



COMMON STREET SPIRITUAL CENTER

Safe Community Policy and Disclosure Forms

Safe Community Policy Concerning Abuse Prevention and Response

Purpose Statement

Common Street Spiritual Center seeks to be a place where all can feel safe and welcome. Towards that end we are establishing this policy in an effort to prevent sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, and other abusive behavior at our Center and in our community of members; such behavior will not be tolerated by the community of Common Street Spiritual Center, and this policy outlines our response whenever it occurs.

Motivations

One of the central motivations for this policy is the intention of our community to depart from unjust and oppressive structures and relationships that we inherit as habits of thought and relationship, such as patriarchy, racism, classism, nationalism, ableism and other dynamics that establish hierarchy of one group over another.

Relations between persons in a community are shaped by experiences and habits. For example, consider the example of how patriarchal dynamics shape relationship: most women have conditioning related to subordination to men, and of trauma, personally, or communicated by women they know; most men have conditioning related to dominance and entitlement in relation to women, either personally or as part of a male-dominated world. This patriarchal dynamic distorts all relationships, including among women and among men. Racism works in a similar way to establish the power and privilege of white people in our society.

Abusive behavior is often predicated on power imbalances which are inherently unjust; we are mindful of this problematic dynamic. We are also mindful of the potential for people in positions of leadership within our community to misuse their power in abusive ways. This policy, and our community's relational covenant, both carry forward an intention to create a new culture of relationship based on equality, respect, and love.

Definitions

1. **Minister:** Ministers include elected or appointed leaders of the Community, employees, and volunteers, as well as Authorized Ministers, who are engaged in work authorized to be part of CSSC's mission
2. **Authorized Minister:** a person called to serve in this Community who holds ordained ministerial standing or has been commissioned or licensed by an Association of the American Baptist Churches or other reputable denomination. An Authorized Minister with the professional credentialing described above is one type of minister within the meaning of this policy. The **Senior Minister** is the authorized minister of the highest responsibility and authority in the Community, should there be multiple authorized ministers.
3. **Ministerial Relationship:** the relationship between one who carries out the ministry of the Community and the one being served by that ministry.
4. **Abuse:** physical or nonphysical misuse or maltreatment, so as to injure, hurt, demean or damage (including bullying and cyber-bullying).
5. **Sexual Exploitation:** sexual activity or contact (not limited to sexual intercourse) in which a minister engaged in a ministerial relationship takes advantage of the vulnerability of the person being served by causing or allowing that person to engage in sexual behavior with the minister.
6. **Sexual Harassment:** repeated or coercive sexual advances toward another person contrary to his or her wishes. It includes behavior directed at another person with the intent of intimidating, humiliating, or embarrassing the other person, or subjecting the person to public discrimination. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when:
 - Submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition or circumstance of instruction, employment, or participation in any Community activity; or,
 - Submission to, or rejection of, such conduct by an individual is used as a basis for evaluation in making personnel or Community-related decisions affecting an individual; or,
 - Such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's performance or participation in Community activities or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work or Community environment.

Prohibited sexual harassment includes unsolicited and unwelcome contact that has sexual overtones, particularly:

- Written contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene letters, notes, e-mails, or invitations;
- Verbal contact, such as sexually suggestive or obscene comments, threats, slurs, epithets, jokes

about gender-specific traits, sexual propositions;

- Physical contact, such as intentional touching, pinching, brushing against another's body, impeding or blocking movement and
- Visual contact, such as leering or staring at another's body, gesturing, displaying sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters, or magazines.

Sexual harassment also includes continuing to express sexual interest after being informed that the interest is unwelcome, and using sexual behavior to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, work, learning, or worship environment of another. It is impermissible to suggest, threaten, or imply that failure to accept a request for a date or sexual intimacy will affect a person's job prospects, Community leadership, or comfortable participation in the life of the Community. It is forbidden either to imply or actually withhold support for an appointment, promotion, or change of assignment, to suggest that a poor performance report will be given because a person has declined a personal proposition; or to hint that benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications, will be forthcoming in exchange for sexual favors.

7. **Sexual Assault:** any type of sexual contact or behavior that happens without active consent. Sexual assault includes rape and attempted rape, and child molestation.

Policy Prohibiting Abuse, Exploitation and Harassment

As a love-centered community, Common Street Spiritual Center is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities and a community in which members, friends, staff and volunteers can worship, learn, and work together in an environment free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation or intimidation. All persons associated with Common Street Spiritual Center should be aware that the Community is strongly opposed to sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, and other abusive behavior (e.g. threats, name-calling, raising of voices in angry and intimidating ways, and bullying, whatever the mode of communication) and that such behavior is prohibited by Community policy. The statement pertains to behaviors occurring in programs under the auspices of CSSC, whether onsite or not.

It is the intention of the Community to take action in an attempt to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy. At the same time, in keeping with the principles of restorative justice, which we affirm, we seek to restore relationships amongst all parties that have been damaged by sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, and other abusive behavior.

However, in situations where perpetrators are unwilling or unable to reform their behavior, or if their misconduct is so severe that their continued presence and participation in our community would cause continued harm or trauma, Article IV: 6 of our bylaws would apply: “The Common Street Spiritual Center Council may drop from the rolls of the community any member whom inquiry shows to be destructive to the community and who, after good faith efforts at conflict resolution and reconciliation, is unwilling or unable to reform his or her behavior.” This policy also indicates that certain behaviors which violate state or federal laws, such as sexual assault or child abuse, will be reported to public authorities.

Ministerial Conduct

Consistent with our understanding that each of us is called to serve and care for one another, all authorized ministers, employees, elected and appointed lay leaders, and authorized volunteers are “ministers” to the congregation. (see pg. 2-3 for further definitions)

It is important that every minister to the Community be adequately prepared and educated for the ministry in which they serve others, and to understand the ways in which their use or misuse of power impacts others.

It is the policy of Common Street Spiritual Center to encourage its ministers to nurture safety within ministerial relationships by being attentive to self-care, education, maintaining appropriate boundaries, asking for help when needed, and referring those in need to supportive and helpful resources.

Requirements for Commencing and Continuing Ministry

- Before beginning their duties, all ministers will submit a disclosure form similar to the sample attached hereto as Exhibit A.
- Before beginning their duties, all ministers will be personally interviewed to assess the suitability of their

character and qualifications for the position they seek.

- The Spiritual Center will conduct a registered sex offender review for each minister by searching their name on the Department of Justice website at www.nsopr.gov (or equivalent). This registered sex offender review will be repeated on an annual basis for all ministers. The Common Street Council or a subcommittee thereof will review any cases where records of previous offenses are found.
- Authorized ministers of the Community will attend all boundary workshops, harassment prevention trainings, or other meetings required by the Common Street Council, or will attend at least one workshop or training to raise awareness and strengthen competencies related to this policy every three years, whichever is more frequent.

Additional Requirements for Child and Youth Ministry

Common Street Spiritual Center is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment in which young people can learn about and experience God's love.

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

- We expect that those who volunteer to work with minors will have been members of Common Street Spiritual Center for at least six months or, if not members, regularly and frequently associated with Common Street Spiritual Center for at least a year.
- All volunteers who regularly work with children and youth will complete and submit a disclosure document in a form substantially similar to the sample attached hereto as Exhibit B.
- Before beginning their duties, all prospective employees will undergo a background check, including but not necessarily limited to, inquiries of references and a criminal history verification by a third party vendor.
- All volunteers and employees who regularly work with children and youth will receive orientation regarding safe community policy and procedures.
- It is the policy of this Community to provide adequate supervision and safeguards for youth activities. In situations where participants are not readily visible to each other, there will be no fewer than two unrelated adults present with children. Youth over the age of 16 may assist an unrelated adult in supervising children and youth activities; however, such assistance does not alter the requirement that at least two unrelated adults be present.
- Written consent of one parent or guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the Spiritual Center property, and any overnight activities.

Procedures for Handling Complaints of Sexual Exploitation, Harassment, or Abuse

I. General Procedures

- A. A subcommittee appointed by the Common Street Council with no less than three members, with similar numbers of men and women, will be established each year in preparation for the possibility of hearing complaints under this policy. One member will be responsible for gathering documentation of the team's findings and proceedings in all cases, even matters resolved informally. The subcommittee, hereinafter referred to as "The Response Team," will be familiar with the terms of this policy, as well as the established procedures of the Community for dealing with a complaint.
- B. Several approaches may be taken in addressing incidents of alleged sexual exploitation, harassment, or abuse:
1. The complainant can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the respondent, the individual accused of sexual exploitation, harassment, or abuse.
 2. The complainant can report the incident to a member of the staff or council, in an effort to resolve the matter informally. Upon receiving a report of an incident of sexual exploitation, harassment, or abuse, the member of the staff or council must report the matter to the Response Team for review. The Response Team will determine, after conversation with the complainant, if an attempt to resolve the matter informally is wise. The Response Team will document the report with due respect for the confidentiality of all persons involved.
 3. If an informal resolution of the complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed, the Response Team will institute formal proceedings which shall include the following steps:
 - The Response Team shall advise the Senior Minister and Moderator of the receipt of the complaint and shall keep them apprised of ongoing steps and actions taken. If either the Senior Minister or Moderator is the subject of the complaint, this notice requirement shall not apply as to that person.
 - The Response Team shall gather statements or other information from the individuals involved in the alleged exploitation or harassment and from others who may have pertinent information, such as qualified professional consultants, and present such information to the Common Street Council or an appropriate subcommittee thereof. The Response Team may seek the advice of legal counsel or others to advise it in performing its functions. This information will all be documented with due respect for the confidentiality of all persons involved.
 - The Common Street Council, or a subcommittee thereof, in conjunction with the Response Team, shall make determinations and take actions appropriate to resolve the matter. These may

include:

- a. finding that sexual exploitation, harassment, or abuse has occurred, and that the appropriate body of the Community is called upon to take action accordingly; such action may include one or more of the following:
 - (i) a formal reprimand, with defined expectations for changed behavior;
 - (ii) recommending or requiring psychological or psychiatric assessment, counseling and/or treatment;
 - (iii) probationary standing, with the terms of the probation clearly defined;
 - (iv) dismissal from employment or authorized volunteer position by, affiliation with, or membership in, the Community.
 - (v) reporting the incident to law enforcement or other public authorities
- b. finding that sexual exploitation or harassment did not occur.
- c. finding of insufficient evidence.

- C. A written summary of the Response Team and Common Street Council proceedings in such cases will be maintained.
- D. In cases of sexual exploitation, sexual assault, child abuse, physical or verbal abuse, or other forms of abuse, person(s) toward whom the inappropriate behavior is directed need not be the complainant. However, in cases of sexual harassment the complainant must be the victim. In cases of sexual exploitation, neither consent nor acquiescence will excuse or exonerate inappropriate behavior. The Community may initiate or proceed with the formal complaint process at any time.
- E. In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse, consideration shall be given to the record of the alleged incident(s) as a whole and to the totality of the circumstances, including the context in which the alleged incident(s) occurred.
- F. Any person bringing a sexual harassment, exploitation, or abuse complaint or assisting in investigating such a complaint will not be adversely affected in terms and conditions of employment or Community membership or affiliation, or otherwise discriminated against or discharged.
- G. If the complainant or respondent is not satisfied with the disposition of the matter by the Common Street Council, he or she has the right to appeal to the Moderator, or to another member of the Council if the Moderator is the subject of the complaint, who shall refer the matter to the American Baptist Churches of

Massachusetts (TABCOM). The subject of any such appeal to TABCOM shall be limited solely to whether the procedures of this policy were followed. The matter will not be reconsidered on the merits, and the decision of TABCOM will be the final resolution of the matter. If TABCOM determines that the procedures of this policy were not followed, it will refer the matter back to the Common Street Council to complete the processing of the complaint in accordance with these procedures.

II. Child Abuse

If at any time the Community has reasonable cause to believe that a minor may be an abused or neglected child, apart from any legal requirements, the Common Street Spiritual Center will make a report to appropriate authorities, including but not limited to the MA Department of Children and Family Services. Any Minister of the Community who becomes aware of facts or circumstances that child abuse or neglect has occurred or that there exists a substantial risk that child abuse or neglect may occur in the reasonably foreseeable future shall immediately report the matter to the Senior Minister and Moderator so that the Community may take appropriate action in a timely manner. The MA Child Abuse Hotline currently is: 800-792-5200.

III. Clergy

Apart from any disposition of the matter by the Community, all allegations of behavior which call into question the fitness for ministry of any Authorized Minister will promptly be forwarded to the American Baptist Churches of Massachusetts or other ordaining body.

TABCOM may be contacted at: (978) 448-1445 and/or tabcom@tabcom.org

Exhibit A
Common Street Spiritual Center
Authorized Volunteer
Application and Disclosure Form

Name: Last **First** **Middle**

Address: Street **City/State** **Zipcode**

Daytime Phone **Evening Phone** **Email**

References: One reference should be related to you and the other references should not be related to you.

Name

Address **City** **State** **Zipcode**

Telephone **Email**

Name

Address **City** **State** **Zipcode**

Telephone **Email**

Name

Address **City** **State** **Zipcode**

Telephone **Email**

Q I have been a member of this Community since _____

Q I have been a friend of this Community since _____

I have never been convicted of, nor pled guilty or no contest to, a crime. (Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state)

Q True

Q Not True

If not true, please attach a document briefly describing the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. The Community will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the

person has been convicted of a crime. The Community, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?

Q Yes

Q No

If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

The covenants between persons seeking authorized volunteer positions in the Community require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the Community. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between volunteers and the Community they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize Common Street Spiritual Center and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

Common Street Spiritual Center authorized volunteer recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in. To that end, I authorize Common Street Spiritual Center and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that Common Street Spiritual Center will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the Common Street Spiritual Center Safe Community Policy.

(PRINT NAME & SIGN)

DATE

(PRINT NAME & SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN FOR APPLICANTS UNDER 18)

DATE

OFFICE USE ONLY

- Sex Offender Registry (www.nsopr.gov) review performed on _____
- Personal interview conducted by staff on _____
- Reference inquiries completed on _____

Exhibit B

**Common Street Spiritual Center
Employment/Authorized Children and Youth Volunteer
Application and Disclosure Form**

NAME: LAST FIRST MIDDLE

ADDRESS: STREET CITY/STATE ZIPCODE

DAYTIME PHONE EVENING PHONE EMAIL

References: One reference should be related to you and the other references should not be related to you.

NAME

ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIPCODE

TELEPHONE EMAIL

NAME

ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIPCODE

TELEPHONE EMAIL

NAME

ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIPCODE

TELEPHONE EMAIL

Q I have been a member of this Community since _____

Q I have been a friend of this Community since _____

I have never been convicted of, nor pled guilty or no contest to, a crime. (Exclude convictions that have been sealed, expunged or legally eradicated, misdemeanor convictions for which probation was completed and the case was dismissed, or offenses about which inquiry is not permissible in this state)

Q True

Q Not True

If not true, please briefly describe the nature of the crime(s), the date and place of conviction and the legal disposition of the case. The Community will not deny a position to any applicant solely because the person has been convicted of a crime. The Community, however, may consider the nature, date and circumstances of the offense, as well as whether the offense is relevant to the duties of the position applied for.

No civil lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct has ever resulted in a judgment being entered against me, been settled out of court, or been dismissed because the statute of limitations has expired.

Q True

Q Not True

If not true, give a short explanation of the lawsuit. (Please indicate the date, nature, and place of the incident leading to the lawsuit; where the lawsuit was filed; and the precise disposition of the lawsuit.)

I have never terminated my employment, professional credentials, or service in a volunteer position or had my employment, professional credentials, or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or misconduct; physical abuse; child abuse; or financial misconduct.

Q True

Q Not True

If not true, give a short explanation. (Please indicate the date of termination; name, address, and telephone number of employer or volunteer supervisor; and nature of the incident(s) leading to your termination.)

Do you have a valid drivers' license?

Q Yes

Q No

With respect to my driving record, I have not had my license suspended or revoked within the last five years due to reckless driving or driving while intoxicated and/or under the influence of a controlled substance.

Q True

Q Not True

Is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the responsibilities of the position for which you are applying?

Q Yes

Q No

If yes, please provide a brief explanation.

The covenants between persons seeking authorized volunteer positions in the Community require honesty, integrity, and truthfulness for the health of the Community. To that end, I attest that the information set forth in this application is true and complete. I understand that any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of consideration for, or termination of, the position I am seeking to fill. I acknowledge that it is my duty in a timely fashion to amend the responses and information I have provided if I come to know that the response or information was incorrect when given or, though accurate when given, the response or information is no longer accurate.

Beginning such relationships with an open exchange of relevant information builds the foundation for a continuing and healthy covenant between volunteers and the Community they seek to serve. To that end, I authorize Common Street Spiritual Center and/or its agents to make inquiries regarding my character and qualifications, including all statements I have set forth above. I also authorize all entities, persons, former employers, supervisors, courts, law enforcement, and other public agencies to respond to inquiries concerning me, to supply verification of the statements I have made, and to comment on and state opinions regarding my background, character, and qualifications. To encourage such persons and entities to speak openly and responsibly, I hereby release them from all liability arising from their responses, comments, and statements.

Common Street Spiritual Center authorized volunteer and employee recruitment process involves the sharing of information regarding applicants with those persons in a position to recruit, secure, and supervise both the position I am seeking to fill and program I am seeking to participate in. To that end, I authorize Common Street Spiritual Center and its agents to circulate, distribute, and otherwise share information gathered in connection with this application to such persons for these purposes. I understand that Common Street Spiritual Center will share with me information it has gathered about me, if I request it to do so.

I acknowledge my receipt and understanding of the Common Street Spiritual Center Safe Community Policy.

(PRINT NAME & SIGN) **DATE**

(PRINT NAME & SIGNATURE OF PARENT OR GUARDIAN FOR APPLICANTS UNDER 18) **DATE**

OFFICE USE ONLY

- Sex Offender Registry (www.nsopr.gov) review performed on _____
- Personal interview conducted by staff on _____
- Reference inquiries completed on _____
- Community membership for 6 mos. or association for 1 year confirmed on _____
- Safe Community awareness training and policy orientation performed on _____

Additionally, if considered for employment:

- Criminal History Verification (Oxford Document Management) together with Fair Credit Reporting Act notices, completed on _____