

Wo Tokyo Union Church

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Safe Church Policy

I. POLICY APPLICATION

It is the policy of Tokyo Union Church (“TUC” or the “Church”) that all church members, church staff, nonmember employees and/or contractors, and volunteers of this congregation, maintain the strongest sense of integrity, safety, nurturing, and care involving all interactions with Children and Youth. This policy applies to all Tokyo Union Church-sponsored activities that involve Young People.

II. POLICY DISTRIBUTION

Copies of this Safe Church Policy shall be made available to the TUC Elders, Admin, staff, member and non-member church attendees, and volunteers. It shall also be made available to the public via the church website. It must be made available in the hiring process for Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Director(s) or Coordinator(s) of Youth and Children’s Ministry.

III. PURPOSE AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS

This Safe Church Policy and the TUC Safety Team have been created to reduce the risk of abuse and harm to Young People for the following reasons:

- Children and Youth are a gift from God and the Church has a divine mandate to provide for their safety and nurturing. The Strategic Pillars of Tokyo Union Church state that we are “Open to All.” The Church is called to be a place that reflects the openness and inclusion of Christ. In Matthew 19:14, Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me.” The Church is to be, at all levels of leadership and ministry, a place of safety and nurture reflective of the open arms of Christ.
- Any type of abuse involving Children or Youth has lasting and devastating effects on the life of the victim/survivor. It is the call of the Church to be a life-giving entity of Christ’s healing and hope for community and individuals, not an entity that brings harm and hurt.

- The whole Church suffers with the victim/survivor and his or her family when abuse and harm occurs. The Church is unable to do the full work of Christ, due to the hurt, pain, and distrust that accompanies abuse. The Church loses its credibility at all levels and suffers a considerable loss of integrity. More importantly, in instances of Child or Youth abuse within the Church, there is immeasurable spiritual, psychological, emotional, and physical harm perpetrated that woefully hinders God's call on the Church.
- Children and Youth are not only persons of care and service in the church, but they are also recipients of God's love and grace. Jesus exemplified this in the Gospel of Mark 10:15–16 when he urged his followers to receive the kingdom of God as a little child. And he specifically takes up the children into his arms and blesses them. So also the Church, as the body of Christ, is to be the presence of Christ's love, in the same way taking up all Children, Youth, and into its arms and blessing them; providing a safe, thriving, and nurturing environment in which to grow in every way.

IV. DEFINITIONS

The following definitions apply to their use in this particular policy:

Child

A Child is defined as a person between the ages of 0-11.

Youth

A Youth is defined as a person between the ages of 12-19.

Young Person

A Young Person is defined as a person between the ages of 0-19.

Child/Youth Worker

Any volunteer (including parent volunteers), paid staff or contracted worker who participates in any TUC-sponsored event or activity involving Young People.

Adult

Any person 20 years of age or older who is a TUC member, pastor, staff member, nonmember employee, nonmember attendee, contracted worker, or volunteer of this congregation.

Child/Youth Abuse

Any act or failure to act that results in physical, sexual, or psychological abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child or Youth.

- **Physical Abuse** is intentional bodily injury. Some examples include slapping, pinching, choking, kicking, shoving, shaking, or inappropriately using physical restraints.
- **Sexual Abuse** is non-consensual sexual contact. (All sexual contact between an Adult and a Young Person is considered non-consensual.) Examples include inappropriate touching, rape, incest, coerced nudity, indecent exposure, and sharing explicit photographs.
- **Psychological Abuse** is a pattern of behavior that impairs a person's emotional development or sense of self-worth. Examples include constant criticism, intimidation, coercion, ridiculing, belittling, shunning, withholding love as a form of punishment, use of silence to control behavior, and yelling or swearing which results in mental distress.
- **Neglect** is the failure of an Adult to provide for a Child or Youth's basic needs. Examples include failure to provide food, or appropriate supervision, failure to provide necessary medication, or the failure to attend to a Child or Youth's emotional needs.
- **Exploitation** of a Young Person occurs when his/her body, resources, or income is used for sexual purposes or economic profit.

Bullying

Bullying is an ongoing and deliberate misuse of power in relationships through repeated verbal, physical and/or social behavior that intends to cause physical, social and/or psychological harm. It can involve an individual or a group misusing their power, or perceived power, over one or more persons who feel unable to stop it from happening.

Self-Harm

Self-harm is the act of purposely harming oneself. Examples include cutting, burning, or starving oneself or unnecessarily withholding basic bodily needs.

Suicidal Ideation

Suicidal ideation is the inner process of planning or thinking about suicide or wanting to take one's own life.

Harm

Harm is an umbrella term that refers to any social, physical, spiritual, or psychological distress or injury experienced by a person. Harm can be done by a person or group of people and it is not

always intentional. It refers in particular to the experience of the one who has been hurt, regardless of the intention or knowledge of the perpetrator.

V. GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Whenever possible, all three guiding principles of accountability, visibility, and appropriate use and balance of power shall govern our behavior in interactions with Youth and Children. When one principle is not possible to achieve because of circumstances outside an Adult's control, the other two principles are of utmost importance.

The principles apply to relationships with Youth and Children both at TUC and at all TUC-sponsored activities. TUC staff members and Child/Youth workers are bound by these principles at all times.

A. Accountability

Scriptural Basis

"Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ." (Eph. 4:15)

Question: Do others know what I am doing?

Examples

Any Adult who is meeting with a Youth or Child associated with TUC (who is not their own Child or relation) must disclose the meeting and reason for meeting with the parents of the Young Person, a TUC staff member, or a Child/Youth worker.

Digital communications between an Adult and a Youth or Child associated with TUC should include either 1) a group of 3 or more Youth, 2) a parent or another Adult CC'd on the communication, 3) screenshots saved and shared with another Adult.

B. Visibility

Scriptural Basis

"If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live out the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another." (1 John 1:6-7)

Question: Is it possible for others to see me?

Examples

One-to-one meetings between an Adult and a Youth or Child associated with TUC should take place in public or visible areas with windows and appropriate lighting.

Sunday gathering rooms for Youth and Children should provide visibility through door windows and/or working security cameras. Online Sunday gathering programs should be recorded and documented.

C. Appropriate Use and Balance of Power

Scriptural Basis

“Do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.” (Eph 6:4)

Question: Do Children/Youth feel safe in my presence?

Examples

TUC Youth and Children are brought in as active participants in their own learning at every opportunity. Child/Youth workers strive to be facilitators rather than lecturers.

Adults should use appropriate language, tone, and posture towards Youth and Children to ensure that they feel safe and comfortable in their presence.

VI. SECONDARY PRINCIPLES

A. Appropriate Physical Contact

As Adults, we do not get to decide where our bodies are in proximity to a Young Person's body unless they are in immediate danger. To that end, physical contact will be in response to the need of the Child, not the need of the Adult. Physical contact should be:

- Open and public
- Initiated by the Youth or Child rather than the Adult
- Should only take place with the Youth or Child's permission and be respectful of their resistance

Actions that are **unacceptable** and may be considered abuse include, but are not limited to:

- Touching buttocks, chests, genital areas, or thighs except to keep young Children clean or healthy
- Any form of affection that is resisted or unwanted by the Child

- Any behavior that could be interpreted as sexual in nature, including flirtatious or seductive looks
- Assisting the Youth/Child with anything of a personal nature that they are able to do themselves
- Kisses or tickling

Full-body hugs should be avoided if at all possible. High fives, fist bumps, hand hugs, and side hugs are best. Never pull a Child into your lap. If they climb into your lap, encourage them to sit next to you instead. This is fairer to other Children and safer for the Child.

B. Safe Communication

All verbal, non-verbal and digital communication with students, including e-mail, texts, and all forms of social media, will be guided by principles of professionalism and integrity and conducted with caution and discretion.

Appropriate behaviors include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Praise and/or positive reinforcement when used consistently and equally for all Children and Youth.
- Emails sent to Youth or Children and CC'd to a parent or another Adult.
- Messages on social media platforms sent to groups of 3 or more Youth or including another Adult.

Inappropriate behaviors include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Use of profanity, sexual innuendo, or risqué jokes.
- Private messaging via text, social media, or online gaming platforms except in specific, approved situations, guided by the other principles of this policy.
- Bullying, yelling, threatening, ridiculing, shaming, or making humiliating or degrading comments.

Examples

If a Youth or Child privately messages a Child/Youth worker via a social media platform, that communication should be documented and shared with a parent, Adult, or other Child/Youth worker.

C. Building Relationships

All relationships should be wholesome, above reproach, and conducted in a way that honors God. Adults should avoid favoring particular Children/Youth to the exclusion of others or excluding Children/Youth in a derogatory or embarrassing way in the presence of others.

The following contact/relationships with a Child/Youth are considered **unacceptable**:

- Intimate contact/relationships
- Romantic contact/relationships
- Sexual contact/relationships
- Inappropriate emotional contact/relationships (i.e. flirting, favoring one particular Child or Youth, coercing emotional vulnerability)

D. Spiritual Safety

At Tokyo Union Church we are Open to All. This means that Child/Youth workers are responsible to maintain theological openness in their communication with Young People in order to respect and cultivate the great diversity of our community. Above all, the dignity and humanity of all people as made in the image of God must be upheld in all discussions.

Example

When presenting information on a topic of disagreement like the subjects above, effort should be made to present various viewpoints fairly. A Youth/Child worker may explain their own view, but should not present it as the only “correct” view. Child/Youth workers should engage Young People in sharing their perspective, tradition, or experiences on such topics and bring in the perspectives of other Child/Youth workers when appropriate.

E. Restorative Justice

When a Youth or Child has done harm, participated in bullying, or disciplinary measures are needed, Adults and Child/Youth workers should use a restorative justice model. Restorative justice focuses on righting a wrong committed and repairing harm done. It is meant to transform the heart by providing healthy strategies for dealing with difficult emotions and situations. The victim and the wrongdoer are given the opportunity to share how they were harmed, as victims, or how they will work to amend the harm caused, as wrongdoers.

Appropriate restorative practices include, but are not limited to:

- Taking a Young Person aside to better understand the reason for the harmful or inappropriate behavior
- Providing space and time for young people to cool down during difficult times to consider positive responses to problems
- If someone has been harmed, requesting feedback from the victim about how the wrongdoer can resolve and repair the harm done

- Allowing Young People to create and agree to group guidelines

Correction of harm or harmful behavior should be done respectfully with the intent to redirect and restore rather than punish. Disciplinary actions that are considered **abuse** include, but are not limited to:

- Hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, or any behavior that assaults a Child; pushing or restraining a Child outside the goals of protecting them or others from danger
- Degrading, ridiculing, name calling, yelling at a Child or using other forms of hostile language
- Shaming, humiliation, cruelty
- Forcing a Youth or Child to stay in a room alone or withholding food, water or shelter

VII. SCREENING AND TRAINING OF STAFF AND CHILD/YOUTH WORKERS

A. Volunteers

All volunteers regularly participating in activities for Youth or Children must first be screened and trained as follows:

- They must fill out a Child/Youth Worker Application
- They must complete an interview with the Director(s) or Coordinator(s) of Youth and Children's Ministry and the Elder of Youth and Young Adults Ministries
- They must provide two character references:
 - One personal reference (cannot be a family member)
 - One reference from a pastor or ministry leader familiar with their volunteer experience.
- Regular volunteers must participate in the annual safety training led by the Director(s) or Coordinator(s) of Youth and Children's Ministry twice a year.
- Volunteers must review and sign the Code of Conduct annually

All non-regular volunteers (a parent attending a Youth trip, for example) must also sign the Code of Conduct before participating in Youth or Children's ministry activities. It is not necessary for them to complete an application or interview as is required for regular volunteers. Training may be required for certain events.

B. TUC Paid Staff or Contracted Workers

This policy must be included in the contracts of the Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Director(s) or Coordinator(s) of Youth and Children's Ministry. The Code of Conduct must be signed annually by

all paid TUC staff and contracted workers, regardless of the relation of their work to Youth or Children.

TUC Staff who work with Youth or Children must undergo additional training. This includes the Associate Pastor, the Director(s) or Coordinator(s) of Youth and Children's Ministry, and any other paid full-time or part-time staff or interns. This training includes the following:

- CPR/First Aid Certification
- Annual safety policy training
- At least one annual training seminar as assigned by the TUC Safety Team

VIII. CODE OF CONDUCT FOR STAFF AND CHILD/YOUTH WORKERS

The Code of Conduct must be reviewed and signed annually by all Child/Youth Workers, TUC Staff, and members of the church council. It must include the Primary and Secondary Principles, but may include additional requirements as necessary.

IX. MANDATED REPORTERS

Child/Youth workers, members of TUC staff, Council members, and pastors are considered mandated reporters. Any such person must report within 24 hours if they suspect abuse (see Appendix Section C below), receive a report or disclosure from a Child or Youth of abuse or harm, or witness an incident of abuse or harm. Any such person must also report instances of bullying, self-harm, or suicidal ideation.

X. REPORTING AND RESPONSE PIPELINE

TUC will publicize the process for reporting instances of abuse or harm to the congregation and the public. Anyone who has knowledge of abuse or harm may report it to the Safe Church Reporting Form. Any Child or Youth who suspects or has knowledge of any type of abuse or harm of a Young Person is invited and encouraged to share that information with a Child/Youth worker.

Once an incident has been reported, it will be reviewed by the TUC Safety Team. The team will review the report within 24 hours and will develop a plan of response.

Any reported incident involving physical or sexual abuse or neglect must be reported to the relevant Japanese authorities, such as the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, immediately.

A Report is Filed



TUC Safety Team convenes within 24 hours



The filer of the report will be contacted and a response plan will be created and appropriate authorities notified

The TUC Safety Team will consist of at least three members including the Director(s) or Coordinator(s) of Youth and/or Children's ministry, the Elder of Youth and Young Adult Ministries, and the Associate Pastor or the Pastor. The team may also include a member of the Admin team or an assigned congregant in place of any of these members as needed. At least two members of the TUC Safety Team must undergo annual training twice a year in accordance with the Child Safety and Protection Network. The TUC Safety Team is responsible to:

- Meet within 24 hours to address any reports of harm or abuse.
- Immediately provide for the safety of the alleged victim(s) involved.
- Immediately forward reports of physical or sexual abuse or neglect to Japanese authorities. It is not for the TUC Safety team to determine the validity of these reports.
- Hold a team meeting at least quarterly to ensure the maintenance of the Safety Policy and report on any safety concerns.
- Review and update the Safety Policy annually.

XI. POLICY REVIEW PROCESS

This Safe Church policy must be reviewed and updated annually by the TUC Safety Team. All changes made to the policy must be presented and approved by the Church Council. Copies must be kept of all past versions of the policy.

XII. CONFIDENTIALITY

Reports sent to the TUC Safety Team are confidential. Information about these reports will be shared only with parties whose knowledge of the event is essential to its resolution or the safety/care of the victim(s). The TUC Safety team must report all known details to Japanese authorities in regards to reports of sexual or physical abuse or neglect.

APPENDIX

A. Building Safety and Accessibility

The TUC property must provide ample safety for ministries involving Youth and Children. An annual review of building safety must take place in conjunction with the TUC Safety Team and representatives of Property and Use.

Necessary building safety measures include:

- Working lighting in all rooms where programs are being held
- Working fire alarms
- Up to date first aid kits on every floor
- Up to date emergency supplies on every floor
- Unobstructed fire escape routes
- Either 1) a working camera or 2) unlocked, windowed doors in all spaces where Youth and Children's programs are being held
- A working elevator that can access all floors
- Unobstructed walkways on all floors where Youth and Children may be present
- Proper locks on doors or entryways that lead to places that are dangerous for Children

B. Use of TUC facilities by outside parties

Any church group, wedding, or event that takes place at TUC but is not a TUC sponsored event is responsible to abide by building safety guidelines. TUC is not responsible for providing Child care or safety provisions for such groups.

C. Recognizing Abuse

The information in this section has been taken with permission from the Child Welfare Information Gateway. It is available <https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubPDFs/signs.pdf>. While some of these signs alone may not evidence abuse, it is important for Child/Youth workers and all Adults in our congregation to be watchful for these signs.

Consider the possibility of physical abuse when the Child or Youth:

- Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an uncharacteristic absence from church activities
- Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home

- Shrinks at the approach of Adults
- Reports injury by a parent or another Adult caregiver
- Parent or caregiver offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for a Young Person's injury
- Parent or caregiver describes the Young Person as "evil," or in some other very negative way
- Parent or caregiver uses harsh physical discipline with the Young Person

Consider the possibility of neglect when the Child or Youth:

- Begs for or steals food or money
- Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- Is consistently dirty
- Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- Abuses alcohol or other drugs
- States that there is no one at home to provide care
- Parent or caregiver appears to be indifferent to the Young Person
- Parent or caregiver seems apathetic or depressed
- Parent or caregiver behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
- Parent or caregiver Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

Consider the possibility of sexual abuse when the Child or Youth:

- Has difficulty walking or sitting
- Uncharacteristically refuses to participate in physical activities
- Reports nightmares or bedwetting
- Experiences a sudden change in appetite
- Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
- Runs away
- Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another Adult caregiver
- Parent or caregiver is unduly protective of the Young Person or severely limits their contact with other Young People, especially of the opposite sex
- Parent or caregiver Is secretive and isolated
- Parent or caregiver is jealous or controlling with family members

Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment when the Child or Youth:

- Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- Is either inappropriately Adult (parenting other Children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)

- Is delayed in physical or emotional development
- Has attempted suicide
- Reports a lack of attachment to the parent
- Parent or caregiver constantly blames, belittles, or berates the Child or Youth
- Parent or caregiver Is unconcerned about the Child and refuses to consider offers of help for the Young Person's problems
- Parent or caregiver overtly rejects the Child or Youth