

Safe Congregation Policy

Westside Unitarian Universalist Church

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I. SAFE CONGREGATION COMMITTEE PHILOSOPHY

Conflicts in our society have prompted more questions and concerns about safety policies and risk management procedures to protect staff, children, youth, vulnerable adults, friends, and all members of our congregation. It is prudent for us to look at resources and establish guidelines around this broad and multifaceted subject called a Safe Congregation.

A variety of potential dangers are inherent in operating a congregation. These include physical site (including buildings and grounds), operation of the Lifespan Religious Education (LRE) program, transportation, and supervision of children and youth off site. (For instances of disruptive behavior involving members, friends, intruders, and/or staff of the congregation, see Disruptive Behavior Policy.)

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.

We want everyone associated with our Congregation to treat this as a “living document” that may need to be amended to reflect changing needs. Requests for amendments should be made through the Board of Directors.

II. SAFE CONGREGATION COMMITTEE

- A.** In order to ensure continuity, a Safe Congregation Committee will be established and in place at all times, with the names and phone numbers of committee members available to all members and friends of the Westside Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Worth. This Committee will be composed of the Minister, the DLRE, and at least three other members of the Congregation. Openings on the Committee will be filled by the Board. Additionally, the President of the Board is an ex officio member of the Committee. 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, legal issues, and physical safety.
- B.** In cases of a conflict of interest, a Committee member must be excused from participation and replaced by a suitable alternate. Guided by the Philosophy Statement as set out above, their function, individually and collectively, will be to offer confidential support, advice, and counsel with concern for the safety of all parties involved. The Safe Congregation Committee 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.** Evaluate applications for Religious Education (RE) teachers and youth group leaders that are flagged by the Minister or DLRE as needing more information or follow-up. Assist in facilitating annual training for RE staff and teachers on issues, policies, and procedures relevant to sexual/physical abuse;
 - 5.** Work with the RE Committee to assure that the sex abuse education sections of the Our Whole Lives curricula are offered at each age level;
 - 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 **Covenant of Behavior** (Limited Access Agreement) for participation in Congregation activities.

C. All activities of the Committee will be conducted in a confidential fashion and may be disclosed only when necessary and appropriate as determined by the Committee.

III. UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST PRINCIPLES AND ETHICS.

One of the *Leader Resources in Creating Safe Congregations* restates our Principles in terms of sexual ethics, and appears in every age level of *Sexuality and Our Faith*, the companion volume to *Our Whole Lives*:

- The inherent worth and dignity of every person. Every person's sexuality is sacred and is worthy of respect, and therefore, is not to be violated.
- Justice, equity and compassion in human relationships. We treat others as we would want to be treated; therefore, sexual exploitation and interpersonal violence is wrong.
- Acceptance of one another and encouragement to spiritual growth in our congregation. Accepting each other, as we are, means doing no harm and fostering well-being in one's self and others.
- A free and responsible search for truth and meaning. In our relationship to others, our freedom of sexuality is as important as the responsibility for it.
- The right to conscience and the use of the democratic process within our congregation and in society at large. As a community and as an institution, we are responsible for creating a secure and safe environment.
- The goal of a world community with peace, liberty, and justice for all. We have the opportunity to create the kind of environment that lends itself to peace, liberty, and justice in human sexuality, and we can become a model for the rest of society.
- Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part. When we respect each person's sexual integrity we honor the wholeness of life and we respect the web of all existence.

IV. DEFINITIONS

The terms used in this document will have the following meanings:

- A. Abuse** includes non-accidental conduct that involves bodily injury or impairment; offensive physical or sexual contact, including physical or sexual abuse; physical or sexual harassment; physical or sexual molestation; or physical or sexual exploitation.
- B. Physical abuse** includes offensive physical contact or activity that causes bodily injury.
- C. Sexual abuse** means any sexual touching of a child or any activity that causes a person to engage in any sexual act or conduct without that person's consent, or in circumstances where that person is unable to refrain from consenting due to age, mental capacity, or unusual vulnerability derived from the person's mental health or from the existence of a relationship of significant dependency or trust.
- D. Physical harassment or molestation or exploitation** means activity that places a person in fear of bodily injury by such acts as threatening or tormenting behavior, compelling a person by force or threat of force to engage in conduct from which the person has a right to abstain, knowingly restricting substantially the movements of another person without that other person's consent, communicating to a person a threat to commit an act against that person or another person or entity where the natural consequence of the threat is to place that person in fear or cause that person to engage in conduct in which that person otherwise would not engage, or similar repeated offensive physical or verbal conduct.
- E. Sexual molestation and sexual exploitation** means activity that places another person in a situation where that person feels compelled to engage in sexual conduct to which that person would not voluntarily consent, or in circumstances where that person is unable to refrain from consenting due to age or mental capacity or unusual vulnerability derived from the person's mental health or from the existence of a relationship of significant dependency or trust.
- F. Sexual harassment** means making sexual advances or requests for sexual favors to another person, or other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, where the other person by words or conduct has indicated that such words or conduct are not desired, or where a

reasonable person would expect that such words or conduct would not be desired.

V. SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MINISTER AND CONGREGANTS

“Congregations confer powers upon their ministers through roles which the minister is expected to assume-worship leader, teacher, counsel, or representative in the larger community...The powers of ministry have a great potential for good if they are used responsibly, and with potential for damage if they are abused...Ministers need to be fully aware of those powers and use them responsibly for the building of spiritual community, not for personal gratification. Exploiting ministerial powers for personal advantage abuses those congregants who become the inappropriate sexual objects of a minister’s personal interest. Such abuse damages the religious community of which the abuser is minister.”

~ Excerpted from Thomas Mikelson, Reflections Toward a Unitarian Universalist Theology of Clergy Misconduct through Sexual Abuse, December, 1992.

As a community, we expect our Minister to abide by the Unitarian Universalist Ministers Association’s (UUMA) Code of Professional Practice which acknowledges that ministers are the recipients of automatic trust, and comments directly on the issues of clergy sexual misconduct and the abuse of the trust congregations place in their ministers. In subscribing to this code, ministers agree not to exploit the powers inherent in their roles.

The complete text of the code is published in the UUMA Guidelines the UUMA website (Log on to www.uuma.org, click onto Guidelines and Code of Professional Practice).

In the case of violation of this code, the Safe Congregation Committee will contact the UUA Office of Ethics and Safety which will initiate an investigation. The Safe Congregation Committee will then work with the Board of Directors to establish the most appropriate methods of communicating, counseling, and responding to reactions within the congregation and the community.

VI. SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL RELIGIOUS EDUCATORS AND CONGREGANTS

[Minister’s affirmation]

“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. 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. Furthermore, I will be aware of and observe the legal requirements of my State regarding reporting of physical or sexual misconduct.”

~ *Excerpted from the Religious Educator’s Code of Professional Practices*

We, as a community, expect the Director of Lifespan Religious Education (DLRE) and other professional or volunteer religious education staff, to abide by the Liberal Religious Educators Association’s (LREDA) Code of Professional Practice, which acknowledges that religious educators are also the recipients of special trust. In subscribing to this code, professional or volunteer religious educators agree not to exploit the powers inherent in their roles.

The complete text of the Code is published in the LREDA Guidelines and Code of Professional Practices which is available from the LREDA website (www.uua.org/lreda/content/code.html).

In the case of any violation of this code, procedures as outlined in this policy will be used.

VII. PREVENTING SEXUAL MISCONDUCT, PHYSICAL ABUSE, AND HARASSMENT

We acknowledge that preventing sexual misconduct, physical abuse, and harassment in our religious communities and in society is a complex goal. Prevention education, training, careful hiring, and safety procedures are concrete steps toward creating a safer environment for all concerned.

A. Education and Training:

- 1.** Education and training are critical to the creation of a safer congregational environment. Information, knowledge, and understanding support the development of healthy relationships based on self-esteem and respect for others. Greater understanding of sexuality and abuse will make us better able to avoid situations that could lead to abuse, and

to move more effectively toward justice and healing for us all. To this end we believe it is important to promote healthy self-esteem and personal responsibility among our children, our members, and friends.

The Director of Lifespan Religious Education (DLRE) and the Religious Education (RE) Committee are responsible for:

- a.** Offering age-appropriate information about development and sexuality for our children, youth, and adults on a regular basis, including clarification and understanding of the complex aspects of sexuality, as well as focusing on sexual abuse prevention and
 - b.** Keeping employees, advisors, and parents informed of this policy and reviewing it regularly through the use of the following: the Code of Ethics for Those Working with Children and Youth.
- 2.** The Safe Congregation Committee will promote congregational awareness about this policy.

B. Hiring

- 1.** Incidents of abuse and harassment often take place in the context of ongoing relationships. Therefore it is essential that recruitment and hiring procedures protect staff, children, youth, vulnerable adults, members, and friends from injury as well from rumors, and protect our Westside Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Worth from ethical and legal liability.
- 2.** All persons seeking paid employment at Westside Unitarian Universalist Church, including (but not limited to) the Minister, the DLRE, the Secretary, the Sexton, and any other professional staff, will sign the Code of Ethics. They will be screened by the appropriate hiring committee(s), which will contact references and conduct both a criminal history record check plus a formal interview with the candidate. The employment application and reference material will be confidential and will be available only as required by law and to those responsible for screening, hiring, or participating in the Safe Congregation Committee.

VIII. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION SAFETY PROCEDURES

A. Adult Volunteers

- 1.** Volunteers in the Religious Education (RE) programs at the Westside Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Worth must meet the following criteria:
Prior to participating in the Children's RE and Youth Group programs, all volunteers will agree to a background check which may include references. Volunteers will be asked to complete an Application Form for Workers with Children and Youth. In addition, volunteer teachers will be provided a training session to be scheduled by the Director of Lifespan Religious Education.
- 2.** Various supervisory methods are listed below. They will help Westside leaders avoid setting up situations in which personal boundary issues can become a problem. Some of these methods will help leaders and teachers decrease the risk of misunderstandings and offer some support for handling various concerns.
 - a.** Regular consultations with the DLRE
 - b.** On-going training
 - c.** Parental permission whenever necessary
 - d.** Visible classroom activity
 - e.** Support for following the behavior guidelines of the Safe Congregation Policy.

B. Working with Children and Youth

- 1.** It is ultimately the responsibility of the entire Congregation, not just those in leadership and teaching positions, to create and maintain a climate that supports the growth and welfare of children and youth. We encourage all Westside members and friends to read and abide by the Code of Ethics. However, those working with young people in the context of our Unitarian Universalist movement have a crucial and privileged role, one which carries with it a great deal of power and influence. Whether acting as a youth advisor, chaperone,

childcare worker, teacher, or in any other role, the volunteer has a special opportunity to interact with our young people in ways which are affirming and inspiring to all involved.

2. While it is important that volunteers be capable of maintaining meaningful friendships with the young people they work with, they 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 people older than themselves, and may find it difficult to speak out about any inappropriate behavior of their leaders, teachers, and caregivers.
3. Teachers, helpers, or youth group leaders who have gained the trust of young people, are in a unique situation to observe behavior or be party to a conversation in which a possible abusive situation (either within or outside the Congregation) is revealed. In this situation, it is the adult's responsibility to report any reasonable cause to suspect child abuse to legal authorities as required. The Minister or DLRE shall then be notified.
4. Any participating adult may not consume alcohol or use any form of drug, which can negatively affect physical or mental performance before or during the carrying out of his/her responsibilities.

C. Religious Education Classes/Programs (Nursery through 12th Grade)

1. All classes including the nursery must be taught by a minimum of a two-person teaching team. This requirement applies to off-site Westside UU Church activities as well as on-site classes. Ideally, teams should consist of at least one person who has been an active participant at Westside for at least one year or after six months if they have had previous teaching experience in a UU setting. Parents may serve as classroom aides and/or visit classes at any time. Teachers are subject to the approval of the RE Committee. One individual may be briefly alone with a group when the other must leave as dictated by common sense and necessity for such purposes as bathroom breaks and escorting individual children away from the group.

2. For grades 7-12, youth group teachers must be at least twenty-one years of age. Exceptions may be made by the DLRE.

D. General Supervision Guidelines during Sunday Morning Programs

1. Each child will have a registration form on file that includes information about special needs and permission to accompany their RE class and teachers on walks around the Church or neighborhood on Sunday mornings. All personal information is held confidential except for those who have a need to know for legal or safety reasons.
2. Parents are responsible for their children before the service begins and after the RE programs have ended.
3. During services and classes, all children under high school age must have a parent or another responsible adult on the premises unless prior arrangements have been made with the DLRE.
4. Parents, teachers, volunteers, children, staff, invited guests, and Safe Congregation Committee members are the only people allowed in the RE classrooms during services and in the classrooms.
5. Parents (or designee) of children in classes containing fourth grade and younger must pick up their child(ren) from the RE program at the end of the service. The DLRE or appropriate designee will locate parents (or designee) who fail to comply.

E. General Lock-in Guidelines

1. Adults supervising youth lock-ins must be active participants at Westside for at least one year (or after six months if they have had previous youth group experience in a UU setting before volunteering). Parents who are staying over with their own youth need not have been active participants.
2. There shall always be a minimum of two adults (one of each

gender) present during sleeping hours regardless of the numbers of youth attending. **Two adults must remain awake during these sleeping hours.** During lock-ins at Westside, there should be a minimum ratio of one adult to eight youth with one additional adult required for each additional four youth.

3. During lock-ins at Westside, all outside doors will be locked against entry once the last youth has arrived, and will remain locked until parents arrive for pick-up.
4. A Parent/Guardian Consent and Medical Release form and a Medical Information form will be required for each youth at the lock-in.
5. Each youth will be required to complete and sign the Youth Code of Ethics for each lock-in event.
6. The adult supervisors will maintain a list of attendees.
7. Youth will sleep only in areas equipped with a functioning smoke detector.

Please reference Child/Youth Lock-in Policy for additional requirements.

F. Transportation To and From Westside-Sanctions Events

1. When traveling to and from outings, conferences, meetings, and other activities, a parent/guardian-signed permission slip is required for each child/youth participating or being driven to an off-site activity. In addition, each youth must sign the Youth Code of Ethics and each adult must sign an Adult Sponsor Responsibilities form.
2. Drivers must be at least 21 years old.
3. Every person in the car shall have a seatbelt and age-appropriate seating.
4. A minimum of two adults—one at least 21 years of age—must

accompany a group going off site. Exceptions for exigent circumstances may be made only by the primary on-site adult leader.

5. Each driver must show proof of license, registration, and insurance coverage upon request, and the provision to be contacted by and ability to contact the DLRE and/or parents.

G. Children and Youth Fire, Sheltering, and Emergency Evacuation Processes

1. In the event of fire or other emergency evacuation, all children will be evacuated or escorted out of the building by their teachers following our procedures.
2. The Religious Education Committee and DLRE will conduct a Sunday morning fire drill annually for all Children's Religious Education classes and coordinate these with adult services.
3. Fire evacuation plans as well as the location of fire extinguishers and smoke detectors at Westside UU Church will be provided at the time of teacher training.
4. Teachers shall be provided training for sheltering safety procedures.

H. Fire and Electrical Safety

1. Childproof electrical outlets shall be used in the nursery.
2. Smoke detectors are hard-wired and shall be checked annually by the Safe Congregation Committee.
3. Fire extinguishers, to be inspected and maintained by the Sexton, shall be located in several places as designated by the Buildings and Grounds Committee.
4. Emergency exit signs are posted in places as designated by the Buildings and Grounds Committee. A Tornado Sheltering Area shall also be designated.

I. First Aid and Incident Reporting

- 1.** A defibrillator, maintained by the Safe Congregation Committee, shall be displayed in a central location and labeled prominently.
- 2.** A first aid kit shall be maintained by the DLRE in the RE Office and another kit, maintained by the Safe Congregation Committee, shall be kept in the kitchen.
- 3.** In case of serious injury, 9-1-1 shall be called for emergency assistance.
- 4.** In case of minor injury, appropriate first aid shall be applied, the parent/guardian of a child notified, and an incident report completed and submitted to the DLRE.
- 5.** A file shall be maintained by the DLRE for all incident/accident reports involving children.

Note: Any exceptions to the RE Safety Procedures (Sections VII) must be approved by the DLRE.

IX. EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURES

When the fire alarm sounds, all present must:

- A.** Immediately leave the building through the nearest designated exit. (Note that not all outside doors are official exits.) Walk briskly away from the building and assemble across the street from the building. If there is a person nearby who might need assistance, offer such assistance or get additional help if necessary.
- B.** People who brought someone in a wheelchair are to locate another person for assistance, then proceed with the wheelchair-bound person to the nearest exit.
- C.** When the building is evacuated for an emergency, parents should

find their children at the evacuation area located away from the building and inform the teachers that they are taking them. All others should locate their family members and/or significant others.

- D.** The DLRE, Building & Grounds Committee, and Safe Congregation Committee shall be accountable for executing the Emergency Evacuation Policy.

X. RESPONDING TO COMPLAINTS OF SEXUAL OR PHYSICAL ABUSE OR HARASSMENT

- A.** There are several situations which may prompt a response regarding a complaint or concern about sexual or physical abuse, including but not limited to:

- 1.** A child, youth, or adult reports possible abuse by a Westside official, member or attendee;
- 2.** Any church staff or officer, member, friend, or attendee suspects that a child or youth is being abused;
- 3.** Child or youth reports possible abuse by a family member or other individual; or
- 4.** Church staff or other officials learn that a church member, friend, or attendee (child, youth or adult) is under investigation for allegedly abusing others.

- B.** Because child abuse is addressed directly by Texas state law, such cases require that reporting laws be followed. When any of the situations described above are reported, the procedures outlined in Section XI will be utilized.

XI. REPORTING CHILD ABUSE TO COMMUNITY AUTHORITIES

- A.** It is not the function of the Minister, DLRE, or President of the Board of Directors to conduct an investigation into accusations of child abuse. Rather it is both Texas law and the policy of the Westside Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Worth 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.

*To report: Texas Department of Family & Protective Services
By phone: 1-800-252-5400
Online: Texas Abuse Hotline
(They cannot accept reports by email.)*

- B.** Once a report is made to the appropriate authorities, Westside UU 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 Minister will also notify the President of the Board and the NTUUC, and seek their advice and counsel. Additionally, the Minister will notify the Church'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 President of the Board of Directors.

XII. SAFETY NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION REGARDING REPORT OF ABUSE

- A. Interim Safety Plan:** When a report is filed by any person on behalf of any child and the suspected abuser is a church employee, member, or attendee, the Committee will develop an interim safety plan during the investigation of abuse. This plan may include, but not be limited to implementation of a draft Covenant of Behavior (Limited Access Agreement). The purpose of this plan is not only to safeguard our children, but also to provide protection to the accused abuser from further complaints. If the accused abuser is another youth, the plan must be developed with input from both sets of parents or guardians. The plan will be clearly communicated to the accused abuser or, if a minor, his or her parents or guardians, by the Safe Congregation Committee. The Minister and/or DLRE may implement similar steps while awaiting initial action of the Safe Congregation Committee.
- B. Covenant of Behavior:** Upon final disposition by legal authorities, a permanent Covenant of Behavior (Limited Access Agreement) shall be developed or revised by the Committee. A disposition requiring a response would be substantiation by either Adult or

Child Protective Services, or other responsible public officials, by conviction by a Court of Law, or by specifications for parole or probation.

- C. In all cases, the Safe Congregation Committee, Minister, DLRE, or President of the Board of Directors may seek legal counsel before proceeding with either a draft or permanent Covenant of Behavior.

XIII. NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION REGARDING REPORTS/ ACCUSATIONS OF SEXUAL ABUSE

Following a report of suspected abuse, the Safe Congregation Committee shall also develop a plan for the purpose of avoiding further incidents.

- A. The person who has allegedly been sexually abused: This may include providing information about or referrals to appropriate professional, community, church, or UU resources, as needed. Additionally, the Safe Congregation Committee may assist in dealing with responsible public officials.

B. Other members and friends of our congregation:

1. Members, friends, or attendees immediately affected by the incident (such as family members or partners) whose needs we can help meet, either directly or indirectly;
2. The Minister (or other members of the church staff) to aid in dealing with the pastoral needs of the victim or accused person;
3. Other members and friends of the congregation who witnessed one or more incidents or, who having heard about them, are reminded of their own concerns; and
4. Other congregation members and friends who are relied on to a great degree by the person who has allegedly been sexually abused or is the accused (or those connected to them).

- C. **The accused person:** Support may include helping the accused person access the appropriate professional, community, and spiritual resources. While there may be feelings of ill-will toward the accused person, if that individual is a part of our community, he or she also deserves our support; withdrawing it at this critical point in

that person's life might have severe detrimental long-term effects on his or her behavior in the future. It remains the mission of this congregation to recognize and support the integrity and inherent worth and dignity of that person even though we do not condone inappropriate behaviors, and to treat him or her with compassion.

- D.** Other persons who have allegedly been sexually abused and who have been reluctant to come forward: If warranted, the response plan will include a way of reaching out to these individuals in a manner that is non-threatening.

XIV. NEEDS OF THE CONGREGATION REGARDING REPORTS OF HARASSMENT

- A.** Incidents of alleged sexual or physical harassment of minors which do not warrant involvement of, or are not accepted for investigation by responsible public authorities or law enforcement, after reporting, shall be referred to the DLRE and Minister. They may request that the Safe Congregation Committee investigate such allegations. A plan shall be developed to address and resolve these complaints which shall make clear to the accused person that this Congregation will not tolerate harassment in any form, as well as provide information about appropriate counseling or other resources for both the child being harassed and the alleged offender. The parent(s)/guardian(s) of the minor(s) shall also be informed of this plan and involved, as appropriate, in its development.
- B.** Incidents of alleged sexual or physical harassment of adults will be referred to the DLRE and Minister. These allegations may also be referred to the Safe Congregation Committee who will then make clear to the accused person that this congregation will not tolerate harassment of any form, as well as provide information about appropriate counseling or other resource for both the adult who has allegedly been harassed and the alleged offender. The Safe Congregation Committee would also be available to discuss concerns regarding situations that have felt uncomfortable but may not constitute abuse or harassment as defined in this Policy. The function of the Safe Congregation Committee would be to help individuals clarify the source of their discomfort, brainstorm effective means of resolving the problem, and share information about appropriate resources.

XV. GUIDELINES INVOLVING SEX OFFENDERS

Situations may occur involving individuals accused or convicted of sexually aggressive behavior. Those situations will be addressed as follows:

- A.** An individual who has been convicted of or pled guilty to a charge of sexual misconduct or who has been determined to have engaged in any form of child abuse in any civil, criminal, administrative, or ecclesiastical forum shall not have contact with the children or youth or the parties involved.
- B.** If an individual has been legally accused of sexual misconduct and is currently involved in civil or criminal litigation of such a charge, that individual shall not have contact with the children or youth or the parties involved until there is final disposition of the case (resolution).
- C.** In the event that a person has been convicted of a sexual offense and completed a term of incarceration and seeks to enter the life of the Westside Unitarian Universalist Church of Fort Worth, the Safe Congregation Committee will meet to make a determination as to whether or not and the ways in which the individual may be safely involved in the life of the congregation. If it is determined that the person can participate in congregation life, a Covenant of Behavior (Limited Access Agreement) will be developed.
- D.** In all cases, the Committee, Minister, DLRE or President of the Board of Directors may seek legal counsel before proceeding with a Covenant of behavior. The names of those with a Covenant of Behavior shall be shared only with those who have a need to know or for the purpose of monitoring compliance. Terms of a Covenant of Behavior shall be reviewed periodically.

XVI. ACTIVE SHOOTER SITUATION

Westside Unitarian Universalist Church is licensed and authorized to use *Shots Fired, When Lightning Strikes* for internal training. This program, developed by the Center for Personal Protection and Safety, provides training for a survival mindset and courses of action in the event of an active shooter or hostage situation. Presentation of this program can be scheduled for any adult church group by contacting the Safe Congregation Committee.

Adopted by the Board on 5-20-2015

Our policy was adapted from that of The Unitarian Society of Ridgewood, New Jersey, "Toward a Safe Congregation," as revised by them on 3-3-2014.