

# The Unitarian Church of All Souls

## Safe Congregation Policy

### updated January 2018

A variety of potential dangers are inherent in operating a congregation. These include physical site (including buildings and grounds), operation of the Religious Education (RE) program, transportation and supervision of children off-site, and instances of disruptive behavior involving members, friends, and/or staff of the congregation.

In the past few years, the issue of making our congregations safe places has become more prominent. Congregations are carefully and intentionally putting into place policies around all kinds of safety issues. Openness to a wide variety of individuals is one of the prime values held by our congregation and expressed in our denomination's purposes and principles. However, when any person's physical, sexual, emotional well-being, or freedom to safely express their beliefs or opinions is threatened, the source of this threat must be addressed firmly and promptly.

Our commitment, as Unitarian Universalists, to the inherent worth and dignity of every person and to justice and compassion, compel us to create a safe and nurturing environment that protects children and adults from harm and promotes their spiritual growth while part of our community. Additionally, we affirm our commitment to maintain an environment free of discrimination and harassment based on race, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, age, physical ability, gender, or sexual/affectional orientation. We pledge to conduct ourselves in a manner which conveys mutual respect and consideration.

If we are to be a caring community, we must ensure that everyone who comes here feels valued, safe, and secure. This congregation accepts responsibility to educate ourselves and our children about sexual misconduct, abuse, molestation, harassment, and exploitation. We pledge to do our best to protect and support those who come to us either at risk or in crisis.

The Unitarian Church of All Souls is a Safe Congregation where practices and procedures serve to ensure that all members, friends, adults, children and youth are treated with respect.

This policy will be periodically reviewed by the Executive Staff Team as well as by the RE Committee and the Board of Trustees. It will be posted on the All Souls website as a reference and will be easily accessible to all members, visitors and friends. Our policies are comprehensive and cover a large range of issues related to all aspects of safety:

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## **Section I Religious Education Program Safety**

### **Staff and Volunteers**

A. Selection and Screening of Staff & Volunteers: The Religious Educator is responsible for the recruitment, training, and supervision of all teachers and leaders within the Religious Education Program and Youth Programming at the Unitarian Church of All Souls. The Religious Educator will recruit and carefully screen all applicants for paid and volunteer positions. All Souls Church will use screening documents, which applicants must complete, sign and submit as a condition of employment or appointment, both for initial hire and ongoing work. All volunteers must sign the Code of Ethics (see appendix A)

Paid or volunteer staff known to have criminal charges pending or who have been convicted of or who have pled guilty to any sexual or physical abuse or assault charge will not be allowed to work with children or youth.

Paid or volunteer staff who break the Code of Ethics will be dismissed immediately.

All religious-education related positions, including creative workshop teachers, worship leaders, youth group advisors and religious education teachers, in addition to the documentation stated above, must attend teacher orientation at the beginning of the year, led by the Religious Educator. If a paid staff or volunteer begins their work after the scheduled orientation, the new staff or volunteer will be oriented to safety policies by the Religious Educator or the Religious Education assistant.

All Staff over 18 must have a background check. Youth assistants under 18 must still attend orientation. Senior High Youth Group Leaders must be at least 25 years of age, unless special exception is made by the RE.

### **B. Screening Process and Documentation**

The RE and RE Assistant shall be responsible for overseeing completion of the appropriate paperwork, and for checking references online. The DRE shall follow up to ensure that the reference checks have been completed and submitted appropriately. If the applicant is not known to the Religious Educator, confirmation of identity will be requested.

For all RE-related positions excluding creative workshop teachers, including teachers, youth group advisors, and worship leaders, the applicant shall have been a congregant for at least six months, or have been a member of another Unitarian Universalist Congregation and be able to supply references if asked. Youth Advisors and Creative workshop teachers are hired through mutual agreement, references and a background

check.

References must include the name, phone number and address of the reference, type and duration of the relationship, and a general character overview, including the person's ability to work with children/youth.

The Religious Education assistant will keep records of the screening and related forms in a confidential file. When criminal records checks are performed, they will be initiated and reviewed and kept confidential. Access to such information will be limited to the Executive Team and RE as necessary.

### C. Training and Supervision of Staff and Volunteers

Every September, an orientation(s) will be held. All teachers, teaching assistants, creative workshop leaders, worship leaders and youth group leaders should attend or make an appointment with the Religious Educator to be oriented to All Souls and our policies and procedures. Parents and families also need to be oriented to the religious education program. The Religious Educator will include a discussion of this policy to families during orientation to the RE program.

As described in this policy and using supplemental materials, staff and volunteers working with children and youth shall be oriented to understand the following:

- \* Unitarian Universalist principles and purposes, RE philosophy and goals of All Souls Religious Education Program
- \* The rationale behind screening procedures.
- \* Definition of child abuse and sexual/ physical abuse / symptoms

Church policies that govern working with children or youth, including the Positive Discipline Guidelines and Code of Ethics

- \*What constitutes inappropriate conduct
- \*The civil and criminal consequences of misconduct
- \*Reporting procedures for observed or suspected misconduct

## **Supervision of Children and Youth**

### **A. General Guidelines**

Religious education classes are available from 10:00 until 12:15 pm. Nursery care is available from 9:45 am-12:15 pm. All classes will be observed by the Religious Educator or the RE Assistant and each class have at least two adults present in the classroom at all times, with the exception of Creative Workshops, which are staffed by Teaching Artists, and are open for visitors and observation at any point. The Religious Educator and Religious Education Assistant circulate during class time on Sunday mornings to ensure that all the needs of the teachers and students are being met.

Immediately following services, parents are expected to pick up their children from the respective teacher or nursery staff or from Chapel which is at 11 to 11:15. At this time, parents again resume supervision responsibility for their children until leaving the grounds. No child through 5<sup>th</sup> grade will be dismissed from religious education without an appropriate parent or guardian. Children and youth 7<sup>th</sup> grade and up may be dismissed on their own.

The supervision of children and youth while on church grounds and during church functions is a very important aspect of maintaining a safe congregation. Parents or guardians of children and youth are responsible for their children at all functions and field trips, unless specifically left in the care of a childcare volunteer or staff member.

### **B. Nursery**

Nursery teacher to student ratio is one adult per three children under two years of age. If this ratio is exceeded, a parent must stay in the room until the hour is over.

### **C. Off-site and Fieldtrips**

For church-related field trips and off-site functions, the following guidelines must be adhered to:

1. Volunteers and paid staff must receive specific permission to pick up children/youth to/from home from the RE and parents
2. Permission slips and medical release forms for each child/youth must be signed and submitted to the activity supervisor prior to the start of the trip/activity.
3. Group leaders must have a list of participant names, emergency contacts, medical conditions and allergies with them at all times.
4. Every person transported in the vehicle must wear a seatbelt.
5. Every driver must have a valid driver's license and an actively insured car.
6. No driver may consume alcohol or use any form of drug, which can affect physical or mental performance before or during the carrying out of his/her duty as a driver.

### **D. Church Lock-Ins and Sleep Overs**

#### **General Sleepover Guidelines**

1. Adults supervising youth sleepovers must be approved by the Youth Programs Coordinator and RE. Ideally, they will have been active participants at All Souls for at least six months and have had previous youth group experience or training in a UU setting. Parents who are staying over with their own youth need not have been active

participants.

2. There will always be a minimum of two adults present during sleeping hours regardless of the numbers of youth attending. Two adults must remain awake until all youth are sleeping. During a sleepover at All Souls, there should be a minimum ratio of two adults at each overnight, also one adult to six youth with one additional adult required for each additional four youth.
3. During sleepovers at All Souls, all outside doors will be locked against entry once the last youth has arrived, and will remain locked until morning programming begins.
4. A Medical Release Form and Medical Information Form will be required to be on file for each youth at the sleepover.
5. Each youth will be required to complete and sign a Youth Code of Ethics for each sleepover event.
6. The adult supervisors will maintain a list of attendees.
7. Youth will sleep only in areas equipped with a functioning smoke detector.
8. Adults will be trained in fire safety procedures and youth will be made aware of fire safety guidelines

#### E. Physical Safety of Children, Youth and Adults

Proper attention to and management of physical safety concerns is another important aspect of maintaining a safe congregation. In addition to taking action on immediate safety issues that arise, the following steps will be implemented to routinely monitor physical safety:

- \* An annual fire drill will occur each fall to ensure a plan for Religious Education classroom safety. Teachers and leaders are aware of fire procedures.
- \* Buildings and classrooms will be observed by the RE and RE assistants for safety and cleanliness.

#### **Reporting Child Abuse**

- A. It is not the function of the Minister, Religious Educator or President of the Board of Trustees to conduct an investigation into accusations of child abuse. Rather it is both New York law and the policy of All Souls to immediately report any situation in which any person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been, or is likely to be, abused or neglected.
- B. Once a report is made to the appropriate authorities, the Church will rely on the decisions of those authorities as to the validity of the complaint. It is also the Church's responsibility under these guidelines to develop an appropriate plan of response to the allegations.
- C. In all cases, the Senior Minister will also notify the President of the Board and the UUA, and seek their advice and counsel. Additionally, the Minister will notify the Society's insurance company.
- D. In the event the accused abuser is the Minister, reports will be filed by, and the notifications referenced above will be the responsibility of the Associate Minister or the Executive Director of All Souls.

## **Section II Personal Safety**

### **Sexual Harassment**

Definition of Sexual Harassment:

Sexual harassment is defined as:

- Sexual solicitation or advances directed at an individual or group by another individual or group of the same or opposite sex who knows (or ought reasonably to know) that this attention is unwanted, or
- Implied or expressed promises of reward for complying with a sexual solicitation or advance, or
- Any threat of reprisal for refusing to comply with an implied or expressed sexual solicitation or advance, or
- Repeated behavior, verbal or physical, that, by denigrating an individual or group on the basis of sexual orientation or gender, interferes with the environment appropriate to a religious community.

Sexual harassment can be verbal or physical. Examples include:

- Demeaning remarks, jokes, or other types of verbal abuse of a sexual nature directed at an individual or group, or
- Inappropriate and uncalled for comments about an individual's dress or body, or
- Inappropriate and uncalled for display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, including material obtained from the Internet and /or displayed on a computer, or
- Unwelcome touching, offensive gestures, etc., or
- Compromising invitations or demands for sexual favors, or
- Sexual assault (a criminal offense).

Because All Souls should be a safe environment for all, no form of sexual harassment can be tolerated. Accordingly, complaints of sexual harassment will be taken seriously and dealt with appropriately.

All reports of harassment will be handled in a prompt, confidential manner. All Souls has established clear procedures for investigating and responding to such reports. See Appendix E.

### **Guidelines for Those Working With or Around Children**

The following guidelines are intended to provide information about your conduct in order to prevent abuse or unfounded allegations of abuse.

- Never engage in any aggressive horseplay or sexually provocative games with children, even as a joke.
- Do not ask kids to sit in your lap.

- Allow children to express affection on their own terms; do not request a hug or kiss from a child.
- Never use any form of physical or emotional punishment to discipline a child or to tease a child.
- Respect the child's need for privacy, especially in restrooms or changing rooms.
- Don't swear around children or make sexually suggestive comments, even in fun.
- Don't ask children, particularly teens or preteens, about their sexuality.
- Do not appear to favor one child over the others in your care.
- Don't give special gifts or trinkets to just one child.
- Do not offer to take the child home or on any special outings.
- Never tell a child to keep any type of secret from their parents.
- Don't say things like "This is just between us..."
- Avoid being alone with one child away from the others, particularly in a restroom room or locked room.
- Follow the rule of 3: It is preferable to take another person with you if you must accompany a child to the restroom.
- Activities with children should be conducted in as public an environment as possible in order that all behavior can be readily observed.
- Keep classroom doors open and windows should remain uncovered by drapes or shades.
- Be aware of situations which could be misinterpreted, including being alone with the last child to leave an activity.
- Don't tease children or use guilt tactics if they are setting their own personal or physical boundary with you.
- Do not give any child a ride in a car or van unless you have express permission from the parents.
- Children should always use the "buddy system" or otherwise be encouraged to stay together when going to the bathroom, on field trips, or when leaving a classroom or activity area.
- Be professional and maintain the highest standard of personal behavior at all times; do not smoke or drink alcohol when working with minors.
- Remain alert to any inappropriate actions of others. Trust your instincts.

Report any suspicions or criminal action as required by the law and by USD policy.

Unless specifically instructed by your supervisor, All Souls employees are not to interact with participants from organized events that are run by entities outside of All Souls.

Children, caregivers, parents, guardians, guests etc. are off limits to the custodial staff. They should refer any questions problems or issues to either to their own supervisor or to the designated program representative (coach or instructor).

## **Prevention of Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation**

Sexual abuse prevention at All Souls is addressed through education of children, adults and staff members. This includes working to educate members on the prevalence of child sex abuse, programs for parents to educate their children about healthy sexuality and ensuring that staff, lay leaders and volunteers properly handle a suspected case of abuse of any kind -- sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect.

Unless specifically instructed by your supervisor, All Souls employees are not to interact with participants from organized events that are run by entities outside of All Souls.

There are many resources for congregations to further educate and work towards prevention efforts for adults and youth. Rev. Debra Haffner has a helpful document online for adults entitled Balancing Acts: Keeping Children and Youth Safe. <http://www.uua.org/safe/children/index.shtml> The Safe Congregations Handbook is also available online at <http://www.uua.org/safe/handbook/index.shtml>.

For children, All Souls believes that using the UUA curriculum Our Whole Lives (OWL) is one of the best methods to prevent or decrease the risk of sexual abuse. Curricula are used for 4th graders and for 8th graders. OWL or another similar program will assist children and youth to recognize when someone is behaving in an inappropriate manner toward them. It is equally important for children and youth to develop a learned response in the event that anyone tries to engage them in inappropriate behavior.

For adults, All Souls cultivates healthy sexuality throughout the lifespan through worship, adult education and spiritual development programs and learning opportunities, which vary each church year.

### In the Case of Convicted or Unresolved Sexual Abuse or Offense

Keeping our Unitarian Universalist principles in mind, we must set boundaries for participation with persons whom have a history of sexual abuse or offense with children or adults.

If it is determined through a background check that a potential volunteer or potential church staff person has an unresolved accusation of abuse or offense, or has been convicted of a sexual abuse/ offense, the person shall not be hired.

In the case of a member or friend of the congregation who has such a history, the first response shall be for the person to meet with the Senior Minister, Associate Minister or Executive Director to establish boundaries for participation.

In coordination with the person and team of staff and lay leadership (Safe Congregations Response Team), a Limited Access Agreement (Appendix D) shall be put in place. This tool will be used to welcome the person to only certain, specified church functions, and only under specified conditions. The Limited Access Agreement must be

signed by the person prior to being admitted into All Souls Church. Refusal to sign allows All Souls Church the right to refuse admittance of the person to all church services, functions and activities.

The congregation will take seriously all allegations and reports of mistreatment, misconduct or any other incident deemed unsafe.

### **Disruptive Behavior**

Although the congregation of All Souls believes in civility and tolerance, we recognize the need to address the potential for behavior that may challenge our sense of individual and communal safety and well-being. Therefore, the following shall be the policy of the Church if, and when, such a challenge may arise:

1. Situations involving disruptive behavior will be brought to the attention of the President of the Board of Trustees, the Ministerial Team, and staff as deemed necessary. The Senior Minister will determine if the situation should be referred to the Safe Congregation Response Team (Section XI). All situations referred to the Safe Congregations Response Team will also be reported to the Board of Trustees.
2. The Safe Congregation Response Team will investigate the matter using this policy for guidance.
3. If an immediate response is required, this will be undertaken by the Senior Minister or Staff member onsite and/or the leader of the group involved. This may include asking the offending person or persons to leave, or suspending the meeting or activity until such a time as it can safely be resumed. If further assistance is required, the Police Department may be called. Any time any of these actions are undertaken without the Senior Minister being present, the Senior Minister and the President of the Board of Trustees must be notified. All plans for follow up steps will be referred to the Safe Congregation Response Team.
4. Persons identified as being disruptive will be responded to as individuals of dignity and worth.
5. Information concerning the alleged incident(s) that led to concern will be systematically collected from the concerned parties by delegated Response Team members and documented before any action is taken.
6. The Response Team will meet to assess the findings and decide on a course of action, with the following four levels of response recommended to them.

**Level One:** A Response Team member or members contacts the person named as the source of the disruption and informs them of the nature of the concern. The person's viewpoint of the matter will be elicited, valued, and documented. Response Team members will then assess the situation.

Level Two: If the basis of the original concern is determined to be valid, this finding will be clearly communicated to the person in question and a “contract” for clearly defined behavior change will be negotiated. Such communication and contract will be documented.

Level Three: If the person in question refuses to negotiate a contract, refuses to abide by a contract or is engaging in behavior of sufficient severity, he or she may be excluded from the Church for a specified period of time, with reasons for such action, and conditions for return, clearly communicated and documented.

Level Four: The person in question is permanently excluded from the Society and the Society premises with steps taken as needed to enforce the integrity of this decision.

7. Should the Safe Congregation Response Team decide that exclusion or expulsion from the Church is necessary, they will consult the Board of Trustees prior to this action being taken.

8. The four levels of response recommended by this policy may be applied in the order determined by the Safe Congregation Response Team and the Board of Trustees in their judgement.

9. If appropriate, the Safe Congregation Response Team may offer referrals for professional services.

10. All documentation developed in the course of investigating and resolving allegations of disruptive behavior will be kept confidential. The Senior Minister will be responsible for determining access to such documentation and for ensuring its security.

11. To aid in evaluating the problem and determining the appropriate response, the following points will be used in assessing the nature and severity of referred problems.

a. Dangerousness: Is the individual a source of threat or harm to persons or property?

b. Disruptiveness: What is the extent of disruption to Church functions?

c. Congregational Integrity: How likely is it that existing or prospective Church members will be driven away by the alleged behavior?

d. Causes: Why is the disruption occurring? Is it a conflict between the individual and others in the Church? Is it due to a professionally diagnosed condition of mental illness?

e. Probability of Change: How likely is it that the problem behavior will diminish in the future?

f. History: What has been the frequency and the degree of disruption caused by the individual in the past?

## **Alcohol Policy**

It is the policy of the church that the responsible consumption of alcohol by adults at church events is acceptable. If alcohol is to be served at church events, alternative beverages shall also be provided. Alcohol will be served in a separate area from food and other drink.

Alcohol shall not be served at events where children will be present. Alcoholic beverages may not be served by, or to, anyone under 21. No one under 21 may handle any container that has alcohol in it, or has contained alcohol. Persons under 21 who are serving or cleaning up shall not handle glasses or other containers of alcohol left on tables.

On rare occasions, there may be special events at which alcohol is served to adults and to which some children will attend with their parents. All parents will be responsible for close supervision of their children at these events. All Souls will not be held liable.

Alcohol stored at All Souls must be locked up and inaccessible to people under 21.

Alcohol brought in for non-church events will be self-monitored by the group to be sure the policy is followed. All containers of alcohol brought in shall be removed by representatives of the non-church event or disposed of by the custodial staff.

Because it would undermine the purpose of maintaining control over alcohol on the premises, no one may bring a personal container of alcohol onto the church premises or consume alcohol on the premises that has not been handled in accordance with this policy.

Any person who appears to be intoxicated to the point of being disruptive or posing a danger to anyone, shall be brought to the attention of a staff member or custodian on-site who shall take appropriate action, including if necessary requiring the violator to leave the premises. The police can and will be called if the situation demands such action.

The special events manager will ensure that all those using church space and serving alcohol receive a copy of the alcohol policy and that they understand it.

## **Service Animal Policy**

Animals are not permitted on the premises of All Souls, as a general policy, although exceptions may be made in consultation with the Senior Minister, the Associate Minister and the Executive Director. Further,

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), The Unitarian Church of All Souls defines service animals as “dogs that are individually trained to do work or perform tasks for people with disabilities.” Examples of such work or tasks include guiding people who are blind, alerting people who are deaf, pulling a wheelchair,

alerting and protecting a person who is having a seizure, reminding a person with mental illness to take prescribed medications, calming a person with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) during an anxiety attack, or performing other duties. Service animals are working animals, not pets. The work or task a dog has been trained to provide must be directly related to the person's disability. Dogs whose sole function is to provide comfort or emotional support do not qualify as service animals under the ADA."

A service animal will be identified by their uniform and will be allowed on the premises of All Souls with their handler.

Service animals must remain with their handlers.

Service animals shall not sit on church furniture.

Service animals must be harnessed, leashed, or tethered, unless these devices interfere with the service animal's work or the individual's disability prevents using these devices. In that case, the individual must maintain control of the animal through voice, signal, or other effective controls.

Service animals shall not obstruct an area used for emergency evacuation.

### **Emotional Support Animal (ESA) Policy**

The First Unitarian Church of All Souls defines emotional support animal (ESA) as an animal (typically a dog or cat) that provides a therapeutic benefit to its owner through companionship and is not specifically trained or certified to perform tasks for a person who suffers from emotional, psychiatric or mental health-related disabilities. Under the law, an ESA does not qualify as a service animal and, thus, is not granted legal access to places of public accommodation by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Therefore, requests made by persons who wish to access All Souls with their ESA are treated as a unique situation, which may be considered as an exception to the service animal policy. Approval of an ESA is made strictly on a case-by-case basis by the Senior Minister, Associate Minister and/or the Executive Director.

Those requesting an ESA should have current documentation from a licensed mental health professional or physician treating their mental health-related disability stating that the person has a mental health-related disability and that the animal accompanying the congregant is necessary to their mental health or treatment along with the mental health professional's license number (or type, issue date, and state in which the license was issued).

Unless granted approval, an ESA is not permitted on the grounds of All Souls for Sunday services or other classes, events and programs.

Persons with ESAs who are granted reasonable accommodation will receive a special tag at that time, and must display this tag in order for staff, ushers, and other community members to readily identify their ESA as approved. Approved ESAs must comply with

all the expectations listed under the service animal policy. In addition, ESAs are encouraged to find seating away from ADA-approved service animals. Any animals granted approval to accompany their owners on All Souls property will be asked to relocate or remove their animal if it triggers an allergic reaction in another member of the All Souls community.

### **Online Communications/ Social Media Policy**

#### **A. Electronic Communications Safe Church Policy Guidelines for Youth Advisors, Worship Leaders, Religious Education Teachers and Staff**

The purpose of these guidelines is to provide adults who are in advisory roles with youth of All Souls Unitarian Church, NYC with procedures for electronic communications. One of the components of a balanced youth program is developing strong youth-adult partnerships within the intentional and safe community of youth group.

The vast numbers of communication possibilities and the speed of technology require that adults working with youth be aware of the need to maintain appropriate relational boundaries regardless of communication medium. The spirit of this approach requires the adult to think of all communications as if they were happening in person (face to face) and apply the same standards applied to face to face meetings to exchanges through electronic media.

First, group communications through email, Facebook, etc. are appropriate. These mediums provide powerful modes of connecting with youth and for youth to connect with each other in their fast-paced world and should be channeled as such.

The ONLY appropriate interaction between youth and adults on email or Social media must be as a group or no less than three people. There will be no one-on-one communications allowed; this includes email, texts, im, snapchat, etc. In the case of conducting youth group business, discussions of logistics, church event planning, or something more related to one person, include the other youth advisors or the RE in the communication loop.

Inappropriate actions include: Initiating and engaging youth in personal/private conversations better discussed in person, exploring youths' Facebook pages as peers - ie. commenting on personal photos or "poking".

Facebook or other social networking communications can help create a group identity, and assist in planning for group activities, through the creation of an All Souls Sr. High online group. Communications on Facebook are most appropriate when conducted through a group.

Adult advisors need to remind youth that the specific covenant youth group members have agreed to abide by during group time at the church also applies to online communications and communities set up specifically for the group.

Adults must recognize the public nature of social networking sites and see themselves as representatives of the Unitarian Church of All Souls (volunteer and/or paid.) Thus, advisors agree not to post any material that could be deemed inappropriate or explicit. So doing is cause for dismissal, which can be undertaken at the RE's discretion at any point.

If an adult advisor is in doubt about the appropriateness of any ongoing or new forms for communication, they should consult with the RE, YAC and/or RE committee members for guidance.

## B. General Guidelines for all Social Media

These Guidelines are for anyone who posts to any "social media": i.e. any channel for online publication and commentary, including but not limited to blogs, wikis, social networking sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Tumblr, etc. The tone of any All Souls text, audio or video should reflect the values of this congregation, whether it is original content being posted or a comment on content created by someone else.

All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City (All Souls NYC) welcomes contributions to conversations about All Souls on social media and content directly related to All Souls NYC and to Unitarian Universalism. Wall posts, comments, photos, and other content posted on social media should be relevant to these areas of interest, respectful of the people involved, and mindful of the principles upheld by the UUA's Purposes and Principles.

All Souls NYC has the right to delete any inappropriate content from the Facebook page, including but not limited to: irrelevant content, redundant content, hateful content, malicious content, uncivil or disrespectful content, attacks or complaints against an individual, financial solicitations, endorsements of a political candidate or party, and content that violates Facebook's terms of use, code of conduct, or other policies. Content that violates Facebook's policies may also be reported to Facebook.

### Guidelines:

Bring your best self to online interactions. To use a favorite phrase of UUA social media specialist Shelby Meyerhoff, we bring our best selves such that our presence in social media is spiritually nourishing and aligned with our religious values.

All social media is public space. Treat it as such. Remember that once something is posted, it is difficult to remove.

Remember the seeker; practice hospitality. Always remember that an All Souls social media site maybe a seeker's first experience of All Souls. So please be warm and welcoming, informative, and responsive; representatives of our shared Unitarian Universalist principles, ideals and values.

Be ambassadors for All Souls. Adult members and friends of All Souls interacting on these sites are effectively representatives of the Unitarian Church of All Souls, whether they are volunteer or paid staff.

### C. Setting Up All Souls Social Media Sites

Consult communications staff. If you are interested in setting up an All Souls NYC account—Facebook page, Twitter feed, blog, etc.—first discuss with communications staff.

**Set up Administrators:** There must be at least three administrators with access to any account, to ensure that sites are kept up to date and to monitor interaction occurring there.

**Publicize and educate about the site:** Anytime a new congregational social media presence is introduced, it is important to publicize it through existing communication channels and to encourage people to learn to use the new tools and participate: possibly through tables set up at Coffee Hour, or through adult education offerings.

### D. Interacting on Social Media

**Guiding Principle:** all social media are public spaces and should be treated as such.

**Be honest. Do not blog anonymously, use pseudonyms or false screen names. Be honest and authentic:** use your real name, be clear about who you are, and identify yourself as a member, friend, volunteer or staff member of All Souls.

**Be aware of your own privacy needs. Be smart about protecting yourself and your privacy.** Consider carefully what you post, and be cautious about disclosing personal details. Be mindful of posting information that you would not want the public to see.

**Protect All Souls members and friends.** Never identify someone by name or obviously reference them in some other way without their permission; and never discuss confidential details about them. If you do speak about another, make sure that what you say is factual and does not disparage that party.

**Use disclaimers.** Always make it clear that any views and opinions you express are yours alone and do not express any official position or view of All Souls Church NYC.

**Observe copyright rules.** Always credit others for their work; and make sure you have permission to use material before you do so. “Fair use” requirements dictate that you should never quote more than short excerpts of someone else’s work without explicit permission; always attribute work to its original author or source. Where possible, link to others’ content rather than copy it.

### Dealing with potential controversies

If you see something, say something: If you see misrepresentations made about All Souls in the media, you may point them out, but always respectfully and with reference to facts. Tell an All Souls staff member, too, to make sure they've seen it.

Don't be inflammatory: Social media are not the place to conduct arguments. Make sure what you are saying is factually correct. If a discussion becomes too heated, an administrator may decide to remove it from the site, archive it, and arrange for the parties meet in person to discuss their differences. Sometimes issues need to be discussed face-to-face rather than online.

Think before you post: Social media's greatest strength is also the source of its potential greatest weakness: speed. You can get the word out fast; but that goes for mistakes as well. Be the first to respond to your own mistakes on social media: own up to and correct them quickly! If you choose to modify an earlier post, make it clear that you have done so.

Respond to critique: If someone accuses you of posting something improper (such as their copyrighted material or a defamatory comment about them), work to resolve the situation and let All Souls staff know quickly if a problem or a potential problem has arisen.

#### E. Administration and Monitoring

Those who manage and produce content for the congregation's new media tools should agree to:

Consistently and fairly enforce stated policies

Prioritize Confidentiality: Do not post photos of children without written consent of their parent or guardian. If an event is being filmed or photographed, tell people in advance and at the event and provide an opt-out option.

Back up all content.

#### **Surveillance Footage**

When theft, injuries, and other incidents occur at church, surveillance footage can provide an account of what happened. Surveillance cameras can help gather useful information, but there are limits to where cameras should be placed. Surveillance efforts should balance ministry security with individual privacy.

Notification. A sign shall be posted at the receptionist area or building entrance announcing that surveillance cameras are in use.

Privacy. Cameras shall be placed in public areas only such as the sanctuary, vestibule, or hallways—where an individual can expect to be seen by others is generally acceptable. However, restrooms and other private spaces should be off-limits for cameras.

Recording and storing video content. Video footage can be helpful evidence if an incident occurs on church property. In the case of an incident of a crime such as robbery, assault, or murder, the video content will be made available to the NYPD at their request. If the video content is requested by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a warrant must be provided at the time of the request and will be provided only at the decision of the Senior Minister in collaboration with the Associate Minister and Executive Director.

Recorded video is only kept for 7 days. Recorded video cannot be viewed by any staff except those authorized by the Senior Minister, Associate Minister, or Executive Director. Video footage shall be kept secure.

## **Media**

### **A. Spokespersons**

Only authorized All Souls staff spokespersons- Senior Minister, Associate Minister, Executive Director, Music Director or communications staff may communicate directly with members of the media on behalf of All Souls. Other staff should check with those authorized first before speaking to the media. It is in the best interest of All Souls to maintain relations with the media in an open, pragmatic manner, and respond promptly to their legitimate interests.

All media requests should be recorded accurately and passed on to the following: Senior Minister, Associate Minister, Executive Director, Music Director, and communications staff.

Media requests include inquiries for interviews, commentary and information, and include all media – TV/Radio, newspapers, magazines, local/national media and internet sites.

Authorized All Souls spokespersons will respond on behalf of the parish, or assist in identifying the appropriate person from staff to handle the response.

Receptionists are not authorized to speak to reporters without advance knowledge and coordination with the appropriate staff spokesperson or communications personnel.

Volunteers who are approached by the media should be instructed to direct all media calls to the appropriate staff spokespersons or communications personnel.

All media calls are to be reported to the communications staff for follow-up and archiving. Provide the reporter's name, media outlet and telephone number, the anticipated publication date, and the subject of the story.

### **B. Crisis Communication**

Communication from All Souls regarding unexpected events or serious incidents must be approved by the Senior Minister, Associate Minister and the Executive Director.

Written communication regarding such an incident as such will be prepared in collaboration with each other and the Board of Trustees. In the event of an extreme crisis, the situation will be shared with the UUA Communications Office and a plan of action determined.

#### C. Press Releases

Press releases are written by or coordinated by the communications staff

Press releases may also be written by a paid freelance writer

Staff members are responsible for proofreading and returning releases written on their behalf to the writer in a timely manner to meet publisher deadlines.

### **Section III Building Safety**

#### **Emergency Evacuation of the Buildings**

The emergency evacuation plan is designed to provide the safest exit strategy for attendees of church and RE programs in the event of an emergency. It seeks to evacuate the church in a minimum amount of time by assigning exit paths to evacuees based on their location in the building, thus minimizing congestion at any one exit.

Directions will be provided by “Monitors.” Monitors are: staff, worship associates, ushers, greeters, and RE teachers and assistants. Directions provided by the monitors should be obeyed without hesitation. The monitors’ primary goal is to protect attendees from physical harm and secondarily to minimize psychological trauma created by an emergency.

Maps of the building with egress routes will be posted in hallways, every room used by All Souls members and non-church groups, elevators, and stairwells.

Those with mobility issues will be assigned a partner who will make sure they get out of the building. This list will be created and reviewed by the Lay Pastoral Team.

Procedures for emergency evacuation will be kept in the church office and at the desk of the receptionist. These procedures will be given to every staff member, RE volunteers, deacons, and the ushers/greeters. They will be included in the information given to new staff. They will be included in the Board of Trustees manuals. They will be reviewed 2 times a year at staff meetings.

All Church emergency evacuations will be practiced three times a year.

Emergency staff phone numbers will be accessible at the receptionist desk and in the church office.

## **First Aid Policy and Equipment**

Comprehensive First Aid Kits will be kept in the Receptionist Area and in the Kitchen. Other First Aid Kit Locations are:

Metal Shelves – Peter Green Room, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Infant Nursery supply crate – Room 4B, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Older Pre-School supply crate – Room 3A, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Kindergarten (2<sup>nd</sup> Hour) supply crate – Room 2B, Lobby  
Movement supply crate – Forrest Church Gallery  
Metal Shelves – Mary Ella Holst Room

First Aid Kits will be checked monthly and resupplied by the RE Assistant in coordination with the Facilities Manager.

## **Automated External Defibrillator (AED)**

Two AED units will be maintained in the building:

Location 1 is in the kitchen, inside the door on the Minot Simons side  
Location two is in the vestibule, in the stairwell on the 80<sup>th</sup> Street side

The Facilities Manager will quarterly inspect the AED devices to insure they are functional.

## **Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)/AED Training/First Aid Training**

The Religious Education Program is responsible for scheduling trainings 2x a year for nursery workers, teachers, and staff.

## **Section IV Safe Congregation Response Team**

- A. In order to ensure continuity, the Safe Congregation Response Team will be established and in place at all times, with the names and phone numbers of team members available to all members and friends of The Unitarian Church of All Souls. This Team will be composed of the **Minister, Professional Religious Educator, the President of the Board of Trustees and three members of the Society (appointed annually by the Board of Trustees)**. It is preferable that two of the lay members of the team be familiar with issues likely to arise to include but not be limited to sexual assault, sexual harassment, human resources, and legal issues. In cases of a conflict of interest, a Team member must be excused from participation and replaced by a suitable alternate.
- B. The function of the Safe Congregations Response Team, individually and collectively, will be to offer confidential support, advice, and counsel with concern for the safety of all parties involved. The SCRT ensures that The Safe Congregations Policy is known and followed. In addition, they will generally have the following responsibilities:

1. Know about community resources for child abuse, treatment for sex offenders, and support groups for survivors.
  2. Know about state laws regarding reporting.
  3. Be a resource for people to share their concerns.
  4. Investigate disruptive behavior allegations and create a Behavioral Covenant where appropriate.
  6. Receive allegations of possible abuse and develop a process for expedient handling of such allegations.
  7. Meet with convicted sex offenders to develop a Limited Access Agreement for participation in Society activities
- C. All activities of the response team will be conducted in a confidential fashion and may only be disclosed when necessary and appropriate as determined by the Response Team.

This Safe Congregations Policy is adapted from the All Souls Safe Congregation Policy dated 2013 as well as the Safe Congregation Policy of The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood.

Appendix A

CODE OF ETHICS FOR THOSE WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Those who teach and/or lead our children and youth play a key role in fostering the spiritual formation of our children and youth. It is therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions provide the special nurture, care and support that will enable our children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence and responsibility.

Therefore, those who teach and/or lead our children/youth will:

- Provide nurturing care and support to all children/youth.
- Work to help children/youth develop a positive sense of self and a spirit of independence.
- Respect the selfhood of each young person, including the absolute right to privacy of his or her own mind and body.
- Not engage in any behavior with young people, which constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse, in person or online.
- Not engage in behavior or language, which is personally threatening or demeaning.
- Not engage in any sexually harassing behavior, nor any other sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children/youth.
- Not encourage or condone any sort of illegal or unethical activity on the part of children/youth.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree my electronic communications with children and youth will not be one-on-one but always in the context of a group

\_\_\_\_\_ I will not friend a child or youth on Facebook without the explicit authorization of the parent and the Minister of Religious Education.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand volunteering with children/youth requires a background check.

I have read the above Code of Ethics and understand that these guidelines govern expected behavior of those working with the children and youth at The Unitarian Church of All Souls.

Name Printed \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Appendix B

YOUTH CODE OF ETHICS FOR SLEEPOVERS/OVERNIGHT TRIPS

I am attending the \_\_\_\_\_ on  
\_\_\_\_\_

(name of event) (date of event)

I understand that this event is coordinated by  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

(name of person, persons, or committee)

I understand my behavior will affect the Youth community of The Unitarian Church of All Souls. While attending this event:

- I will act in ways that encourage the well-being, safety, and the best interests of everyone attending this event.
- I will follow all federal, state and local laws.
- I will work out a system of communication with my sponsor during this event.
- I understand that I am encouraged to express myself in healthy ways and to respect each other's boundaries.
- I understand that behavior that breaks down the community, including sexual activity and sexual harassment, is inappropriate and therefore, not permitted in this setting.
- I will not consume any alcohol or illegal drugs.
- I understand that my sponsor has also agreed to refrain from any use of alcohol or illegal drugs during this event.

I, \_\_\_\_\_,  
have read and understand the Youth Code of Ethics. I agree to abide by these guidelines for the duration of the event. I understand that if I break this agreement, my parents/guardians will be contacted and that I may be prohibited from attending any future events sponsored by All Souls.

## Appendix C

### AGREEMENT TO TEACH AT THE UNITARIAN CHURCH OF ALL SOULS

I have attended the teacher training session on September 10<sup>th</sup> or met with the Interim Minister of Religious Education. I have received all training as outlined in the safety policy and understand all procedures.

I have read the documents provided for me on the All Souls Religious Education website. I understand these are for my reference and to help support my teaching at All Souls. I can refer to them at any time on the website at [www.allsoulsreligioused.org](http://www.allsoulsreligioused.org).

I have signed the Code of Ethics statement.

I affirm that I have never been accused of, convicted of, or pled guilty to any sexual crime. I also have not pled guilty to a lesser charge after having been charged with a sexual crime. I have never engaged in any form of child abuse, including sexual abuse. I have never been determined to have engaged in any sexual offenses in any civil, administrative, or ecclesiastical forum or other forum.

If there are any facts or circumstances in my background that call into question my being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of children, youth, or vulnerable adults, I have met to review this information confidentially with the Interim Minister Religious Education.

Further, I agree to notify the Interim Minister Religious Education immediately should I be accused of sexual abuse, sexual offenses, sexual harassment, or other improprieties in the time that I am working with children and/or youth in this congregation.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix D

### LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT

The Unitarian Church of All Souls affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshipping (being among us) with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation.

We welcome you to our congregation and our membership but your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of our children and youth and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations.

Within these guidelines, the congregation welcomes your participation in adult worship services, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, all adult social events, and well supervised intergenerational events. You are to avoid all contact with children on congregation property or congregation-sponsored events. This includes the following:

- i. Please do not talk with children.
- ii. Please do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone or participate in events for children and youth including such things as religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, driving or otherwise transporting children and/or youth.
- iii. Please remain in the presence of an adult who knows your situation at all times when children are present.
- iv. If a child in the congregation approaches you, either at the Society or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the situation.
- v. Please avoid being in the building unsupervised when activities involving children are in session, such as nursery school or youth group.

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect the children/young people for whom they care:

---

I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future Church functions and Church property.

I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every six months and will remain for an indefinite period.

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

Witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Minister \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

MRE \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Board Chair \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Appendix E          Reporting and Investigating Sexual Harassment**

Sexual harassment includes unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical harassment of a sexual nature, according to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). It also can include offensive remarks about a person's gender.

Both the victim and the harasser can be either a woman or a man, and the victim and harasser can be the same sex. The harasser can be the victim's supervisor, a manager in another area, a co-worker or someone who is not an employee, such as a client or customer.

Sexual harassment is considered illegal when it is so frequent or severe that it creates a hostile work environment or adversely affects the victim's job, such as being fired or demoted. Would a reasonable person find the conduct offensive? That's the standard used by the courts and the EEOC.

### **Process of Reporting**

If you believe that the actions or words of a supervisor/manager, co-worker, congregant, vendor, volunteer, or other individual in the Church constitutes illegal or prohibited sexual harassment, you have a responsibility to promptly report that behavior. Prompt reporting enables the Church to stop the sexual harassment, before it becomes severe or pervasive.

If you believe you have been the victim of any form of sexual harassment or retaliation, or you witness such behavior, you must promptly give notice of your complaint to one or more of the following:

1. Your supervisor;
2. Anyone in your supervisory chain;
3. The ministers on staff: Senior Minister, Associate Minister, Executive Director, or the Assistant Ministers;
4. A deacon of the congregation;
5. or the Pastor Lay Ministry team

You are not required to complain to your supervisor or within your chain of command. In addition, to reporting the offending behavior to one of the people listed above, you are encouraged to speak directly to the individual whose conduct you find objectionable. You are not required to do this and it is suggested for you to consider doing only if you are comfortable doing so. If you decide to speak directly to the person involved, you may find that clear communication can sometimes resolve an issue immediately, as well as build greater understanding between individuals in the Church.

You may formally or informally complain to any of the above personnel via any of the following:

1. Telephone call
2. Letter
3. E-mail
5. In-person meeting
6. Online

All supervisors and decision-makers are required to report all formal and informal complaints, as well as any suspected or known policy violations, immediately to the Executive Team even if you ask the supervisor or decision-maker to keep the complaint confidential, or indicate that you do not wish to file a formal complaint.

All supervisors and decision-makers are expected to act promptly and appropriately to prevent (1) sexual harassment in the Church, and (2) retaliation against those who make a good faith complaint of sexual harassment, or those who participate honestly and in good faith in either an investigation of a complaint or oppose illegal or prohibited sexual harassment in the Church.

All complaints of sexual harassment will be reviewed and investigated promptly and impartially by the Church's management and/or its designee. Complaints may be made orally or in writing. Once Church management receives notice of any complaint of sexual harassment it will swiftly determine whether or not a fact-finding investigation is necessary. If it is determined that a fact finding investigation is necessary, it will be launched promptly. If necessary, intermediate measures may be taken before completing the investigation to ensure that further sexual harassment does not occur.

Moreover, the Church will protect the confidentiality of the allegations to the extent possible; however, no individual can be promised or guaranteed strict or absolute confidentiality. For example, information may have to be disclosed to those officials and/or Church Personnel with a need to know in order to carry out the purpose and intent of this Policy. Corrective or disciplinary action will be taken against any Church Personnel found to have engaged in sexual harassment. Such action may include counseling and/or appropriate disciplinary measures, up to and including termination. As the complaining party, you will be given notice, in a timely fashion, of the outcome of the investigation of any formal or informal complaint.

#### Complaints procedure

- 1) Employee Complaints of sexual harassment should be brought to the attention of the supervisor unless the alleged harasser is the employee's supervisor. In such cases, the employee should feel free to bypass the supervisor and take the complaint directly to the pastor or either the personnel committee, deacons or other governing body.
- 2) Supervisor: After notification of any employee's complaint, the supervisor will immediately contact the pastor unless the alleged harasser is the pastor. In such cases, the supervisor should feel free to bypass the pastor and take the complaint directly to the personnel committee, deacons or other governing body.

3) Pastor: After notification of any employee's complaint, the pastor will immediately contact the personnel committee, deacons or other governing body.

4) Process a) After notification of the employee's complaint, a confidential investigation will immediately be initiated to gather all facts about the complaint. The pastor will initiate and the personnel committee, deacons or other governing body will have the primary responsibility for the investigation.

b) After the investigation has been completed, a determination will be made regarding the resolution of the case by the personnel committee. If warranted, disciplinary action, up to and including termination, will be taken.

c) If no action is warranted, then both parties will be informed that the facts did not substantiate the allegations. In this situation, steps must be taken to facilitate both parties continuing to work with each other.

### **Process of Investigation**

- Determine who will investigate?
- What evidence needs to be collected?
- Who will be interviewed?
- Stay Neutral and objective
- Do not label people as victim or harasser
- Prepare interview questions in advance. Collect needed details from the person making the allegation—the who, what, when and where. You might also ask “Were there witnesses? Did others know you were upset by this? Did you talk to family members or friends?”
- Try to ask open-ended questions to ensure that you have a full picture of events. Resist the urge to fill silent moments. Staying quiet can be helpful when you’re trying to get someone to open up, Clark advises. She suggests saying, “I have the feeling that you want to say more about that.” Then, wait.
- Gather evidence that might support or negate the complaint. This might include voice mails, text messages, e-mails, photos, timecards, business expense records and social media posts. For example, electronic messages might show that a male supervisor made inappropriate sexual comments to a female subordinate. On the flip side, if workers need a key card to enter the worksite, building access records might show that the person accused likely wasn’t in the building at the time of the alleged incident, Cole-Johnson suggests.
- Check past performance evaluations and prior complaints. Consider whether the person making the allegation might be seeking retribution for a poor evaluation. “You have to leave your mind open to all of this. Unfortunately, this sometimes happens,” although less frequently than some suggest, Clark says.
- Also evaluate any past complaints against the person being accused. Contact former employees, particularly the individual who previously held the accuser’s job or anyone in the same department who left suddenly without explanation, to find out if they also had problems with the accused employee. Even if there are no

prior complaints, you might detect a pattern of questionable behavior. Sometimes the problem escalates over time

- Take careful notes throughout the interviews. Record who wasn't available and why. Ask the interviewees to sign off on the written summaries of their statements. Be aware that any written evidence might well end up being scrutinized in court.
- Encourage confidentiality.

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I give All Souls Unitarian Church permission to publish in print, electronic, or video format the likeness or image of the person(s) below, to be used in its publications, including on its website, in brochures, and/or in other promotional materials. I release all claims against the All Souls Unitarian Church with respect to copyright ownership and publication, including any claim for compensation related to use of the materials. I understand that these photos can be viewed publicly, but no identifying information will be displayed without my express permission.

I am over 18, and I give permission for my image to be published.

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number and email address: \_\_\_\_\_

I am the parent or legal guardian of the following child(ren) under 18 years of age, and I give permission for their images to be published.

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Adult's name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Adult's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number and email address: \_\_\_\_\_