



OLIVET
CONGREGATIONAL
CHURCH

SAFE CHURCH POLICY
September 2020



Olivet Congregational Church
1850 Iglehart Ave.
Saint Paul, MN 55104

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I. Covenant of Physical, Mental, Emotional, & Spiritual Wellness

As a community of Christian faith, Olivet Congregational Church is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities, and a community in which members, friends, staff, and volunteers can worship, learn, socialize, and work together in a respectful and caring atmosphere. Trusting that God is present in all, we covenant to respect the bodies, emotions, intellects, and spirits of all. Through every church interaction, with reverence and humility, we honor the full humanity of every person, striving to serve God in others and ourselves.

What the Covenant Requires:

Olivet Congregational Church presumes that all people engaged in its sponsored activities will adhere to the Safe Church Policy below. This policy is a living document, and expectations will change as needed to reflect evolving understandings and membership. Such expectations will be applied consistently among those ministering at any given time.

In our Safe Church Policy and to live out the Covenant above, Olivet opposes and prohibits any **discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, or intimidation (including bullying)** that results in harm to another, regardless of that person's age, sex, sexual orientation, sexual identification, race, ethnicity, religion, or mental/physical abilities or limitations. It is the intention of our congregation to affirmatively nurture good behavior, and to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and as necessary, discipline those persons who violate this policy.

Olivet recognizes that children, youth, and vulnerable adults need additional and more specific protection.

II. Code of conduct for those engaged in ministry (volunteers and staff)

Every Clergy, staff, and volunteer of Olivet must be adequately prepared and educated for their ministry to others, to understand ways in which the use or misuse of authority may impact others. It is the policy of Olivet to encourage its employees and volunteers to nurture safety by being attentive to self-care, education, maintenance of appropriate boundaries, and referral of those in need to supportive and helpful resources. Anyone engaging in ministry, as staff or volunteers, will treat everyone with respect and fairness regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, or religion. Staff and volunteers are expected to adhere to uniform standards of displaying affection, as outlined in Section V Appropriate Verbal and Physical Interactions. They will not access online or bring printed materials that violate our covenant to Olivet's property, or any other location where they are engaging in

ministry on behalf of Olivet. This includes pornography and sexually explicit material, as well as racist, sexist, anti-LGBTQIA+, or violent games, websites, books, or magazines.

Commonly accepted principles of healthy boundaries and a safe church:

- Adults have more powers than children or youth.
- Clergy have more power than people with whom they have a pastoral relationship.
- The mutuality of friendship cannot exist when there is a disparity of power.

III. Code of Conduct rules for clergy, staff and volunteers working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults

1. Additional Code of Conduct rules and guidelines involving interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults are found in Appendix A, an integral part of Olivet's Safe Church Policy.
2. Clergy, employees, and volunteers may not have engaged in or been convicted of youth and vulnerable adult abuse, indecency with a youth and vulnerable adult, or injury to a youth and vulnerable adult. They must provide legal records for any unspecified convictions prior to becoming a staff person or volunteer.
3. All Clergy, employees, and volunteers must follow State specific mandatory reporting requirements of any neglect or abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
4. Clergy, employees, and volunteers will avoid affection with children, youth, and vulnerable adults that cannot be observed by others.
5. Clergy, employees, and volunteers will not date or become romantically involved with youth and vulnerable adults.
6. Clergy, employees, and volunteers will not offer, use, or be under the influence of alcohol or illegal drugs in the presence of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
7. Clergy, employees, and volunteers will not have secrets with children, youth, and vulnerable adults and will only give gifts with prior permission of the parent(s) and in the presence of the congregation.
8. Clergy, employees, and volunteers will use common areas, keep doors open, and avoid being the only people on their floor of the church building when working with individual children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Clergy, employees, and volunteers are prohibited from working one-on-one with children, youth, and vulnerable adults in a private setting, i.e., an office or room with a closed door. Two unrelated adults must be able to maintain visual contact with each other any time they engage in ministry with children or youth.

IV Recognizing Bullying

1. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Olivet will not tolerate any bullying behavior, neither from clergy, staff, volunteers, or members; nor from one child, youth or adult toward another child, youth, or adult.

2. Bullying can take on various forms, including:
 - a. *Physical bullying* – when one person engages in or threatens physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
 - b. *Verbal bullying* – when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another person a hurtful name.
 - c. *Nonverbal or relational bullying* – when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.
 - d. *Cyberbullying* – the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:
 - Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
 - Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
 - Pretending to be someone else to make that person look bad.
 - Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
 - Hazing – an activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person’s willingness to participate.
 - Sexualized bullying – when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples of sexualized bullying behaviors include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.
3. Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all participants in Olivet’s programs and services, and those using Olivet’s building, including Clergy, employees, and volunteers.

V. Appropriate Physical and Verbal Interactions

1. **Physical Contact:** God has created us to be in community with one another. People need loving touch from people that they know and trust. Consensual and appropriate touch is part of any healthy community. These physical interaction guidelines for Clergy, staff, and volunteers promote a positive, nurturing environment while protecting all people who work, worship, and rent space with us. Olivet’s guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions for Clergy, staff, and volunteers are:

<i>Appropriate Physical Interactions</i>	<i>Inappropriate Physical Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Side hugs ● Shoulder-to-shoulder or “temple” hugs ● Pats on the shoulder or back ● Handshakes ● High-fives and hand slapping ● Verbal praise ● Pats on the head when culturally appropriate ● Touching hands, shoulders, and arms ● Arms around shoulders ● Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Full-frontal hugs ● Kisses ● Showing affection in isolated area ● Lap sitting ● Wrestling ● Piggyback rides ● Tickling ● Allowing a youth to cling to an employee’s or volunteer’s leg ● Any type of massage given by or to a youth ● Any type of massage given by or to an employee or volunteer ● Any form of affection that is unwanted ● Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas

2. Verbal Interactions: The way we speak to one another shows God’s love and care for the world. Clergy, employees, and volunteers can use their words in ways that connect people to God. They should not speak in any way that is, or could be construed by any observer as, inappropriate. Olivet’s guidelines for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions for Clergy, staff and Volunteers are:

<i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</i>	<i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Positive reinforcement ● Family-friendly jokes ● Encouragement ● Praise ● Prayer ● Active listening (“What I’m hearing you say is: Is that what you meant?”) ● Responding calmly when someone is yelling or using inappropriate language. ● Disrupting instances of inappropriate speech or touch quickly and effectively: request that the behavior stop and immediately take measures to protect any vulnerable people involved. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Name-calling ● Discussing sexual encounters ● Involving those you minister to in the personal problems or issues of Clergy, employees, and volunteers ● Secrets ● Cursing ● Engaging in heated arguments or yelling; (even when yelled at.) ● Off-color or sexual jokes ● Compliments relating to physique or body development ● Shaming or humiliating ● Belittling ● Harsh language that may frighten, threaten, or humiliate ● Derogatory remarks about a person, a person’s family, or others of their race, ethnic group, age group, sexual orientation, sex, gender, gender identity, or religion.

VI. Working with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

1. The policies and guidelines regarding working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults are fully described in Appendix A, an integral part of Olivet’s Safe Church Policy.
2. All volunteers working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall complete the application form in Appendix C.
3. Adult volunteers who wish to work with children, youth and vulnerable populations must be recognized as members or friends of Olivet for at least 6 months.
4. Adult volunteers who wish to work with children, youth and other vulnerable populations must submit to a background check. The background check will be completed by Olivet staff.
5. It is Olivet’s goal that adult staff and volunteers who wish to work with children, youth, and vulnerable populations complete the online training courses offered by “MinistrySafe™” and be certified. The training should be completed every two years. These courses shall be offered to the Church Council and all adult members of Olivet and may be offered to the community as an educational service to parents. Youth, with written permission of their parents, may also take this training.
6. Training may be updated as needed and applied consistently to those ministering at any time.

VII. Responding to Discrimination, Harassment, Abuse, Exploitation, Intimidation, or Bullying

How Olivet responds to suspicious or inappropriate interactions, policy violations, and incidents or allegations of abuse can dramatically affect the depth of harm done to the individuals involved and the damage to the organization. Once someone (including Clergy, member, employee, volunteer, youth, or parent) has expressed a concern or made an allegation about the treatment of a child, youth, or adult within the congregation, swift and determined action must be taken to reduce any subsequent risk to that youth or adult, to the accused person and to Olivet. Olivet has established precise, unequivocal requirements for reporting to the authorities and for adhering to a serious-incident response plan. Responding to those incidents involving children, youth or vulnerable adults are found in Appendix A.

1. Reporting Procedures

- a. Who should report?
 - Any person who believes he/she has been the victim of discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, intimidation or bullying by an employee, volunteer, contractor, friend, or member of Olivet.
 - Any person who witnesses discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, intimidation, or bullying by an employee, volunteer, contractor, or member of Olivet towards another person of Olivet.

- Special standards of responsibility of a witness exist when the victim of mistreatment is a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- b. How should the report be made?
- The victim, parent, or witness should file a written report with the Olivet office. It should include the date and time of the incident, the date and time of the report, the names of the alleged perpetrator and victim, and a description of the mistreatment.
 - Incident forms are available in a plastic sleeve posted on the bulletin board outside the library or from the Olivet office. An email with the necessary data will suffice as an incident report.
 - The incident report should be sent to the Minister and Church Moderator.
 - Any Olivet member or employee who receives a report of discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, intimidation, or bullying shall inform the Minister immediately.
- c. If the complaint of mistreatment involves the Minister or Church Moderator or if the victim or witness does not feel the complaint will get a fair hearing within Olivet:
- If the complaint involves the Minister, the complaint shall be made or filed directly with the Church Council Moderator.
- d. If the victim or witness does not feel the complaint will get a fair hearing within Olivet, they should contact the offices of the Minnesota Conference of the United Church of Christ, 122 W. Franklin Ave. #323, Minneapolis, MN. 55404, **612-871-0359**.
- e. If the allegations involve a child, youth, or vulnerable adult?
- The reporting procedure is the same as above.
 - Additionally, and as required by mandated reporting laws, Minister(s), employees, and volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child/youth/vulnerable adult—whether on or off Olivet property or whether perpetrated by employees, volunteers, or others—**to state authorities**. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. The following link provides the Mandated Reporter Information for Ramsey County.
- <https://www.ramseycounty.us/residents/assistance-support/protection-crisis-resources/child-protection/mandated-reporters>
- A person who mistakenly reports suspected abuse is immune from civil or criminal liability, if the report was made in good faith and without malice.
 - The Minister/Moderator receiving the report shall scrupulously document all communication surrounding the complaint and subsequent investigation. This documentation shall become part of the permanent file of the report.
- f. Submission of a good faith complaint or report of discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, intimidation, or bullying will not affect the complainant or reporter's future employment or membership at Olivet.
- g. Olivet will respect the privacy of the complainant and the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and the witnesses as much as possible, consistent with the legal obligations to investigate, to take appropriate action, and to conform to any discovery or disclosure obligations.

2. Investigation

- a. The Minister, upon receipt of a report or complaint alleging discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, intimidation, or bullying, shall immediately undertake or authorize an investigation. The investigation may be conducted by the Minister, the Church Council, or by a third party designated by the Church Council.
- b. The investigation may consist of personal interviews with the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and others who may have knowledge of the alleged incident(s) or circumstances giving rise to the complaint. The investigation may also consist of any other methods and documents deemed pertinent by the investigator.
- c. In determining whether alleged conduct constitutes a violation of this policy, Olivet should consider the surrounding circumstances, the nature of the behavior, past incidents or past or continuing patterns of behavior, the relationships between the parties involved and the context in which the alleged incidents occurred. Whether a particular action or incident constitutes a violation of this policy requires a determination based on all the facts and surrounding circumstances.
- d. In addition, Olivet may take immediate steps, at its discretion, to protect the complainant or witness pending completion of an investigation of the alleged mistreatment.
- e. The investigation will be completed as soon as practicable but no longer than three months from the date of the receipt of the original complaint. Upon completion of the investigation, a written report will become available to the complainant, the individual(s) against whom the complaint is filed, and others who may have knowledge of the alleged incident(s).
- f. If the complaint involves the Minister, the report may be filed directly with the Church Council and should be shared with the Human Resources Committee. The report shall include a determination of whether the allegations have been substantiated as factual and whether they appear to be violations of Olivet's policy.

3. Church Action

- a. Upon receipt of a report, the Minister will take appropriate action. There may be occasions when the Minister or another individual or group will ask the Church Council to investigate and address concerns.
- b. Church action taken for violation of the Safe Church Policy will be consistent with requirements of Minnesota and Federal law, especially concerning a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- c. Those seeking redress are not required to resolve the matter face-to-face with those who are perceived to have caused harm.
- d. In severe cases where a resolution cannot be found, and after consultation with the Minister and Moderator, one party may be asked to leave the church.
- e. The result of the church's investigation of each complaint filed under these procedures will be reported in writing to the complainant in accordance with State and Federal law regarding data or records privacy.
- f. Olivet expects its clergy to abide by the United Church of Christ Manual on Ministry and the UCC Ministerial Code, which acknowledge that clergy are the recipients of automatic trust, and comment directly on the issues of clergy misconduct that abuses the trust of the

congregation. Following these guidelines, our clergy agree not to exploit the power inherent in their roles. Where possible safety violations involve clergy, the Olivet Council will contact the staff of the Minnesota Conference, United Church of Christ. The Committee on Ministry of the Minnesota Conference may mandate a formal fitness review of a pastor, recommend legal actions, and/or revoke ministerial credentials that authorize a minister's call to serve the congregation. The Olivet Council, in consultation with Minnesota Conference staff, will follow appropriate methods of communicating such actions and their results within the congregation and community.

b. Reprisal

- a. Olivet will discipline or take appropriate action against anyone who retaliates against any person who makes a good faith report of discrimination, harassment, abuse, exploitation, intimidation or bullying or any person who testifies, assists, or participates in an investigation, proceeding, or hearing related to the harassment or abuse.
- b. Retaliation includes, but is not limited to, any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment.

VIII. Congregational Awareness

Olivet is dedicated to a policy of open communication and education for the benefit of all those we serve. They are entitled to know what to expect of our ministries, from our Ministers who serve them, and to know the related policies and procedures created to protect everyone.

1. Olivet's Safe Church Policy with Addendums shall be posted on the Olivet Congregational Church website, [www.olivetucc.net].
2. Olivet's Safe Church Policy with Addendums shall be posted on a bulletin board outside the Church Library.
3. At the time children, youth, or vulnerable adults are enrolled in Olivet's programs, parents or legal guardians shall be provided:
 - a. A copy of the Olivet Safe Church Policy.
 - b. A copy of Addendum A: Olivet's Policies for Working with Children and Youth.
 - c. An invitation to visit programs in progress at any time at their convenience.
4. It is Olivet's goal for adult staff and volunteers who wish to work with children, youth, and vulnerable populations to complete the online training courses offered by MinistrySafe™ and be certified. These courses shall be offered to the Church Council and all adult members of Olivet and may be offered to the community as an educational service to parents. Youth, with written permission of their parents, may also take this training.
5. The Church Council shall review the Safe Church Policy annually at each February Council meeting.
6. At the core of our faith and our covenant with each other is mercy, forgiveness, and grace. When in our humanness covenants are broken, we will work toward healing by communicating honestly, listening deeply, praying faithfully, and seeking assistance or intervention when needed.

APPENDIX A: Olivet’s Policies for Working with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

I. Policies for Staff and Volunteers in the Youth and Children’s Programs

1. Parental Responsibilities

- a. A parent/guardian of youth and children wishing to participate in Olivet’s programming must complete a form which includes identifying information, any special medical or behavioral circumstances, any legal indemnifications, the youth’s date of birth, emergency contact information, an offsite transportation permission form, and a media release.
- b. All parents will receive an orientation to Olivet’s youth and children’s program. This will include printed copies of our safety guidelines, schedules, expectations for parents and youth/children participating in the program, program structure, church building boundaries for children, and the disciplinary process.
- c. Parents/guardians are asked to help Olivet staff and volunteers enforce the building guidelines outlined in VI.12, for the safety of Olivet’s youth and children, and for the protection of the church.

2. The “Two Adult” Guideline (as numbers permit and/or require)

- a. The church prefers that two unrelated adults be present whenever ministering to children, youth, or vulnerable adults. In situations where a single adult must be alone with a vulnerable person, we prefer that adult to be a background-checked employee of the church. Adults who are alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult will report an incident within 72 hours (Appendix C, or online form when developed).
- b. However, it is expressly understood that when it is not possible to staff with two unrelated adults, a “roamer” will be used who will move in and out of the classrooms during the program, event, or ministry.

3. One-on-One Interactions

- The greatest risk of abuse occurs during one-on-one situations. Olivet seeks to conduct pastoral care and mentoring in ways that are safe and accountable.
- Clergy, employees, and volunteers will use common areas, keep doors open, and avoid being the only people on their floor of the church building when working with individual youth and vulnerable adults. They are prohibited from working one-on-one with youth and vulnerable adults in a private setting, i.e., an office or room with a closed door.

- Document anything unusual, including injuries, behavior issues and how they were handled, or interactions that were troubling for either party.
- Volunteer mentors, such as in a Confirmation program, will keep responsible staff up to date on their progress, issues, and the times and dates of their meetings. Staff will report times, dates, and reasons that they will be meeting one-on-one with youth or children to the Pastor.

4. Youth Volunteers in the Children's Program

- a. Youth who would like to volunteer in the children's programs (such as Sunday school teachers or nursery helpers) are an important part of Olivet's children's ministry. They are however still considered youth, not adult volunteers, and need to be paired with adults whenever possible.
- b. Youth volunteers will participate in an age-appropriate training and screening process.
- c. As far as is possible, the supervising staff member should conduct check-ins with the youth volunteers after the program ends each day. Youth volunteers should report classroom management questions, behavior issues and how they were dealt with, and anything unusual that came up.
- d. Twice a year, supervising staff should conduct a review of how the youth volunteers are doing, and provide specific training or resources for developing skills.

5. Transition Times, Program Times, and Bathroom Procedure

- a. Olivet Staff and volunteers will clearly communicate the start/end times, and the place where youth and children's programming will occur. Parents/guardians are expected to bring children to the area the program is located (classroom, playground, fellowship hall, etc.) at the start time, and pick them up at the end of the program. Youth may leave classrooms on their own and bring themselves to church, but parents/guardians are asked to first tell the staff that their youth has permission to do this.
- b. During the stated program times, volunteers and staff are responsible for the supervision, safety, and well-being of the youth or child. Before and after stated program times, parents/guardians assume sole responsibility for children and youth.
- c. Children will not be released from classrooms on their own. If a parent is unable make a transition time, such as between Sunday school and worship, the parent must arrange for a childcare-capable youth or another adult to pick their child up. They must communicate this to the program staff or volunteers ahead of time. Youth will not be allowed to leave the church grounds on their own, without verbal permission from parents/guardians.
- d. Youth and Children should ask permission to use bathrooms but may leave the classroom on their own. Unless it is an emergency, youth and children should be dismissed to go to the bathroom one at a time.

- e. If a single youth or child is waiting for a ride after a program, there must be at least 2 unrelated adults present. Under no circumstances should one adult be alone with one child in the church building or grounds.

6. Gift Giving

- a. Molesters routinely groom youths by giving gifts, thereby endearing themselves to the youth. They might instruct the youth to keep the gifts a secret, which then starts teaching the youth to keep secrets from parents. For this reason, Clergy, employees, and volunteers should only give gifts to groups of youth, and only under the following circumstances:
- b. The gift is given publicly from the Olivet congregation for a program-related event such as Confirmation, not from an individual staff member or volunteer.
- c. Parents must be notified prior to the gift-giving.

7. Playground Activities

- a. When playing outside, children should remain in the side yard or the playground. They should not be on the sidewalk, and they may not leave the area without a parent/guardian.
- b. Be aware that the roof is easily reachable from the wall next to the playground, and children try to climb on it.
- c. Children may be sent to use the bathroom in the basement Youth Group room one at a time.

8. Transportation

- a. Written parent/guardian permission is required for youth to be transported to an off-site activity. Staff will take these permission forms and medical releases with them on any trip.
- b. Drivers for any Olivet sponsored event must have a valid driver's license to drive any youth or child. In addition, drivers must have liability insurance on the vehicle they are using to transport the youth or children (rentals should be covered by Olivet's insurance policy.) Whenever possible, drivers should be adults over the age of 21.
- c. Seatbelts will be worn by all people during any Olivet-sponsored event that requires transportation in a car. All drivers will comply with current State guidelines for use of car seats and booster chairs.
- d. Use the "rule of three" when transporting youth: At least two adults must transport a single youth, or at least two youth must be present if transported by a single adult.
- e. Youth must be transported directly to their destination. No unauthorized stops may be made.
- f. Staff must avoid unnecessary physical contact with youth while in vehicles. When possible, staff should avoid engaging in sensitive conversations with youth as well.
- g. Pastoral staff must be notified of all transportation activities.
- h. Document any unusual occurrences, injuries, or behavior issues.
- i. When public transportation is used:
 - Youth should remain in one area of the bus/train, if possible.

- Clergy, employees, and volunteers that are assigned to a group should remain with that group.
- Take a head count or call roll immediately after entering and leaving the bus/train.

9. Off-Site Activities

- a. Staff approval is needed for off-site activities.
- b. Written permission from parents/guardians is required for youth and children to participate in any off-site activities where parents/guardians are not in attendance.

10. Off-Site contact with youth or children outside regular program activities

Many cases of abuse occur off-site and outside of regularly scheduled activities. This kind of contact may put staff, volunteers, and the church at increased risk. Therefore, staff and volunteers need to observe the following boundaries.

<i>Appropriate Outside Contact</i>	<i>Inappropriate Outside Contact</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking groups of youths on an outing • Attending sporting activities with groups of youths • Attending functions at a youth’s home, with parents present 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taking one youth on an outing without the parents’ written permission • Visiting one youth in the youth’s home, without a parent present • Entertaining one youth in the home of staff or volunteers • A lone youth spending the night with staff or volunteers

11. Overnight Activities

- a. Supervision Guidelines:
 - All overnight activities must be approved by pastoral staff and documented by the responsible staff person.
 - Parents/guardians will be provided with written information about the overnight activity. All parents must sign a permission slip for their youth to attend, which includes a covenant of behavioral expectations that the youth must sign.
 - Determine the appropriate staff/volunteer-to-youth ratio and gender ratios before the event. Only hold the event if there are enough adults attending.
- b. Overnights at the Olivet Church building:
 - Physical boundaries within the church must be clearly defined and explained to the youth.
 - Staff and volunteers will conduct periodic facility “walk-throughs”.

- In accordance with guidance from the Minnesota Conference UCC, Olivet does not separate youth by gender for overnight programs such as lock-ins. This practice is based on heterosexual and cisgender-centric assumptions. It neither prevents sexual activity between youth nor ensures all youth will be comfortable sleeping only with others of the gender you assume them to be. All the youth will stay in one room overnight, supervised by all of the adults.
 - At least one staff person or volunteer must stay awake overnight.
- c. Guidelines for overnights off-site, such as Mission Trips, will be provided by the camp or organization the group will be staying with.

12. Church Building Safety Guidelines for Youth and Children

- **Parents/guardians are asked to please help us enforce these building guidelines**, for the safety of Olivet's youth and children, and for the protection of the church.
- Children should be in the direct supervision of an adult (or childcare-capable older youth) while at church. We ask that they remain where the responsible person can see them.
- During program times, please let staff know who is responsible for your child if you have made childcare arrangements.
- We ask that parents bring children to the door of the Sunday school and Wednesday night programming rooms and pick them up at the door afterwards. Children will not be released on their own.
- Children should not leave the building or courtyard area by themselves. Children and youth should not leave with an adult other than their parents unless parents have given verbal or written permission.
- All are welcome to use the playground at any time, however children need a supervising adult (or childcare-capable youth, with parent/guardian permission) with them while they play.
- There are many areas of the church that are not safe for unsupervised children. The kitchen, the entire basement level, the playground, and rooms with doors such as the T room, Sunday School rooms, the nursery, and the parlor, are off limits to children without a supervising adult (or childcare-capable youth, with parent/guardian permission.) The boiler room and maintenance area, the choir room, the storage rooms in the basement, the staff offices, and the upstairs faith formation storage room are not appropriate areas for children. Some of them are unsafe. These areas are off limits.
- Nursery volunteers or staff accompany nursery aged children to the bathroom and wait outside. If a child needs help in the bathroom, it is best to find the child's parent. If that is not possible, the nursery staff person may assist.

13. Monitoring the Building during Program Times

It is suggested and advisable that an adult walk through the building during services, classes, and programs to assure no one is in out of the way places described in 12g. This duty would have to be assigned to an accountable adult. Currently Olivet does not have the resources to staff this assignment.

14. Electronic Communication with Youth and Children

Youth and children are growing up with technology and social media as a primary form of interaction with peers and family members. It is natural that they will want to communicate with church staff and volunteers in the same way. It is important that boundaries are placed around this type of communication, so that it is safe for everyone involved.

a. Cell Phone Use:

- Any texts sent to youth by staff, or by a volunteer about program-related things, must also be sent to the youth's parent or guardian.
- Consider using a texting app that hides recipients' numbers from each other.
- If that is not possible, staff must get parent or guardian permission before adding children to any text group where other adults might see youth numbers.
- During program times, cell phones should be used by staff, youth, and children only for the purposes of the program.
- Some examples of appropriate cell phone use on-site: Bible apps, program-related websites, texting absent youth group members to relay information.
- During off-site trips, staff and volunteers are required to bring a cell phone with them for safety purposes. Youth are strongly encouraged to bring one as well.
- During off-site visits youth may make calls and text at appropriate times.

b. Email use:

- Staff and volunteers should not delete any email communication that involves youth or children, as it is important there be a record of all online communication with youth and children.
- If a youth or child emails a staff member, or a volunteer about church related issues, the reply should cc their parent/guardian.
- If the youth or child has emailed a staff member or volunteer about a pastoral care issue that does not need to be reported to parents/guardians, the staff or volunteer should attempt to make an in-person meeting following the one-on-one safety guidelines.
- If it is only possible to provide the needed pastoral care over email, the email conversation must be reported to the Pastor or supervising staff person and documented.

15. Social Media Use with Youth and Children

- a. Staff members are prohibited from connecting with or ‘friending’ youth and children on social media from their private profiles.
- b. Volunteers who have previous connections with the youth and children they serve should not use their private accounts to contact anyone for the Olivet youth and children’s program.
- c. Staff and Volunteers are prohibited from contacting youth or children on any social media site or app that does not leave a permanent record of the interaction (an example of this is Snapchat.)
- d. If a child or youth wants to connect to any of Olivet’s official social media accounts, parents/guardians must give verbal permission to a member of staff.
- e. Staff and volunteers who are approved to use Olivet’s social media accounts may contact youth connected to those accounts, provided the messages are public, accessible to parents/guardians, and permanent. There should be a record of all conversations.

16. Online Meeting Platform Use (Zoom, Facetime, Discord, Google Meet, etc.) with Youth and Children

- a. Online meetings should follow the same supervision guidelines as in-person meetings: two unrelated adults on each call, and, if that is not possible, parents will be asked to remain within earshot to help supervise. *If supervision falls below these levels on the call for technical or other reasons, document the occurrence and the topics discussed, and submit the report to Pastoral staff.*
- b. Parents/guardians must sign a permission slip to have their youth and children participate in online meetings where a parent/guardian is not an active participant. (Zoom Sunday worship does not need a permission form; Zoom Youth Group meeting does.)
- c. Online meetings must be approved by Pastoral staff and documented.
- d. It is prohibited for staff or volunteers to have one-on-one online meetings with youth or children unless there are parents within earshot of the call.
- e. Families will be provided with rules of conduct for online meetings.
 - Participants will not bring devices into bathrooms.
 - Participants need to be fully dressed in clothing, or appropriate pajamas.
 - Participants agree to not share content that is prohibited in Olivet’s Electronic Media and Communication policy while on a group chat.
 - If a youth or child shares prohibited content during a group chat, they will be removed immediately from the call and parents will be contacted. An evaluation will be made as to the youth or child’s further participation in calls.
 - If a staff member or volunteer shares prohibited content during a group chat, they will be removed from the call and have immediate consequences up to firing and prosecution depending on the material shared.

II. Responding to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations

If the Minister, employee, volunteer, or member observes any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations on the part of others, it is their personal responsibility to report their observations immediately to Olivet's Minister.

Remember, at Olivet, the policies apply to everyone.

Examples of Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors Between Employees/Volunteers and Youth

- Violation of the abuse prevention policies described above
- Seeking private time or one-on-one time with youths
- Buying gifts for individual youths
- Making suggestive comments to youths
- Picking favorites

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youths will be taken seriously. Our procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected.

1. Employee and Volunteer Response

If an employee or volunteer witness suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from another employee or volunteer, they are instructed to do the following:

Guidelines for Employees/Volunteers Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations

1. Interrupt the behavior.
2. Report the behavior to the Minister.
3. If you are not comfortable making the report directly, make it anonymously.
4. If the report is about a supervisor or administrator, contact the next level of management.
5. Document the report but do not conduct an investigation.
6. Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken.

2. Minister Response

If a Minister receives a report of suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from a staff member or volunteer, the Minister is instructed to do the following:

Guidelines for Ministerial Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations

- Determine the appropriate response based on the report.
- Speak with the employee or volunteer or member who has been reported.
- Review the file of the employee or volunteer to determine if similar complaints were reported.
- Document the report on the appropriate form.
- If at any point in gathering information about a report of suspicious or inappropriate behavior, a concern arises about possible abuse, contact the State authorities and file a report.
- If appropriate, notify parents and/or guardians.
- Advise the person who reported the behavior that the report is being taken seriously.

III. Responding to Suspected Abuse of a Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult by an Adult

1. Employee or Volunteer Response to Abuse

As required by mandated reporting laws, Olivet’s Minister(s), employees, and volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a child/youth—whether on or off organization property or whether perpetrated by employees, volunteers, or others—to State authorities. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. A person who mistakenly reports suspected abuse is immune from civil or criminal liability if the report was made in good faith and without malice.

In addition to reporting to State authorities, Clergy, employees, and volunteers are required to report any suspected or known abuse of children or youth as described in Section VII of the Safe Church Policy. Olivet’s goal is that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims and others who may be at risk.

Additional Guidelines for Employee/Volunteer Response to Incidents or Allegations of Abuse

- If you witness abuse, interrupt the behavior immediately.
- If abuse is disclosed to you, assure the individual disclosing that he or she was correct to talk to you.
- Protect the alleged victim from intimidation, retribution, or further abuse.
- Immediately report the allegation or incident to the proper organization authorities (based on mandatory reporting requirements) and the designated authority.
- Be sure to document the incident, disclosure, or any circumstances causing your suspicion of abuse. State only the facts.
- It is not your job to investigate the incident but it **IS** your job to report the incident to your supervisor in a timely manner.
- Check back to make sure appropriate steps were taken. If not, report again to your supervisor or the designated organization authority.

2. Ministerial Response to Abuse

In addition to the above response procedures, supervisors and administrators should ensure the following:

<i>Guidelines for Ministers Responding to Allegations or Incidents of Abuse</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First, determine if the youth is still in danger and if so, take immediate steps to prevent any further harm. • Gather as much information about the allegation as you can. For example, who made the report, who was allegedly abused, who was the alleged abuser, what was the nature of the alleged abuse, where and when did the alleged abuse occur, etc. • Accurately record everything you learn in as much detail as you can. Remember your notes may be read by others. Stick to the facts. • Contact the appropriate local authorities as indicated by your mandatory reporting procedures. Make sure you get a case number and the name and contact information of the person with whom you speak at the reporting agency. • If the alleged abuse involves an employee or volunteer, notify your crisis management team and follow your crisis management plan. (Church Moderator and Human Resource Director) • Suspend the accused employee or volunteer until the investigation is completed.

IV. Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Abuse and Sexualized Behaviors

1. The thought that one youth may sexually abuse another youth does not occur to many people. Unfortunately, abuse between peers has increased 300% in the past few years. Youth-to-Youth sexual activity and sexualized behaviors often remain unreported in organizations because Clergy, employees, and volunteers are not comfortable documenting these situations, or may not know how.
2. Most serious incidents of youth-to-youth abuse are preceded by more subtle incidents such as name-calling, taunting, or roughhousing. Interrupting these interactions early and establishing and communicating standards of conduct can keep the program environment safe. Olivet recognizes that the following interactions are high risk and should be prohibited:

<i>Prohibited Youth-to-Youth Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hazing • Bullying • Derogatory name-calling • Games of Truth or Dare • Singling out one child for different treatment • Ridicule or humiliation

3. To adequately respond to and track incidents within the organization, all sexual activity between youths and sexualized behaviors of youths must be consistently documented.
4. Employee and Volunteer Response to Witnessing Youth-to-Youth Sexual Behaviors:

Youth-to-youth sexual behaviors can include inappropriate touching, exposing body parts, using sexualized language, making threats of sexual activity, engaging in sexual activity, and similar types of interactions.

If employees or volunteers witness youth-to-youth sexual behaviors, they are instructed to follow these guidelines:

Guidelines for Clergy, Employees, and Volunteers Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Activity

- If you observe sexual activity between youths, you should immediately separate them.
- Calmly explain that such interactions are not permitted and separate the youths.
- Notify your supervisor.
- Complete the necessary paperwork including what you observed and how you responded.
- Follow your supervisor's instructions regarding notifying the authorities and informing the parents of the youth involved.
- In some cases, if the problem is recurring discipline may be required including not allowing one or both youths to return to the program.

5. Minister/Moderator Response

If the Minister or Moderator receives a report of a youth's sexualized behavior or youth-to-youth sexual activity, they should do the following:

Guidelines for Minister/Moderator Responding to Youth-to-Youth Sexual Activity

- Meet with the staff or member(s) who reported the sexual activity to gather information.
- Confirm that the youths involved have been separated or placed under increased supervision.
- Review the steps taken by the staff on duty.
- Review the incident report to confirm it is accurately and thoroughly completed.
- Meet with parents of the youths involved.
- Determine what actions should be taken to make sure there is no recurrence, including assessing the suitability of the program for the children involved.
- Notify the proper authorities.
- Develop a written corrective action or follow-up plan in response to the incident

V. Responding to Victims

In the event of cases of reportable abuse, the policy of Olivet Congregational Church is to be responsive to the needs of victims within the constraints or obligations imposed under insurance contracts. In general, Olivet will attend to the immediate needs of victims by providing support and pastoral care.

Insurance Board notification: An incident of alleged abuse that requires medical or psychological care for a victim or family shall be reported to the Insurance Board by the Minister or Church Moderator. The latter shall discuss with the Insurance Board Claims Department whether the circumstances warrant initiation of Crisis Management services which may include psychological counseling. Upon approval, counseling services may be offered to a perceived victim(s), which may include family members.

Notification of Parents

A minor child may be party to an incident either as an initiator or as the victim. Whether a child is initiator or victim may not be clear in all circumstances, such as a child-on-child incident. And violation of policy does not necessarily create a victim. While notification of parents of such circumstances may be warranted, utmost care in communication is required.

While communicating with a parent, and **being mindful of the importance of timely communication**, care shall be given to assessing:

- a. The specific facts
- b. Whether a disciplinary or termination process is required
- c. Whether a child should be dismissed from a program (requiring notification of other parents/guardians)
- d. Whether “mandatory reporting” is a factor
- e. Who shall communicate with the parents/guardian and in what manner?
- f. Whether the Minister should be involved in the communication
- g. Tentative remedial steps to prevent a further incident

Notification of parents shall not be delayed when immediate medical care is required.

APPENDIX B: Registered Sex Offender Policy

Registered Sex Offender Policy

As a community of faith, serving by the example of Jesus Christ, we also seek to attend to the needs of all who seek healing, redemption, and fellowship among us. We shall be prepared to accept in our midst those who have violated the most sacred mores of our society at large, to provide them refuge, peace, example and support in their recovery and penitence. We commit to doing so with utmost care for the welfare of our congregation, collectively and individually, and the community we serve.

We accept that there are risks being born in our deliberate association with and ministry to sex offenders who are considered a pariah among the community-at-large as evidenced by the many constraints placed upon their interaction with the community. We agree to honor the needs of the congregation and our community to have reasonable assurance that a sex offender in our care will not have an opportunity to re-offend because of lapses in our management of the offender.

We shall consider limited participation or membership of a sex offender in our congregation with utmost care which shall include the following elements:

1. Document understanding of the statutory limitations applying in the State of Minnesota to the movement and activities of a sex offender, considering the programs of the church. (Examples: Sunday school, Wednesday nights, which serve children and “vulnerable adults”.)
2. Consider and understand the character of the crimes which have resulted in requiring an individual to register as a sex offender, the passage of time without repeated conduct or behavior and the risk and opportunity of re-offending that is presented by the programs of our congregation.
3. Document understanding of limitations and prohibitions placed upon the offender by courts and probation authorities. The opinion of a mental health professional regarding the suitability of the person to participate in the life of the church shall be obtained. In all cases where probation is in force, we shall obtain the explicit approval of and conditions of participation specified by the probation officer. A recommendation by law enforcement or mental health professionals to deny participation to an offender shall be honored in all cases.
4. Understanding that, with respect to a person who is an employee, volunteer or in a position of church leadership, who has previously been convicted for acts of sexual misconduct as defined by insurance contracts, knowledge by church leaders and managers of such prior conviction will have the effect of voiding coverage for the individual employee, volunteer, or church leader and for the church for future acts of sexual misconduct by that person.

Given that criminal convictions are a matter of public record, there shall be no expectation of secrecy on the part of the offender. As a condition of participation in our faith community, the offender must agree that the leadership of the church shall make it known to the members, constituencies, and customers of the church that we have accepted among us a registered sex

offender. The conditions and limitations that apply to participation in the life of the church shall be known to all.

With the advice of legal counsel, and in all cases, the conditions of participation by a registered offender shall be defined by a “limited access agreement” executed by the offender and church. Such agreement shall be approved by probation authorities as may be necessary according to paragraph 3., above. The agreement shall be reviewed annually to validate on-going eligibility. Violation of the agreement by the offender shall be considered as grounds for immediate cancellation of the agreement.

The following additional considerations shall apply:

1. **Victims in the congregation** – In such case as the victim of a RSO (registered sex offender) is a member of the congregation, employee or is a client of other services provided by the congregation, the RSO shall not be permitted to attend the church or church activities.
2. **Clergy-penitent privilege** – “Clergy-penitent privilege” is a “Rule of Evidence” defining or limiting information which clergy may reveal in a court of law only. “Clergy penitent privilege” does not prevent clergy from informing the congregation of matters which may be relevant to their safety; it does not require clergy to hold information in secrecy.
3. Ordained clergy shall assume responsibility and take extraordinary care to understand the scope and limitations of clergy-penitent privilege in the State of Minnesota and the parameters of confidence and privilege as defined by our denomination. Authorized clergy shall inform the leadership of the church of the general principles of confidence and privilege under which (s)he performs his/her clerical duties.
4. **Escorts (Parish Associate)** – Conditions of limited access for an RSO will commonly require that the offender have an escort while on the church premises or at church events elsewhere. A person serving as an escort shall not be a spouse, partner or relative of the offender.
5. **Approval and Supervision**
 - a. With the advice and prior approval of the Church Board, a Limited Access Agreement with a Petitioner (known RSO) may be signed only by the Senior Pastor.
 - b. The Minister and parish associates (escorts), who shall be named in the Limited Access Agreement, shall be responsible for the general supervision of the Petitioner in all the latter’s activity in relation to the church. Elements of supervision shall include the following:
 - Knowledge of the terms of the Limited Access Agreement, including activity limitations placed upon the Petitioner.
 - Knowledge of the Petitioners offense history sufficient to understand the risks of association with the church and its ministries.
 - Willingness to assert activity limitations and to report any violation of restrictions placed upon the Petitioner.
 - Willingness to intervene in any onset of a risky or problem behavior.
 - Willingness to report all cases of non-compliance to the Minister.

- c. The Minister shall assess, prior to selection, whether a proposed parish associate is willing to fulfill the above elements of supervision.
- d. **Professional privacy** – Members who are employed in certain occupations may have a statutory obligation to maintain privacy around the criminal history of their clients who may also be parishioners. Such members shall decline to accept leadership roles which may put them in a position of decision-making regarding individuals who may be their professional clients.
- e. **Juveniles** – While the criminal record of a juvenile is ordinarily concealed by the courts, the church may come to know the juvenile’s history by other means. Honest disclosure by a juvenile and parents in the volunteer application and screening process may reveal that a record exists without knowing the specifics. While a limited access agreement will be required for the juvenile, as for others, every precaution will be taken to preserve the privacy and confidentiality which the law affords a juvenile.

APPENDIX C: Forms

Volunteer Application and Disclosure Form Olivet Congregational UCC

Name—Last:	First:	Middle:
Address—Street:		
City:	State:	Zip Code:
Phone: (cell)	(home)	
Email:		

I have been a friend/member of Olivet Congregational UCC since:

Name (Please print)

Date

I agree to Olivet Congregational UCC conducting a background check: Signature and date:

For Staff Use Only:

- Church member or friend for minimum 6 months_____.
- Safe Church Training completed on_____.
- Criminal History Verification and Sex Offender Registry completed on_____.

Completed requirements signed off by_____.

Staff Member Date

INCIDENT REPORTING FORM
Olivet Congregational UCC

Your name:	
Name, date, and location of incident:	
Names of the people involved in the incident:	

Please give a brief description of the incident in the area provided and return form to church office manager.

Signature	
Today's Date	