

Safe Church Covenant

As the gathered members of the Christian community of faith referred to as The Congregational Church of Weston, United Church of Christ, we pledge to conduct our ministry of the Gospel in ways that assure the safety, well-being, and spiritual growth of all our members. To protect our children and youth, as well as those who work with them, we will follow all recommended safety procedures in their recruitment, selection and training. We will implement prudent operational standards for all programs and events. We will educate all of those who serve here, volunteer and compensated, regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods. We will have and follow a clearly defined procedure for reporting any suspected incident of abuse, as we also conform to state law and all other regulatory mandates. We will do so out of deep care and concern for the welfare of each and every person who is served by, and who seeks to serve, the ministries of our Church, as all seek to follow the example of the compassionate Christ.

The Congregational Church of Weston (UCC) is committed to provide a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and grow in Christian Faith.

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

- We expect that those who regularly volunteer to work with minors will have been members of The Congregational Church of Weston, UCC for at least six months or, if not members, regularly and frequently associated with The Congregational Church of Weston, UCC for at least a year.
- All volunteers who regularly work with children and youth will complete and submit a volunteer application form.
- Before beginning their duties, all prospective employees and volunteers will undergo a background check, including but not necessarily limited to inquiries of references and a criminal history verification.
- All volunteers and employees who regularly work with children and youth will receive orientation regarding safe church policy and procedures.
- It is the policy of this church to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for child and youth activities. In situations where participants are not readily visible to each other, there will be no fewer than two unrelated adults present with children. Youth over the age of 13 may assist in supervising children and youth activities; however, such assistance does not alter the requirements that at least two unrelated adults be present.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian or a minor will be required for all activities off the church property, and any overnight activities (see permission release form pg 14).

Please refer to the Safe Church document at www.congwestonucc.net for more information.

The Congregational Church of Weston Safe Church Policy 2012

Bullying Prevention and Intervention

The Congregational Church of Weston does not tolerate bullying. All incidents should be brought to the attention of the teacher, staff, or to the Safe Church chair/committee and when necessary documented and/or resolved immediately.

Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students of a written, verbal, or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof directed at a target* that: (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property; (ii) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to himself/herself or of damage to his/her property; (iii) creates a hostile environment* at school for the target; (iv) infringes on the rights of the target at a school/community program; or (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a classroom/school/program. Bullying includes cyberbullying*.

Cyberbullying is bullying through the use of technology or any electronic device.

Hostile Environment is a situation in which bullying causes the school environment to be permeated with intimidation, ridicule, or insult that is sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the student's education.

Target is a student against whom bullying, cyberbullying, or retaliation is directed.

Consequences and Support in Responding to Reports

There is no one prescribed response to verified acts of bullying. Actions may be age appropriate, concrete, and immediate. Because of the legal requirements regarding the confidentiality of student records, the Congregational Church of Weston cannot report specific information to the target's parent or guardian about disciplinary action taken. Actions may be accompanied by the referral to counseling or other therapeutic support.

Best Practices in Bullying Prevention

The word "discipline" comes from the same root as the word "disciple" and means "to teach." We are most likely to succeed in helping young people change their aggressive behavior when we use the principles of good teaching in our discipline interventions. We can ask questions instead of statements whenever possible so youth learn to think about their own goals and behaviors and how this relates to others.