

First Parish Church of Stow and Acton

Policy on Nut-free Environment

Policy # 018

Revision # 02

I. POLICY STATEMENT

The Board of Trustees designates all FPC buildings and on-campus events as being nut-free. The purpose is maintaining a safe environment and continuing being welcoming to all, including those with peanut and/or tree nut allergies. It is not a guarantee that all members, friends, guests, volunteers, contractors, staff or any one else who enters the building will comply.

II. SCOPE

The intent of this policy is to create a nut-free environment through education of members, guests, volunteers and staff.

III. RESPONSIBILITY

The Board of Trustees, in conjunction with the Building Committee, is responsible for communicating this policy by posting:

1. An electronic copy of the FPC Members and Friends/Documents section of the church website.
2. Placing a hard copy of this policy in the FPC kitchen and all other areas in the building where food is served.

IV. DEFINITIONS

Nut-free: this means that no peanuts or tree nuts will be in any food offering at the First Parish Church of Stow and Acton.

Peanut: a legume that grows in the ground

Tree nut: Nuts that grow on trees, including almond, beech nut, brazil nut, butternut, cashew, chestnut (Chinese, American, European, Seguin), chinquapin, coconut, filbert/hazelnut, ginkgo nut, hickory nut, lichee nut, macadamia nut/bush nut, pecan, pine nut/pinon nut, pili nut, pistachio, sheanut, walnut (English, Persian, Black, Japanese, California), heartnut, and any other nut as defined by the FDA.

<https://www.fda.gov/industry/fda-basics-industry/section-201qq-act-defines-term-major-food-allergen-include-tree-nuts-addition-three-examples>

V. REFERENCES

FDA Information on food-allergies

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<https://www.fda.gov/regulatory-information/search-fda-guidance-documents/guidance-industry-questions-and-answers-regarding-food-allergens-edition-4>

Frequently asked Questions:

Q. Will this increase our risk of legal issues if we fail to live up to this policy?

A. We have spoken with our church insurance provider and they do not have any concerns related to liability and they think this policy further protects us from liability.

Q. Are we expected to provide food labeling/Ingredient lists?

A. In addition to providing tree nut and peanut free food for events, we ask that FPC members and friends provide an ingredient list or recipe when available but do not expect that everything brought into the building will contain an ingredient list. We leave it to the members with allergies to decide which foods are most likely safe and which they should avoid.

Q. What are the guidelines for commercially- prepared food brought in? Are we expected to do a thorough read of the ingredients list? If so, what, makes a product unacceptable?

If the ingredient list includes peanuts or tree nuts, or if the product is processed in a facility that processes peanuts and tree nuts, we ask that you not bring these products to the church.

Q. If an FPC event is off campus, for example a service auction dinner, are we now expected to make it nut-free so that every FPC member feels equal access?

A. No, we do not expect all off campus events such as auction events to be tree nut or peanut free. We hope that you will ask your guests about their dietary restrictions but that is up to the host/hostess.

Q. If the FPC women's cookie swap were moved off campus, would it no longer need to be nut free?

A. It is our expectation that a community wide event, like the FPC Women's Cookie Swap, would be tree nut/peanut free no matter where it is held, to allow full participation by all members.

Q. What about Fair-Trade products that are sold during coffee hour?

A. These products are sealed up in packaging and are okay as long as they remain in their packaging are not opened in the church building.

Q. Does this policy extend to our renters?

A. Yes, we will include our policy in our rental agreements. We do not plan to police or monitor this policy but we hope renters will take it seriously and we will continue to clean the building and facility with procedures already in place.

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Q. Why tree nuts and peanuts and no other allergens?

A. We know that there are adults and children in our congregation who have life threatening allergies to tree nuts and peanuts, so that is the issue we are currently trying to address. If there are other life-threatening issues to members, the Board will be happy to address those issues as well.

Q. What about hand soap?

A. It was brought to our attention that sometimes there is hand soap in the restrooms with almond or shea in it. These products will no longer be purchased for church use and we ask members to be aware if they are donating items for use in the church bathrooms or kitchen. This policy does not remove the need for the person with an allergy to be diligent.

VI. APPROVAL SIGNATURES

Helen Ham 3/15/21

[Note: This Policy was approved by the Board of Trustees in 2018 and put in policy format in 2021]

Originator / Date

On behalf of the Board of Trustees

[Lynda Layer for original 2018 version]
Katy Weeks 3/17/21 for the reformatted version

FPC President / Date