually review and revise these guidelines to address the current church situation and any changes in denominational process or secular law.

The lay leadership shall be alert and sensitive to potential abuse and molestation within the congregation, and shall immediately report any suspicions or concerns to the Sunday school superintendent, SPRC chair, or the pastor. The Sunday school superintendent and SPRC chair shall immediately inform the pastor.

An allegation of sexual misconduct against the pastor shall be immediately reported to the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ District Superintendent; (insert office number).

It is the responsibility of any lay leader to immediately report sexual misconduct, child molestation, etc. to the pastor. Failure to do so may result in removal of church office, removal as a Sunday school teacher, possible disciplinary action as governed by the current edition of the Book of Discipline, and possible criminal/civil action.

**Responsibilities of the Pastor**

The pastor shall offer pastoral care to sexual offenders, victims, and the families of sexual offenders and the victims’ families. Under some circumstances, the pastor may elect to ask additional pastors to assist as needed. (Example: a male victim asks to speak to a male pastor).

The pastor will work with the lay leadership to provide support, education and training in issues of sexual misconduct.

The pastor shall remain in contact with the sex offender’s parole/probation officer.

The pastor shall immediately act upon any allegations of child abuse within the congregation. The pastor shall report allegations of child abuse to the proper authorities, and shall cooperate with denominational and secular authorities.

The pastor shall keep a written and/or photographic narrative of all allegations of sexual misconduct, child abuse, child molestation, etc., and shall retain a dated copy of all allegations, photographs, list of witnesses, and narratives reported to law enforcement or social service agencies in a safe, confidential location. This record is to be retained in case social service agencies do not act to protect a child or youth. (The Calista Springer rule)

The pastor shall be responsible to the District Superintendent and the West MI Annual Conference pastoral and ethical standards for conduct. If the conference does not require a background check or a signed statement that s/he has never faced an allegation of sexual misconduct, the pastor shall provide to the chair of SPRC a signed statement and undergo a background check.

**Responsibilities of Professional Staff**

Professional staff includes all persons who receive a salary or work full or part-time for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ United Methodist Church.

All staff shall immediately report any allegations of child abuse or molestation to the pastor.

All staff shall immediately report any instances of sexual harassment, unwanted sexual advances, or inappropriate sexual behavior of any kind to the pastor or chair of SPRC.

All staff shall act to protect children and youth at all times.

All staff shall work with the pastor, lay leadership, and the congregation to maintain a safe and protected environment for adults, children and youth at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ UMC.

All staff shall undergo a background check and shall sign a statement that s/he has never faced an allegation of sexual misconduct.

Approved by:

SPRC Chair

Date

Church Council Chair

Date