



“Safe Sanctuaries”

Christ United Methodist Church
Salisbury, North Carolina

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CHILDREN AND YOUTH ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

“Safe Sanctuaries” for Christ United Methodist Church

Salisbury, North Carolina

Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, and the Western North Carolina Annual Conference, in June 2004, adopted resolutions aimed at reducing the risk of abuse of children and youth in the church. This would include sexual, emotional, physical, and ritual abuse, and neglect. The adopted resolutions include the following statement:

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes [a] child...welcomes me.” (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones..., it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that “...children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation, and abuse.”

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse (ritual abuse refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be) occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma. Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.

(From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church-2000; pages 180-81. Copyright @ 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.)

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of abuse of children and youth in our church.

Purpose

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Children and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth.

Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth, as well as all of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child and youth will be “...surrounded by steadfast love, ...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (From “Congregational Pledge 2,” “Baptismal Covenant II,” in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).

Used by permission from Rev. Joy Melton, “Safe Sanctuaries” (both Youth and Children editions), published by Discipleship Resources.

SAFE SANCTUARIES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH
BASIC ESSENTIAL OPERATING PROCEDURES
For: Christ United Methodist Church
Salisbury, North Carolina

1. **IMPLEMENT A POLICY FOR RECRUITING, SCREENING, HIRING, AND REGULAR TRAINING YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S STAFF AND VOLUNTEER WORKERS.** Criminal background checks, as well as previous employment and all references **MUST** be checked for those in supervisory capacities with children and youth, including but not limited to paid staff. Training sessions for all workers with children and youth will be held annually.
2. **TWO ADULTS:** Two (unrelated) adults must be in the room or vehicle at all times. No child or youth should be alone with one adult at any time. Adults working with children or youth must be a church member for at least six months or actively involved for 12 months for non-members.
3. **AGE LIMITS:** Staff and volunteers should be at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth being supervised. No one under the age of 18 should be given supervisory capacity.
4. **VISIBILITY IN ROOMS:** Every room that is used for activities and teaching of children and youth should have a window in the door, or a half door, that gives visibility to all areas of that room. The window must be left uncovered. If there is no window, the door must be left open at all times.
5. **OPEN DOOR COUNSELING:** Pastoral counseling is expected to be confidential in nature, but it is for the protection of both parties that such sessions take place where other people are nearby even though not within hearing distance. The pastor's study should have a small glass window in it.
6. **ROVING MONITORS:** In the event where there are not two adults in the classroom, you must have a roving superintendent or monitor during the meeting or teaching time, and the door must be left open.
7. **FIRST AID, CPR & DIFIBULATOR:** At least one adult present at every church activity should be certified in basic first aid, CPR and difibulator procedures. The church will offer training annually.
8. **COMMUNICATION AND ADVANCE NOTICE TO PARENTS:** Parents should always be kept abreast of the programs their children or youth are involved in, and be given advance notice and information regarding any activity which deviates from the traditional classroom instruction offered at the church during Sunday school, UMYF, Vacation Bible School, or other regular activities at the church. Permission forms with medical information should accompany children/youth for any activity involving travel or extreme sports activity (skiing, etc.). Have a "Safe Sanctuary" training time for the parents and family of your children and youth, with copies of the policy for your church, available.
9. **AGE AND ACTIVITY APPROPRIATE EQUIPMENT:** Examine the safety and appropriateness of the equipment you are using in your nursery, classrooms, youth room, and playground.
10. **MAINTAIN ADEQUATE LIABILITY INSURANCE COVERAGE** for both your activities of the church family, both on and off the premises. Know what coverage your church has for sexual misconduct.
11. **DESIGNATED SPOKESPERSON:** Your church should have a designated spokesperson in case of an incident or allegation abuse. You will want to have a prepared statement before releasing any information to the press. Contact your District Superintendent and the WNC Conference Director of Communications for assistance. All other persons at the church must refrain from speaking to the press. (Page 61 in the Youth edition and page 47 in the Children's edition of "Safe Sanctuaries").
12. **TRANSPORTATION:** No youth may drive to any off-grounds church-sponsored event or transport others. Your local church policy must specify the insurance guidelines regarding adults using their personal vehicles. The Trustees will have specific guidelines for drivers of the church van, in agreement with their insurance policy, and will do DMV checks on anyone permitted to drive the church van/bus. (Please be aware of National Highway Traffic Safety Administration guidelines for operating 15 passenger vans more safely.)

These procedures (and other suggestions) are outlined in detail in "Safe Sanctuaries" by Joy Melton (Discipleship Resources) in both the Youth and in the Children's editions.

POLICIES DEFINED

Policy for Recruiting, Screening, Hiring and Training

Purpose

To define the policy for the Recruiting, Screening, Hiring and Training of youth and children and youth leaders by Christ United Methodist Church.

Scope

This policy covers all children and youth leaders; both paid and volunteer.

Background Criminal Checks

Background criminal checks will be conducted on all paid staff and ministry leaders prior to their being appointed to a position of leadership of youth or children. Volunteers in support of children and youth ministries shall fill out a volunteer sheet. This includes volunteer staff in positions like youth counselors, Sunday school teachers, VBS leaders, Children's Church workers, nursery attendants and any other position where close working or supervision of youth or children is expected.

The background checks shall be considered confidential and shall be maintained by the chairperson of SPRC.

Reference Checks

All work and personal references will be verified prior to anyone accepting a paid or volunteer position where close working or supervision of youth or children is expected.

Annual Training

Training and retraining will be conducted annually as directed by the Church Council for all new and incumbent leaders of youth and children. The content of the training will be based on new and existing requirements and policies.

Two Adults

Purpose

To define the policy for the always having (2) or more adults present in activities involving youth and children at Christ United Methodist Church.

Scope

This policy covers all children and youth leaders; both paid and volunteer.

Policy

There shall be at least 2 adults present at any activity where youth and children are involved. These 2 adults shall not be from the same family.

This includes activities at the church, away from the church, as well as transportation in a private or church owned vehicle.

These adults shall have been actively involved in the ministry of Christ United Methodist Church for at least 6 months for members and 12 months for non-members. This excludes all paid staff, whom fall under the SPRC hiring guidelines.

Annual Training

Training will be conducted annually as directed by the Church Council for all new and incumbent leaders and teachers of youth and children. The content of the training will be based on new and existing requirements and policies.

Age Limits

Purpose

To define the policy for age limit of adults who supervise activities involving youth and children at Christ United Methodist Church.

Scope

This policy covers all children and youth leaders; both paid and volunteer.

Policy

All adults who supervise children and youth shall be at least 25 years old. In the event that one of the leaders either paid or volunteer is less than 25, there shall be at least one adult, who is over 25, who is not a family member present at all times.

This policy applies to activities at the church, locations away from the church, and transportation within private or church owned vehicles.

Annual Training

Training will be conducted annually as directed by the Church Council for all new and incumbent leaders and teachers of youth and children. The content of the training will be based on new and existing requirements and policies.

Visibility in Rooms

Purpose

To define the policy for Visibility in Rooms which are used for activities and the teaching of children and youth at Christ United Methodist Church.

Scope

This policy covers all rooms that are used by children and youth.

Policy

Every room that is used for activities and teaching of children and youth should have a window in the door, or a half door, that gives visibility to all areas of that room. The window must be left uncovered. If there is no window, the door must be left open at all times.

Annual Training

Training will be conducted annually as directed by the Church Council for all new and incumbent leaders and teachers of youth and children. The content of the training will be based on new and existing requirements and policies.

Open Door Counseling

Purpose

To define the policy for Open Door Counseling at Christ United Methodist Church.

Scope

This policy covers all counseling sessions for children, youth and adult.

Policy

Pastoral Counseling is expected to be confidential in nature, but is for the protection of both parties that such sessions take place where other people are nearby, but not within hearing distance.

Counseling of Youth by a Pastor, Youth Counselor, or Teacher requires the presence of a second adult during the counseling session. The second adult cannot be related to the counselor. Notification of the counseling session and its purpose requires notification to the parent(s) prior to the counseling session taking place.

Counseling of Children by a Pastor, Youth Counselor, or Teacher requires the presence of at least one parent of the child and a second adult during the counseling session. The second adult cannot be related to the counselor.

Annual Training

Training will be conducted annually as directed by the Church Council for all new and incumbent leaders and teachers of youth and children. The content of the training will be based on new and existing requirements and policies.

Roving Monitors

Purpose

To define the policy for Roving Monitors for all activities and teaching in classrooms involving children and youth at Christ United Methodist Church when two adults are not present.

Scope

This policy covers all activities in classrooms involving children and youth.

Policy

In the event where there are not two adults¹ in a classroom with children and youth, a roving superintendent or monitor must be present during the meeting or teaching time, and the door must be left open.

Annual Training

Training will be conducted annually as directed by the Church Council for all new and incumbent leaders and teachers of youth and children. The content of the training will be based on new and existing requirements and policies.

¹Please see policy guidelines for the Two Adults Rule in the Safe Sanctuary policy manual.

First Aid, CPR & Difibulator

Purpose

To define the policy for first aid and CPR training required in support of children and youth activities.

Scope

This policy covers the all youth and all events.

Policy

All ministries, teams, and/or committees in which there are more than five (5) children, youth and/or adults involved must contain at least one person (in all gatherings) whom is CPR/First Aid & Difibulator certified from a credible institution such as The American Red Cross. Also, all ministries, teams, and/or committees having more than twenty-five (25) children, youth and/or adults should have at least two (2) CPR/First Aid & Difibulator certified people. These persons should have their licenses renewed, and up to date. There also should be postings as to who these persons are in each ministry, team, and/or committee; and these persons should be easily accessible.

It also is the church's responsibility to locate opportunities for persons who wish to be involved in this training, and every ministry, team, and/or committee leader is responsible for making sure their ministry, team, and/or committee are abiding to this policy unless formally dictated to another member.

Annual Training

Training will be conducted annually as directed by the Church Council for all new and incumbent leaders and teachers of youth and children. The content of the training will be based on new and existing requirements and policies.

Communication & Advance Notice to Parents

Purpose

To define the policy for Communication & Advance Notice to Parents required in support of children and youth activities.

Scope

This policy covers the all youth and children and all events.

Policy

All ministries involving youth or children must have a plan for communicating with parents/guardians of the persons in their ministry based on the age guidelines.

The guidelines of this plan are as follows:

1. A monthly information sheet for what is going on in these ministries.
2. A six week notice to parents informing them if a ministry is changing or if special events are going to happen.
3. For events where minors are taken from one location to another, permission forms and medical forms shall be obtained prior to the date of the event.
4. A copy of all information that is sent to or received from parents/guardians shall be sent to the church secretary to be kept on file.
5. All parent/guardian information shall be mailed directly to the home of the minor.

Annual Training

Training will be conducted annually as directed by the Church Council for all new and incumbent leaders and teachers of youth and children. The content of the training will be based on new and existing requirements and policies.

Age & Activity Appropriate Equipment

Purpose

To define the policy for providing equipment in support of children and youth ministries that is age and activity appropriate.

Scope

This policy covers all youth and children and all events.

Policy

All rooms and areas designated for use by children and/or youth shall be equipped with safe and clean equipment and furnishings.

The leaders of children and youth ministry along with the Trustees shall create a plan for monthly safety and housekeeping audits of those areas. Any broken toys, hazardous conditions, hazardous materials shall be removed.

Records of the audits shall be maintained along with items removed or repaired.

Annual Training

Training will be conducted annually as directed by the Church Council for all new and incumbent leaders and teachers of youth and children. The content of the training will be based on new and existing requirements and policies.

Liability Insurance Coverage

Purpose

To define the minimum liability coverage required at Christ United Methodist Church.

Scope

This policy covers the all activities on or off church property.

Policy

The church shall maintain a liability insurance policy that provides a minimum of \$1,000,000 coverage per occurrence for activities on or off the church premises.

The insurance will provide for the defense of church leaders who are charged with criminal activity related to the church, but will not provide protection in the event they are convicted of sexual misconduct.

Annual Training

Training will be conducted annually as directed by the Church Council for all new and incumbent leaders and teachers of youth and children. The content of the training will be based on new and existing requirements and policies.

Designated Spokesperson

Purpose

To define the policy for designating and training a spokesperson to represent the church to the community and the media in the event that there is an incident involving charges of misconduct related to a child or youth.

Scope

This policy covers the all incidents involving children, youth or adult on or off church property.

Policy

The Church Council shall designate and provide training in incident communication to one or more individuals. These designated individuals will respond to media or community questions regarding any incident where there is an allegation of wrongdoing involving a child, youth or adult.

All other persons will refer any questions or comments to the designated individual.

Annual Training

Training will be conducted annually as directed by the Church Council for all new and incumbent leaders and teachers of youth and children. The content of the training will be based on new and existing requirements and policies.

Transportation

Purpose

To define the policy for transportation of youth to any church activity that is off the premises of Christ United Methodist Church.

Scope

This policy covers all children and youth and all events.

Policy

No youth shall drive themselves or transport anyone else to a church activity that takes place off the premises of Christ United Methodist Church. Neither shall they drive themselves nor transport others from an off site event back to the church.

Annual Training

Training will be conducted annually as directed by the Church Council for all new and incumbent leaders and teachers of youth and children. The content of the training will be based on new and existing requirements and policies.

CONTROL OF DOCUMENTS

Purpose

To define the system for the control of Safe Sanctuary documents used by Christ United Methodist Church.

Scope

This procedure covers the method of control of the policies and procedures.

Approval

Documents are approved for adequacy prior to issue by the Christ United Methodist Church Council and approval will be noted in the minutes and on each document.

Documents are reviewed and updated as necessary.

Availability of Documents

All policies and procedures are available in a binder in the church secretary's office.

Identification of Documents

Each of the documents described in this procedure contains the following:

1. Title
2. Revision level (beginning with 00 and incrementing with each re-issue).
3. Page control in the form page x of y.
4. Approval on at least the first page of each document.
5. Date that the document is authorized for use.
6. Unique Identifier. In the form of CUMC and a number