

## **Policy Regarding Known Sex Offenders (Fridley UMC, Fridley, MN)**

It is the desire of Fridley United Methodist Church to extend its ministry to all persons while continuing to provide for the safety of all who attend.

When the lead pastor, or any member of the Church Council, is informed that a registered sex offender is seeking to attend or is attending the church, steps must be taken to manage risk as the church lives out its call to minister to all people. These include the following:

- A member of the clergy staff will obtain a record of the sex offender's prior criminal convictions by conducting a criminal records check. If the sex offender is on probation, a member of the clergy staff will identify his or her probation officer and ascertain the conditions that have been imposed. In some cases, sex offenders are not even allowed to attend church. If the probation officer says that the offender is free to attend church, the clergy will ask the officer if he or she would recommend that the offender be allowed to attend church, and if so, under what conditions. This information will be obtained in writing, or, if that is not possible, the clergy person will make a detailed written account of the officer's response.
- The sex offender's right to attend church services and activities will be conditional upon his or her signing a "conditional attendance agreement" that imposes at least the following conditions (other conditions may be imposed depending on the circumstances):
  - o The sex offender will not work with minors or vulnerable adults in any capacity in the church.
  - o The sex offender will not transport minors or vulnerable adults to or from church, or any church activity.
  - o The sex offender will not attend any activities for youth or children or activities for vulnerable adults while on church property, except for those involving his or her own child or children, and only if in the presence of a chaperone\*.
  - o The sex offender will always be in the presence of a designated chaperone while on church property. This includes religious services, educational classes, activities, and restroom breaks. The chaperone will meet the sex offender at the entrance of the church, and accompany the sex offender on church premises until returned to his or her vehicle.
  - o The sex offender will be introduced to the congregation as well as the designated chaperones.

A single violation of these conditions will result in an immediate termination of the sex offender's privilege to attend the church.

The conditional attendance agreement option will not be available unless the church's insurer is informed and confirms that coverage will not be affected.

In some cases, exclusion of the offender from church is the only viable option. This option is advisable if (1) for any reason the conditional attendance option is not feasible or enforceable; or

(2) if the offender's crimes are so frequent or heinous that exclusion is the only appropriate option; or (3) one or more of the offender's victims attends the church. This will be a judgment call made by the lead pastor and Church Council.

\*Designated chaperones shall be lay members of the church and act as chaperones to facilitate attendance by the sex offender. There must be more than one person willing and trained to act as chaperone to facilitate attendance by the sex offender. Training shall include hospitality, the rules the sex offender must follow, and procedures for questions and emergencies. Such training will be provided by clergy or selected staff member.

<http://www.fridleyumc.org/safesanctuary> (accessed 04/05/16)