

CHURCH PARTICIPATION and SEX OFFENDERS

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2016 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS REGARDING MINISTRY WITH SEX OFFENDERS

8014. Church Participation by a Registered Child Sex Offender

The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church declare: “We recognize that family violence and abuse in all its forms- verbal, psychological, physical, sexual- is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the Church to provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the victim. While we deplore the actions of the abuser, we affirm that person to be in God’s redeeming love” (Social Principles 161G [2012 Discipline])

Churches are faced with a dilemma in their attempt to be faithful to both of the last two sentences above. Assuring the safety of children in our care, our facilities and our programs is a sacred duty. We must weigh that duty in the balance with what often seems the conflicting value of participation in the life of the church by a convicted child abuser. Being part of a worshipping community is not the only way for a person to experience God’s redeeming love, but it is an important one.

Ongoing studies suggest a low likelihood that pedophiles can or will change. Without extensive professional treatment, virtually all child sexual offenders will re-offend. Repentance, prayer, and pastoral support, always in combination with lifelong professional treatment, can be crucial in helping to change behavior but, in themselves, offer slim hope of changing the behavior of perpetrators. Thorough awareness, careful planning and ongoing monitoring must accompany welcoming a child sex offender into a congregation.

A convicted and/or registered sex offender who wishes to be part of a church community should expect to have conditions placed on his or her participation. Indeed, offenders who have been in treatment and are truly committed to living a life free of further abuse will be the first to declare that, in order to accomplish that, they must structure a life that includes ongoing treatment, accountability mechanisms, and lack of access to children.

The following steps should be taken in order to be faithful to the "Social Principles" commitment both to safety from abuse and to ministry with abusers:

A. Local churches should:

- Hold discussions in the church council and in adult education settings about the possibility of facing the situation of a convicted sex offender returning to or joining the church. These discussions should be held and general agreements reached about actions to be taken should the church find itself in this circumstance;
- Develop a carefully constructed and openly negotiated covenant between the offender and the church community. The covenant should include agreements in the following areas: participation in a professional counseling program for at least the entire time of church membership or participation; adult "covenant partners" to accompany the offender while on church property or attending church activities; areas of church facilities that are "off limits"; restrictions on leadership in or on behalf of church; no role in church that includes contact with children or youth; any additional conditions for presence or participation; restrictions on use of church-related media; and
- Assure that the covenant is maintained by having it written and signed by the offender, the pastor(s) and the chairperson of the church council. While confidentiality of victims should be respected, the covenant should not be secret. Monitoring of the covenant should be taken seriously as a permanent responsibility.

GUIDELINES: THE UMC AND THE CHARISMATIC MOVEMENT 8015

B. Annual conferences should:

- Develop similar plans and covenants for situations in which a convicted and/or registered sexual offender is involved or seeks involvement in the conference, its activities or facilities;
- Include information about this concern and assistance with implementation of this resolution in its training and resourcing of clergy and local church lay leaders;

C. The General Board of Discipleship and the General Board of Global Ministries should:

- Cooperatively develop and promote a process and specific guidelines to assist congregations in the education and covenant tasks outlined above.

**GUIDELINES/ EXAMPLE COVENANT:
MINISTRY WITH SEX OFFENDER
(PREVIOUSLY CHARGED AND/OR CONVICTED)
(ADAPTED FROM WWW.UMSEXUALETHICS.ORG)**

Dear _____,

It has come to our attention that you have been charged with serious crimes against a child. The disposition of these charges warrant that we take measures to protect our young people, avoid any circumstances from which further accusations could occur, and eliminate concern among the congregation.

By taking the steps outlined below, we are hopeful that the pastor, the staff, and the congregation can be of assistance to you. We recognize that all of us are in need of the mercy and grace God offers to each of those God created and whom God loves.

In order to address the needs and concerns of the congregation, it is necessary to provide mandatory guidelines for your participation in the activities of _____ United Methodist Church. The desire is to make them workable for you and at the same time meet the concerns of the congregation. We are hopeful you will agree to these terms and abide by them. If you will not, then the strongest measures will be required.

The activities by which you are asked to agree and abide are as follows:

1. Any time you are on the campus(es) or at a ministry location of _____ UMC, you must be accompanied by a “buddy.” There will be at least three people who will be available to act as a buddy; their names and phone numbers are listed at the bottom of this letter. You must make arrangements with one of them prior to coming to the campus or ministry location on each occasion. One of these buddies must be present to meet you at your car and be in your company at all times when you are on the campus or ministry location of the church. This includes accompanying you to the restroom. The buddy will accompany you to your car at the time you leave the campus.
2. You will restrict your conversations to people who are the age of eighteen years or older.
3. You may not serve in any positions of leadership or teaching until further notice.
4. Beginning immediately, you will for the present, restrict your time at _____ UMC to services of worship only. After a few weeks we can determine whether attendance at other activities is warranted. If attendance at other activities is permitted, that attendance will be subject to all of the mandatory guidelines contained in this letter.

5. You agree to allow the pastor or their designee to contact any probation officer or other government official other than your attorney or healthcare provider, in order to obtain information about you and solicit their input as to how best to minister to you or to the congregation and community. By signing this letter you agree that this person may share any information with the pastor or designee, and you release that person and their organization or practice from any liability as a result of the releasing of the information. This authorization and release specifically includes any information, written or verbal, associated with medical, psychological, and psychiatric treatment which otherwise might be protected from disclosure by federal or state laws.

6. You agree to meet and consult with the pastor upon request for the purpose of providing assistance to you or for the protection and security of the congregation and the community.

7. You understand and agree that it is necessary for the staff and members of the congregation to be advised of your status and the guidelines agreed upon.

We trust you understand the reasons for these requirements. Please know that we and the staff of this congregation shall be praying for you. We look forward to what God will do in your life and in the lives of the members of this congregation as we confront this situation and seek God's direction.

Sincerely,

(pastor)

(lay leader or other official)

The buddies to call any time you plan to come to the campus of the church are:

1. _____ phone # _____

2. _____ phone # _____

3. _____ phone # _____

I have read the above letter and agree to abide by the mandatory guidelines in the letter.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

**GUIDELINES/ EXAMPLE COVENANT:
MINISTRY WITH SEX OFFENDER
(CHARGES CURRENTLY PENDING)
(ADAPTED FROM WWW.UMSEXUALETHICS.ORG)**

Dear _____,

It has come to our attention that you have been charged with serious crimes against a child. The disposition of these charges warrant that we take measures to protect our young people, avoid any circumstances from which further accusations could occur, and eliminate concern among the congregation.

By taking the steps outlined below, we are hopeful that the pastor, the staff, and the congregation can be of assistance to you. We recognize that all of us are in need of the mercy and grace God offers to each of those God created and whom God loves.

In order to address the needs and concerns of the congregation, it is necessary to provide mandatory guidelines for your participation in the activities of _____ United Methodist Church. The desire is to make them workable for you and at the same time meet the concerns of the congregation. We are hopeful you will agree to these terms and abide by them. If you will not, then the strongest measures will be required. The activities by which you are asked to agree and abide are as follows:

1. Any time you are on the campus(es) or ministry locations of _____ UMC, you must be accompanied by a “buddy.” There will be at least three people who will be available to act as a buddy; their names and phone numbers are listed at the bottom of this letter. You must make arrangements with one of them prior to coming to the campus or ministry locations on each occasion. One of these buddies must be present to meet you at your car and be in your company at all times when you are on the campus or ministry location of the church. This includes accompanying you to the restroom. The buddy will accompany you to your car at the time you leave the campus or ministry location.
2. You will restrict your conversations to people who are the age of eighteen years or older.
3. You may not serve in any positions of leadership or teaching until further notice.
4. Beginning immediately, you will for the present, restrict your time at _____ UMC to services of worship only. After a few weeks we can determine whether attendance at other activities is warranted. If attendance at other activities is permitted, that attendance will be subject to all of the mandatory guidelines contained in this letter.

5. You agree to allow the pastor or their designee to contact any probation officer or other government official other than your attorney or healthcare provider, in order to obtain information about you and solicit their input as to how best to minister to you or to the congregation and community. By signing this letter you agree that this person may share any information with the pastor or designee, and you release that person and their organization or practice from any liability as a result of releasing of the information. This authorization and release specifically includes any information, written or verbal, associated with medical, psychological, and psychiatric treatment which otherwise might be protected from disclosure by federal or state laws.

6. You agree to meet and consult with the pastor upon request for the purpose of providing assistance to you or for the protection and security of the congregation and the community.

7. You understand and agree that it is necessary for the staff and members of the congregation to be advised of your status and the guidelines agreed upon.

We trust you understand the reasons for these requirements. Please know that we and the staff of this congregation shall be praying for you. We look forward to what God will do in your life and in the lives of the members of this congregation as we confront this situation and seek God's direction.

Sincerely,

(pastor)

(lay leader or other official)

The buddies to call any time you plan to come to the campus of the church are:

1. _____ phone # _____

2. _____ phone # _____

3. _____ phone # _____

I have read the above letter and agree to abide by the mandatory guidelines in the letter.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

SAMPLE COVENANT FROM OHIO

STATEMENT OF UNDERSTANDING

As the congregation of _____UMC, we desire to welcome all who seek a deeper relationship with God and the accountability of other Christians. While none of us is in a position to “throw the first stone” (John 8:7) and all of us are sinners in a need of God’s grace, it has come to our attention that you are a registered sex offender. This is a matter that pushes us to be both redemptive yet cautious in our implementation of a plan that leads to the well-being of all.

The Church of Jesus Christ is called to offer hospitality to everyone, yet we also are challenged to create sanctuary and safety to the “least of these”, children, youth, vulnerable adults, and those who work with them. Abuse and the violation of another is sin and we will seek to protect all from these actions and their consequences. We will also do all we can to hold each other accountable for our actions which cause hurt and bring heartache to those we love. We believe in the good news of the gospel and the message of redemption that is offered to all. We believe in the power of Christ’s love to transform the deepest parts of hearts and to help us take ownership for what we have done and who we are becoming.

In accordance with our West Ohio Annual Conference’s policy, we write this “Statement of Understanding” between the parties of the _____ UMC and _____ for the protection of all involved.

- As part of your growth and penitence, you shall prepare and give to the _____ UMC pastor, _____ (pastor's name) a written acknowledgement and apology for the pain you have caused directly or indirectly through the actions that cause you to become a registered sex offender. There will be a time of prayer with you to confess that pain and to experience God’s willingness to forgive, to seek God’s presence and to in the future make better choices. Also, you are to share this document with your parole/probation officer.
- You are to sit down with the _____ UMC pastor on a monthly basis to talk about your life, faith, the progress you are making and the status of your adherence to these guidelines as long as you participate in the congregation’s life.
- You are to comply fully with all the restrictions and requirements places upon you as a result of any legal actions.
- You will not accept any leadership or representational positions within or on behalf of _____ UMC.

- The Administrative Board Chairperson And Pastor of _____UMC will identify at least two “covenant partners” for you. They will be adults of the same gender but not related to you. You cannot participate in any activities within the church or on behalf of church without at least one covenant partner being present with you. You are never to be in the_____UMC facilities or on the grounds by yourself without a covenant partner being with you.
- You are to have no relationship with any child, youth or vulnerable adult* in the congregation or participate or give leadership in any children, youth or vulnerable adult* ministry. (*as defined in the Church’s Ministry Safe policy)
- If you should decide to relocate your membership or attend another church, the_____UMC pastor will inform the leadership of that church of the conditions of these guidelines.
- You will show this covenant to your parole/probation officer and have that person initial a copy and the copy will be held in possession of the _____UMC pastor.
- Whenever there is a change of the _____UMC leadership-Pastor or Administrative Board Chairperson- the covenant shall be formally renewed with new signatures
- If the appointed covenant partners become unavailable, these person(s) shall immediately be replaced by action of the _____UMC pastor and Administrative Board Chairperson.

By signing below, all parties agree to adhere to all the guidelines outlined in this statement:

Perpetrator Signature: _____ Date: _____

Pastor Signature: _____ Date: _____

Adm. Board

Chairperson Signature: _____ Date: _____

SAMPLE COVENANT FROM A LOCAL CHURCH

As Christians, we are called to live according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. In keeping with our biblical heritage, the church's role is to be a place of sanctuary. Our Christian heritage comes from the Hebrew tradition and experience given to us in the Old Testament Scripture.

In that history, the place where people worshipped was a holy place, a sanctuary, where they were able to worship in safety and harmony.

(See Psalms 20:1-2 and Psalm 27:4-5)

With learning that you have been convicted of ____(name specific charges here)____ we are obligated to set some conditions as you choose to participate in the life of this church. Abusive behavior is a choice, and we care enough about you to hold you accountable for it. We, as a church, want to support you in your faith journey and in your transformation in your faith life. We want to assist you in growing in becoming a disciple of Christ. These conditions are given to you so that we can help you in the process.

- You may participate in worship in the sanctuary and in the adult church school class of your choice. You will use the most direct route from the parking lot to the main entrance of the church, not passing through any other parts of the church building.
- The administrative Board will identify at least two "covenant partners" for you.
- If at any time you are seen having contact with children or youth, we may choose to call the authorities and you will no longer be a part of the church.
- At church-sponsored functions for families, you may attend with, but at no time leave the immediate proximity of your family or one of your covenant partners.
- If you should decide to relocate your membership (or substantially attend another congregation), the church Administrative Board will seek to inform the leadership of that congregation of the contents of these guidelines.

Signed:_____ Date:_____

Signed:_____ Date:_____

Signed:_____ Date:_____

SAMPLE SEX OFFENDER COVENANT FROM LOCAL CHURCH

Dear _____, It has come to our attention that you have been convicted of a serious crime against a person. The disposition of this conviction warrants that we take measures to protect our young people, avoid any circumstances from which further accusations could occur, and eliminate concern among the congregation.

By taking the steps outlined below, we are hopeful that the pastor, the staff, and the congregation can be of assistance to you. We recognize that all of us are in need of the mercy and grace God offers to each of those God created and whom God loves.

In order to address the needs and concerns of the congregation, it is necessary to provide mandatory guidelines for your participation in activities at _____ United Methodist Church. The desire is to make them workable for you and at the same time meet the concerns of the congregation. We are hopeful you will agree to these terms and abide by them. If you will not, then stronger measures will be required.

The activities by which you are asked to agree and abide are as follows:

1. Anytime you are on the campus or ministry locations of _____ UMC you must be accompanied by a "buddy." There will be at least three people who will be available to act as a "buddy." The names and telephone numbers of those who have agreed to act as a buddy are listed at the bottom of this letter. You should make contact with one of them prior to coming to the campus or ministry location on each occasion. One of these buddies must be present to meet you at your car and be in your company at all times while you are on the campus of the church. This includes accompanying you to the restroom. The buddy will accompany you to your car at the time you leave the campus or ministry location.
2. You should restrict from having any conversation with people who are eighteen years of age or younger.
3. You cannot serve in any positions of leadership or teaching until further notice.

4. Beginning immediately you should, for the present, restrict your time on the campus or ministry location of _____ UMC for services of worship only. After a few weeks, we can determine whether attendance at other activities is warranted. If attendance at other activities is permitted, that attendance will be subject to all of the mandatory guidelines contained in this letter.

5. You agree to allow the pastor or her/his designee to contact any probation officer or other governmental official, other than your attorney or health care provider, in order to obtain information about you and to solicit their input as to how best to minister to you or to the congregation and community. By signing this letter, you agree that this person may share any information with the pastor or her/his designee, and you release that person and their organization or practice from any liability as a result of releasing this information. This authorization and release specifically include any information, written or verbal, associated with medical, psychological, and psychiatric treatment which otherwise might be protected from disclosure by federal or state laws.

6. You agree to meet and consult with the pastor upon her/his request for the purpose of providing assistance to you or for the protection and security of the congregation and the community.

7. You understand and agree that it is necessary for the staff and members of the congregation to be advised of your status and the guidelines agreed upon.

We trust you understand the reasons for these requirements. Please know that we and the staff of this congregation shall be praying for you. We look forward to what God will do in your life and in the lives of the members of this congregation as we confront this situation and seek God's direction.

Sincerely,

(pastor)

(lay leader or other official)

The buddies to call any time you plan to come to the campus of the church are:

1. _____ phone # _____

2. _____ phone # _____

3. _____ phone # _____

I have read the above letter and agree to abide by the mandatory guidelines in the letter.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Witness: _____ Date: _____

ARTICLE E EXCERPT: PARTICIPATION FOR PERPETRATORS OF ABUSE

(FROM CAROL J. ADAMS' "WHEN THE PERPETRATOR IS AMONG US")

For purposes of this guideline, Perpetrators of Abuse are those who have been convicted of or have confessed in a court of law to physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse of others. The congregation holds these guidelines as a minimum standard under which perpetrators of abuse shall have access to this Christian fellowship. Specifics of the nature, victims, and the perpetrator of the abuse shall determine unique definitions, interpretations, and enforcement parameters required each of individual perpetrator.

Message to the Perpetrator:

Abusive behavior is a choice, and we hold you accountable for it. We care enough about you to hold you accountable for it. There is a part of you that desires a better life and healthier relationships. We are an ally of that part of you that gravitates toward change, but we will continue to judge that part of you that resists change and hurts others. We care enough about all people who desire access to this Christian fellowship and establish these guidelines for your access so that everyone may reasonably expect freedom from direct and indirect hurt.

Our Christian fellowship with you is extended subject to the following:

1. As defined under these guidelines, you may personally participate in this Christian fellowship as it worships in the sanctuary. You shall seek and receive authorization for any other participation as outlined under interpretation, Monitoring, and Enforcement prior to such participation. At any other time, your sole access to church facilities is limited to the most direct route from the parking lot through the main entrance to only the church office, save those instances noted under C. below.

2. We expect you to comply fully with all restrictions and requirements placed upon you as a result of any legal actions. Any violations of these legal conditions shall be considered a violation of this covenant and may be cause of complete re-evaluation of the application of these guidelines. (In this regard, we request that you provide a copy of any judgements, conditions of parole, or other documents in which restrictions of or requirements of you as a result of convictions or judgements are stated. Due to the nature of your abusive behavior and what the Minister and the governing board of the church have come to know about the healing of perpetrators of such abuse, you shall continually participate in a professional counseling program, specifically addressing these behaviors, for the entire time you desire access to this Christian fellowship; further, we strongly suggest that you commit to a continual professional counseling program for yourself for life.)

3. We will stand by you and your family as you accept and experience the consequences of your behavior. Our Christian love for others requires that you be subject to the following:

A. You will not accept any leadership or representational position within or on behalf of First United Methodist Church. (This guideline shall include your not being a sole performer or member of a group performing or making presentations before said entities.)

B. In your pursuit of fellowship within this church, you will not enter or pass through any portions of the church facilities other than those along the most direct route from the parking lot to the sanctuary of the parking lot to your church school class of choice, save those instances noted und C. below. [You may not pass through portions of other facilities to move between the sanctuary an your current church school classroom. Should the location of your church school class change, you shall seek clarification of this guideline as outlined under Interpretation, Monitoring, and Enforcement below. This guideline, in essence, prevents you from going to restroom facilities; therefore, you should make whatever preparations are necessary in advance so as to not expect a need to access the restrooms within the church facilities. Should an emergency arise regarding restroom use, you shall be responsible for getting a buddy lined out in the letter you signed to be in your company.]

C. At church-sponsored functions for families, you may attend with, but at no time leave the immediate proximity of, your family. [This guideline, in essence, prevents you from going to facilities alone or with a family member; therefore, you and your family should make whatever preparations are necessary in advance so as to not expect a need for you to access the restrooms within the church facilities. Should an emergency arise regarding restroom use, you shall be responsible for getting a buddy lined out in the letter you signed to be in your company.]

D. At no time shall you deliberately place yourself or remain in any location in or around the church facilities that would cause undue distress to others participating in or seeking access to this Christian fellowship or its affiliations. [This guideline specifically excludes your being in common fellowship locations, or in or near the nursery, elementary, junior high, or high school facilities for any reason whatsoever.]

E. No less than once per calendar year, and as otherwise requested by the Minister, you shall meet with and report to the governing board of First United Methodist Church, regarding your status of adherence to these guidelines. See 2 below.

F. Be advised that should you decide to relocate your membership to or substantially attend another congregation during the period of your sentence, parole, or probation, the governing body of First United Methodist Church will, in response to their acknowledge Christian, ethical and moral duty, see, to inform the leadership of any such congregation of the factual conditions under which these guidelines were made applicable to you.

Your Christian Love for others should extend, as you are able and fully committed, to the following:

1. As a part of your growth and penitence, you shall prepare and deliver written acknowledgements of apologies for the pain caused directly or indirectly by your actions and defined in any judgements for abuse rendered against you. These several acknowledgments and apologies should be separately addressed to at least your victims, the families of your victims, your own family, and the members and supporters of First United Methodist Church. Requests for forgiveness should not be included in these documents, nor should you hold to expectations of immediate forgiveness from those whom they are delivered.
2. You shall prepare and deliver a written statement to the governing board of First United Methodist Church regarding your commitment to your healing and your pursuit of the healing process, including a detailed description of your past, current, and planned actions. See E. above

Interpretations, Monitoring, and Enforcement

Interpretations, monitoring, and enforcement of these guidelines shall fall primarily to the minister and governing body of First United Methodist Church and their designates. The Minister and the Chair of the governing body of First United Methodist Church, or a designate of either, shall be the sole contacts for your initiating any communications regarding the interpretation, monitoring, or enforcement of these guidelines.

NOTE from the Author:

This document may evoke at least two different responses: that it is too severe or that it is too lax in that it allows the perpetrator to rejoin the church community. The grace in this document and the efforts the church leaders put into it communicated that the perpetrator was welcome to return to the congregation. But the stringency of the document was necessary: this was the most caring thing the governing board could do because it allowed the person to continue to participate while indicating “this is the way you are welcome in the church.” The church board met with the perpetrator and his wife. They explained the purpose of the guidelines and worked their way through each specific item. The pastor told me that the document sounded much harsher as they read it aloud to the perpetrator. But he also reported that the perpetrator told him, “I have abused people in several churches, and this is the first church that as talked to me about it.”

At this time the wife is attending a different church, and it looks as though the perpetrator, when released from jail will no longer attend. These guidelines are for others to use and modify as needed. © 2010 FaithTrust Institute Page 5 of 6 Permission Granted to Duplicate When the Abuser Is Among Us: One Church’s Response to a Perpetrator
www.Faithtrustinstitute.org

© 2010 FaithTrust Institute Page 6 of 6 Permission Granted to Duplicate other churches as they struggle with responding to the perpetrators in their midst. After all, if we heed Jesus’ call, there is no such thing as a bystander’s church.

Carol J. Adams is the author of *Woman Battering* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press 1994).