

Ivanhoe Congregational Church  
United Church of Christ

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Putting down roots, growing in faith, and reaching out in love.  
Welcoming, Caring, Engaging



### **Safe Church Policy**

To Members of the Congregation,

As Christians, we are called to love, care for, protect, and provide places of justice and hospitality for all persons. Churches are to be holy places of sanctuary where all can gather for worship, study, fellowship, and service with the assurance that they are safe and secure in the community of faith. With these commitments in mind, Ivanhoe Congregational Church has created this Safe Church Policy.

Many of us were totally unaware at our baptism, of what our parents and the surrounding community were doing for us: making us full members of God's faithful household. In witnessing the baptism of others, we are reminded of what was promised to us and what we, in turn, are promising to others. In the sacrament of baptism, the question is posed; "Do you who witness and celebrate this sacrament, promise your love, support, and care to the one about to be baptized, as they live and grow in Christ?" And with honesty and intention, we promise our love, support, and care.

Why a Safe Church Policy? In short, it's our job as disciples. The Safe Church Committee has created these policies in accordance with the United Church of Christ Insurance Board – "Partners in Protection" guidelines. With our call to create safe spaces, the congregation is committed to an organized and thorough process of volunteer/staff recruitment through the use of uniform policies and forms. For all our employees, leaders, and volunteers – we are aware that such a process asks for your extra commitment and the sharing of personal information. Please be assured that all the information provided will be kept in strict confidentiality, and will be seen only by the Pastor and the appropriate Board Chair.

In this spirit, thank you for being a partner in ministry with our youth and adults.

Peace in Christ,  
Ivanhoe Safe Church Committee

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## **Statement of Policy**

As a community of Christian faith, Ivanhoe Congregational Church is committed to creating and maintaining programs, facilities, and a community in which members, friends, Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers can worship, learn, and work together in an atmosphere free from all forms of discrimination, harassment, exploitation, or intimidation. The congregation of Ivanhoe Congregational Church supports the principles of a Safe Church Policy, which includes individual responsibility to fulfill the highest standards set by our Christian faith. Ivanhoe Congregational Church strongly opposes and prohibits sexual exploitation, sexual harassment, or any form of exploitation or abuse of others regardless of age, sex, sexual orientation, sexual identification, or mental capacity.

Ivanhoe Congregational Church is committed to being a caring and nurturing faith community. We believe that all persons are to be treated with respect and dignity, and we believe that we have a special responsibility to protect our youth and adults by providing safe and healthy environments in which everyone can learn and experience God's love.

It is the responsibility of Ivanhoe Congregational Church to provide the necessary education and training to all who are employed, lead or volunteer to do the work of the church, and it is the responsibility of those employees, leaders, and volunteers to be adequately prepared by completing all required training. It is the intention of the church to take action in an attempt to prevent and correct behavior that is contrary to this policy and, if necessary, to discipline those persons who violate this policy.

Every member of the congregation, whether authorized Clergy, employee, leader, volunteer, or parent has a role to lead those who look to them for guidance. We ask every member of the congregation to support this policy by committing to the covenant of nurture and care, and by demonstrating good conduct and personal behaviors that are consistent with our Christian values.

This policy shall be administered by our Pastor and the Chair of the Ivanhoe Christian Education Board.

## General Definitions

1. Physical abuse is any intentional act causing injury or trauma to another person.
2. Sexual abuse is any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a youth and an adult, between two youth, or between two adults. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or the youth.
3. Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a youth or adult that results in an observable and material impairment in growth, development, or psychological functioning.
4. Neglect is the failure to provide for a youth or adult's basic needs, or the failure to protect a youth or adult from harm.
5. A Minor is anyone under the age of 18 (referred to as Youth throughout this policy).
6. A Vulnerable Adult is anyone aged 18 or over, who is, or may be, in need of community care services by reason of mental or other disability, age, or illness, and who is, or may be, unable to take care of him/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against harm or exploitation.
7. Bullying is seeking to harm, intimidate, or coerce someone perceived as vulnerable.
8. Mandatory Reporters are those persons required by the State of Illinois law to report suspected abuse to police or child welfare agencies.
9. Authorized Clergy includes any person who is admitted to ministry by Ivanhoe Congregational Church, who serve the congregation in any capacity whether called as Pastor or serving in a retired, emeritus, administrative, or volunteer capacity.

## Code of Conduct for Working with Youth and Adults

The following Code of Conduct is intended to assist Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers in making decisions about interactions with youth and adults. Ivanhoe Congregational Church provides our youth and adults with the highest quality services available. We are committed to creating an environment for youth and adults that is safe, nurturing, empowering, and promotes growth and success.

No form of abuse will be tolerated, and confirmed abuse will result in immediate dismissal from Ivanhoe Congregational Church. All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with youth or adults, or allegations of abuse, will be taken seriously. Ivanhoe Congregational Church will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made that require investigation.

The Code of Conduct for Youth and Adults outlines specific expectations of Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers as we strive to accomplish our mission together.

1. Youth and adults will be treated with respect at all times.
2. Youth and adults will be treated fairly regardless of race, sex, age, or religion.
3. Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers will adhere to the uniform standard of displaying affection as outlined by Ivanhoe Congregational Church.
4. Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers will avoid affection with youth and adults that cannot be observed by others.
5. Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers will adhere to uniform standards of appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions as outlined by Ivanhoe Congregational Church.
6. Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers will not stare at, or comment, on youth and adult bodies.
7. Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers will not have sexually oriented materials, including printed or online pornography on Ivanhoe Congregational Church property.
8. Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers will comply with Ivanhoe Congregational Church's policies regarding interactions with youth and adults outside of our programs.
9. Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers will not engage in inappropriate electronic communication with youth and adults.
10. Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers will not abuse youth and adults in anyway including, but not limited to, the following:
  - a. *Physical abuse*: hitting, spanking, shaking, slapping, unnecessary restraints;
  - b. *Verbal abuse*: degrading, threatening, cursing;
  - c. *Sexual abuse*: inappropriate touching, exposing oneself, sexually oriented conversations;
  - d. *Mental abuse*: shaming, humiliation, cruelty; and
  - e. *Neglect*: withholding food, water, shelter.

11. **Bullying** - Ivanhoe Congregational Church will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take any steps needed to eliminate such behavior.

Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

- a. Physical bullying – when one person engages in 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 hurtful names.
- 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 in order 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 exposure of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all youth and adults, Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers.

12. **Mandatory Reporting** – All Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers must follow state-specific mandatory reporting requirements. They should be aware of, and understand, their legal and ethical obligation to recognize and report suspicions of mistreatment and abuse. They will:

- a. Be familiar with the symptoms of child abuse and neglect, including physical, sexual, verbal, and emotional abuse.
- b. Know and follow organization policies and procedures that protect youth against abuse.
- c. Report suspected child abuse or neglect to the appropriate authorities as required by state-mandated reporter laws.
- d. Follow up to ensure appropriate action has been taken.

As identified mandated reporters by the State of Illinois, all Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers of Ivanhoe Congregational Church who work with our youth are required by law to adhere to the following process for reporting the alleged abuse:

### **Illinois Department of Children & Family Services Manual for Mandated Reporters (Revised 2020)**

Accessed at [https://www2.illinois.gov/dcf/safekids/reporting/Documents/cfs\\_1050-21\\_mandated\\_reporter\\_manual.pdf](https://www2.illinois.gov/dcf/safekids/reporting/Documents/cfs_1050-21_mandated_reporter_manual.pdf)

Mandated reporters are required to call the Illinois Child Abuse Hotline when they have reasonable cause to believe that a child known to them in their professional or official capacity may be an abused or neglected child. The Hotline worker will determine if the information given by the reporter meets the legal requirements to initiate an investigation.

#### **Criteria needed for a child abuse or neglect investigation:**

- The alleged victim is a child under the age of 18.
- The alleged perpetrator is a parent, guardian, foster parent, relative caregiver, paramour, any individual residing in the same home, any person responsible for the child's welfare at the time of the alleged abuse or neglect, or any person who came to know the child through an official capacity or position of trust (for example: health care professionals, educational personnel, recreational supervisors, members of the clergy, volunteers or support personnel) in settings where children may be subject to abuse and neglect.
- There must be an incident of harm or a set of circumstances that would lead a reasonable person to suspect that a child was abused or neglected.

#### **Information the reporter should have ready to give to the Hotline:**

- Names, birth dates (or approximate ages), races, genders, etc. for all adult and child subjects.
- Addresses for all victims and perpetrators, including current location.
- Information about the siblings or other family members, if available.
- Specific information about the abusive incident or the circumstances contributing to risk of harm—for example, when the incident occurred, the extent of the injuries, how the child says it happened, and any other pertinent information.

**If this information is not readily available, the reporter should not delay a call to the hotline.**

If your report is accepted, DCFS child protection specialists will begin an investigation to determine the occurrence of abuse or neglect. You will be informed of the investigation results, and you may request a review of “unfounded” investigations if there is important information that was overlooked during the investigation. If the Hotline does not accept your report, you may ask to speak with a Hotline supervisor and have your information reassessed.

## **Illinois Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-25-ABUSE (1-800-252-2873)**

The Hotline operates 24 hours per day, 365 days a year. Reporters should be prepared to provide phone numbers where they may be reached throughout the day in case the Hotline must call back for more information.

If your call is not an emergency, please submit your report online through our online reporting system at <https://dcfonlinereporting.dcf.illinois.gov/>

Ivanhoe Congregational Church will cooperate fully with authorities to investigate all cases of alleged abuse. Any Clergy, employee, leader, or volunteer shall cooperate to the fullest extent possible in any external investigation by outside authorities or internal investigation conducted by the organization or persons given investigative authority by the organization. Failure to cooperate fully may be grounds for termination.



## Policies for Working with Youth

Policies define the bandwidth of acceptable behavior in an organization. Because offenders often violate policies to gain access to youths, when staff know and understand policies, they can identify, interrupt, and report policy violations. Simply interrupting a policy violation can prevent a false allegation of abuse or put an offender on notice that no one works in private, the rules apply to everyone, and violations will be detected. The following policies will be adhered to by all Ivanhoe Congregational Church’s Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers who work with our youth.

1. Background checks and Training Modules – all Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers who work with Ivanhoe Congregational Church youth are required to complete an “Application and Covenant for Primary Screening” form (pages 15-17), a background check, and the yearly assigned training modules.
2. New members – new members who wish to work with our youth, are required to be part of the Ivanhoe Congregational Church worshipping community for at minimum – 6 months.
3. Two-adult rule – all youth in educational and fellowship programs, shall be under the care and supervision of two adults who have completed background checks and training modules. One of the adults must be a member of the Christian Education Board.
  - a. No adult will put themselves in a compromising position by being alone with a youth.
  - b. If a high school-age or middle school-age youth is volunteering with younger youth, there must always be an adult present.
  - c. No adult will give individual gifts to a minor child.
4. Physical contact - Ivanhoe Congregational Church encourages appropriate physical contact with youths and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact.

Appropriate Physical Contact	Inappropriate Physical Contact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Side hugs</li> <li>• Shoulder-to-shoulder hugs</li> <li>• Pats on the shoulder or back</li> <li>• Handshakes</li> <li>• High-fives and hand slapping</li> <li>• Pats on the head when culturally acceptable</li> <li>• Touching hands, shoulders, and arms</li> <li>• Arms around shoulders</li> <li>• Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Full-frontal hugs</li> <li>• Kisses</li> <li>• Showing affection while in isolated spaces</li> <li>• Lap sitting</li> <li>• Wrestling</li> <li>• Piggyback rides</li> <li>• Tickling</li> <li>• Allowing a youth to cling to an adult’s leg</li> <li>• Any type of massage given by, or to, a youth</li> <li>• Touching bottom, chest, or genital area</li> </ul>

5. Verbal interactions – all Ivanhoe Congregational Church Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to youth in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with youth. Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with youth.

Appropriate Verbal Interaction	Inappropriate Verbal Interaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive reinforcement</li> <li>• Appropriate jokes</li> <li>• Encouragement</li> <li>• Praise</li> <li>• Only group chat electronic communications between adults and minors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Name-calling</li> <li>• Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving youth in the problems or issues of Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers</li> <li>• Secrets</li> <li>• Cursing</li> <li>• Off-color or sexual jokes</li> <li>• Shaming or belittling</li> <li>• Derogatory remarks</li> <li>• Harsh language that might frighten, threaten, or humiliate youth</li> <li>• Derogatory remarks about the youth or his/her family</li> <li>• No individual social media communications between adults and minors</li> </ul>

6. Bathroom supervision of young children – When possible, two adults will escort a young child to the bathroom and will wait outside the room, with the door closed, while the child is inside. If it is not possible to have two adults accompany the child, then an adult and a peer “buddy” will escort the child to the restroom and will wait outside the room until the child finishes.
7. The use of drugs, tobacco, vaping devices or vaping products, or alcohol is prohibited at all Ivanhoe Congregational Church youth gatherings and events whether taking place on church grounds or at an off-grounds church-sponsored event.
8. No Ivanhoe Congregational Church Clergy, employee, leader, or volunteer may transport our younger children to, or from, church gatherings or events. For older youth (high school and middle school), attending field trips, mission trips, or UCC conferences or conventions, youth will always be transported in groups and they must have written parental permission. All drivers for youth events must be 21 years of age and a maximum of 70 years of age; must have a valid IL driver’s license; must have no record of convictions within the past five years for driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol, driving with a suspended or revoke license for reckless driving; and must complete a Vehicle Transportation Form. All drivers shall ensure seat belt usage is strictly followed.
9. Overnight rules for older youth – any, and all, adult chaperones supervising overnight stays at our church building, or on church-sponsored field trips, must be approved by the Pastor and the Chair of the Christian Education Board. At least one adult male will dorm with boys

and one adult female with girls. Should these adults be husband and wife, a third adult needs to be present. A signed written consent form which lists the names and contact information of all chaperones is required.

## **Screening, Education, and Training for Working with Youth**

The mission of Ivanhoe Congregation Church is first to prevent abuse of youth and adults. We wish to identify and nurture a Safe Church Policy that leads and guides us through a thorough screening and training process for all Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers. To fulfill this obligation, all Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers are required to complete the following specific program of screening and training before participating in any gatherings, activities, or programs with Ivanhoe Congregational Church youth.

- a. "Application and Covenant for Primary Screening" form.
- b. Review the Ivanhoe Safe Church Policy for Working with Youth.
- c. Review the DCFS Mandated Reporter guidelines in the Ivanhoe Safe Church Policy.
- d. Complete all yearly-assigned Training Modules.

Fulfillment of all screening and training requirement shall be documented by the Pastor and the Chair of the Christian Education Board.

## **Response Plan for Adults**

1. Procedures for forming a response team to handle concerns and complaints for adults
  - a. A response team with no fewer than two members – one male and one female, will be established by the Pastoral Relations Committee to address the concerns or complaints.
  - b. One member of the response team will take on the duties of first respondent.
2. In cases of alleged sexual exploitation or harassment of an adult
  - a. The person having concerns can attempt to resolve the matter directly with the individual.
  - b. If an informal resolution of the concern or complaint does not seem wise, appropriate, possible, or does not succeed – the person raising concerns may institute formal proceeding. At this point the Pastor will offer pastoral care to all those included in the investigation. The proceedings will include the following steps:
    - The response team will gather statements, or other information, from the individuals involved in the harassment or exploitation or other incident of concern, and from others who may have pertinent information.
    - The response team and Pastor will make determinations and take appropriate actions to resolve the matter.

- c. Finding that sexual exploitation or harassment (or other serious misconduct covered by the policy) has occurred – the Ivanhoe Congregational Church – Church Council will be called upon to take action, which may include one or more of the following:
  - Formal reprimand with defined expectations for changed behavior, with possible public notification.
  - Dismissal from employment, leadership, or volunteer position.
3. When concerns are raised about an authorized minister of the United Church of Christ (ordained, commissioned, licensed), whether an employee or volunteer - the response team will notify the Association Minister of the Fox Valley of the Association of the Illinois Conference of the United Church of Christ. Ivanhoe Congregational Church will cooperate fully in any procedures of the United Church of Christ related to ministerial authorization while retaining the right and responsibility to make decisions regarding employment and volunteer ministries within Ivanhoe Congregational Church as it determines.
4. Preliminary response of the response team
  - All allegations will be taken seriously.
  - Response to allegations will be handled with due respect for everyone’s privacy and confidentiality.
  - Care and safety of alleged complainants (and family) will be the first priority.

## **Response Plan for Youth**

For any suspected abuse involving youth, all Ivanhoe Congregational Church Clergy, employees, leaders, and volunteers are identified by the State of Illinois as Mandated Reporters and must follow the procedures for reporting the suspected abuse to DCFS found on page 7 of the Ivanhoe Congregational Church Safe Church Policy.

## **Policy Relating to Sex Offenders**

Convicted sex offenders, registered sex offenders, or those who have been convicted of a sex-related offense, who wish to participate in the life of the church by attending worship, attending church functions, as a church member, or as a visitor, must identify themselves to the Ivanhoe Congregational Church Clergy prior to participating. A limited access agreement will be required. The Ivanhoe Church Clergy are responsible for the enforcement of this policy.

## **Excluding Behaviors Harmful to the Life of the Church**

Ivanhoe Congregational Church reserves the right to require a limited access agreement of any individual who has exhibited behavior that is not welcome in the life of the church, in the sole discretion of the Church Council. The church also reserves the right to exclude any person from the property or events of the church, or membership in the church, who has exhibited behavior that, in the sole discretion of the Church Council, is harmful to the life of the church.

## **References**

*SafeConduct Policy & Procedure Template, Insurance Board, June 2017 edition.*

<https://www.insuranceboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Safe-Conduct-Policy-Template.pdf>

Illinois Department of Children & Family Services Manual for Mandated Reporters (Revised 2020)

[https://www2.illinois.gov/dcms/safekids/reporting/Documents/cfs\\_1050-21\\_mandated\\_reporter\\_manual.pdf](https://www2.illinois.gov/dcms/safekids/reporting/Documents/cfs_1050-21_mandated_reporter_manual.pdf)

## **Harmonization**

If there is to be an ongoing relationship with a Youth Group from another church, it is intended that this policy will be harmonized with the policy of that Church. That is to say, all sections that cover Codes of Behavior and a Response Plan need to be similar. Any changes made in either policy need to be included, or noted, in the other.

## **Addendum Process**

Any change made to this policy will be approved by the Ivanhoe Congregational Church - Safe Church Committee and the Ivanhoe Congregational Church – Church Council.

This version of the Ivanhoe Safe Church Policy was approved by the Church Council on February 21, 2023.



**Application and Covenant for Primary Screening**  
**Safe Church Policy – Ivanhoe Congregational Church**

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of youth. It is being used to assist this church in providing a safe and secure environment for those youth who participate in our gatherings, activities, and programs, both on and off church grounds. Information provided will be kept strictly confidential and shared only among ministerial staff and the appropriate chairperson.

**Personal Information**

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Religious History and Prior Youth Work**

List the name and addresses of other religious institutions you have attended regularly during the past five years:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List all previous religious work involving youth (list each institution's name, type of work performed, dates, and a contact person with his/her phone number).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List all previous non-religious institution work involving youth (list each institution's name, type of work performed, dates, and a contact person with his/her phone number).

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List any special gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for youth work.

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Have you ever been convicted of, or pleaded guilty, to a crime? ..... Yes No

If yes, please explain:

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Please provide two personal references (not former or current employees or relatives):

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_



## **Applicant Commitment**

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize Ivanhoe Congregational Church to contact any references or religious institutions listed in this application to obtain information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my character and fitness for youth work.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Bylaws and Policies of Ivanhoe Congregational Church. I shall refrain from unethical conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church, and I agree to the following Covenant which governs youth work at Ivanhoe Congregational Church:

- To honor each youth's integrity and worth as a child of God.
- To provide a nurturing and safe environment for all youth to grow socially and spiritually.
- To continue to grow and nurture my own personal growth.
- To work in partnership with the Pastor, employees, leaders, and volunteers of Ivanhoe Congregational Church, and with Christ as part of the larger Christian community.

I state that I have carefully read the Ivanhoe Congregational Safe Church Policy and Covenant statement above and know its content. I sign this application as my own free act, and understand this is a legally binding agreement.

I further understand that if any of the information on this form is false, I may be removed upon such discovery from my work with Ivanhoe youth.

As part of this application process:

- I give consent for a background check to be performed.
- I promise to complete all required yearly Safe Church Training.

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Signature

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Date