



First United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policies & Procedures

Introduction to Safe Sanctuaries

Thank you for joining me. I am so excited that you are so willing to serve our church as volunteer in our children's, youth, and vulnerable adult ministries. This is a video tutorial designed to introduce you to our Safe Sanctuaries Policy. I'd like to begin by giving you a summary of what exactly we mean by "Safe Sanctuaries".

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes 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 litigations following allegations of child 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 –1996. Copyright 1996 by The United Methodist Publishing House.)

So, in covenant with all United Methodist Congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child/youth/vulnerable adult abuse in our church.

Our Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to help First United Methodist Church of Moultrie (hereafter referred to as FUMC) provide a caring and safe environment for children, youth, vulnerable adults and those involved in ministering to such persons in all phases of the Church's life. We express our unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all under the shadow of the steeple.

Abuse

Abuse is defined as an act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child/youth/ vulnerable adult on a daily basis) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's, youth's or vulnerable adult's physical or mental health or welfare. This includes any acts utilizing electronic means that could be construed as physical, verbal, sexual, or ritual abuse.

There are different Types of abuse.

1. Physical Abuse

Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child/youth/vulnerable adult. Examples: violent battery with a weapon, burning, shaking, kicking, choking

2. Emotional/Verbal Abuse

Abuse in which a person exposes a child, youth, or vulnerable adult to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the child/youth/vulnerable adult of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved, but undeserving of love and care. Examples: confinement (as in a closet), inadequate nurturance, extreme discipline, knowingly permitting such behavior as drug or alcohol abuse. Emotional abuse is often very difficult to prove and is devastating to the victim.

3. Neglect

Abuse in which a person endangers a child's, youth's or vulnerable adult's health, safety, or welfare through negligence. Examples: withholding food, clothing, medical attention, education, or even affection and affirmation of child's/youth's/vulnerable adult's self-worth 2

4. Sexual Abuse

Abuse in which sexual contact between a child/youth/vulnerable adult and an adult (or another older and more powerful youth) occurs. The child/youth/ vulnerable adult is never truly capable of consenting to or resisting such contact and/or such sexual acts. Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of minors for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not limited to incest, rape, prostitution, romantic involvement with any participant, any sexual intercourse, or sexual conduct in sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content.

a) Sexual Misconduct Any unwanted sexual or gender-directed behavior by either a layperson or a clergyperson within a ministerial relationship.

b) **Sexual Harassment** A form of sexual misconduct that is defined in ¶1611 of the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church as found in The United Methodist Book of Discipline—2012. Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual or gender-relationship that is so severe or pervasive that it alters the conditions of service by creating a hostile, offensive environment. Sexual harassment can include unwanted sexual jokes, repeated advances, touching, or comments that insult and/or degrade or sexually exploit women, men, elderly persons, children, or youth.

c) **Sexualized Behavior** Any behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content. Sexualized behavior can be a form of sexual misconduct when this behavior is unwanted by the recipient or witness, is a violation of society's or the church's law, breaks the sacred trust in the ministerial role, or violates the vows taken at membership or ordination. Examples: "displaying sexually suggestive visual materials, making sexual comments or innuendo about one's own or another person's body, touching another person's body, hair or clothing, touching or rubbing oneself in the presence of another person, kissing, and sexual intercourse." (Resolution 36, The Book of Resolutions 2004)

5. Ritual Abuse

Abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child/youth/ vulnerable adult are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person, or persons, responsible for a child, youth's or vulnerable adult's welfare.

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within FUMC, several prevention measures will be utilized. These measures include screening of paid and volunteer workers for past child abuse convictions, provision for regular training on child abuse issues to paid and volunteer staff members, use of the two adult worker rule, standards of appropriate classroom discipline, and open classrooms. It is our responsibility and deepest desire that all who enter our care will find shelter under the shadow of the steeple. FUMC will be vigilant in protecting all in our midst. Background checks and covenant statements will be required of all leaders

In order to clarify all parties for the purpose of this video a worker is defined as...

Worker—an adult who has responsibility for programming and/or supervision of children, youth and/or vulnerable adults

Adult—person 18 years of age or older

Child—person whose age is between zero and 12 years of age, inclusive

Youth—person whose age is between 13 and 17 years of age, inclusive

Vulnerable Adult—any person 18 years of age or older with diagnosed diminished physical, mental or emotional capacities

Reducing the Risk of Abuse of Children/Youth/Vulnerable Adults

Policies:

Two Adult Rule {Slide}

No fewer than two adults who are not related and have passed the screening process, must provide supervision at all times during any program, event, or ministry involving children, youth and vulnerable adults at the church. If a group is divided, each subgroup which is in a

separate room will have two adult workers. Invited guests who are not screened do not count as part of the two adult rule.

1. Use of Floaters

During periods of time when only one supervising adult is present, all interactions will occur in open and public spaces and room doors will remain open. A designated adult “floater” will roam between rooms, regularly checking in on each room. When one adult is assisting in the restroom, another adult must be in line of sight.

2. Overnight Stays

If any group stays overnight at the church, or if a church sponsored group leaves the premises, two or more workers must provide supervision. If it is a mixed group, the workers must include at least one male and one female who are not related. If a group is one gender, at least one worker must be of the same gender. When groups travel overnight and stay in a hotel or other non-bunkroom housing, adult leadership will stay in separate rooms from children, youth and vulnerable adults.

3. Transportation

When transporting children, youth and vulnerable adults to day trip activities one supervising adult in each vehicle is adequate. A driver’s license is required to be on file in the Church office for all drivers of a personal or church vehicle. When a personal vehicle is used a \$300,000 liability insurance certificate is required to be on file in the Church office prior to use of that vehicle. When traveling by charter bus, adult chaperones will be stationed throughout the bus to ensure constant supervision while traveling together. If the required adult leadership cannot be secured, the event cannot take place.

Age Requirements for Workers

Persons under the age of eighteen will not be placed in charge of any groups of children or youth. Persons under the age of eighteen cannot be expected to have developed the maturity and judgment that is needed to be fully responsible for younger children. Youth may serve as assistants but cannot count as one of the two workers.

Five Year Older Rule

Of the two adult workers (see Section V., Article B.) for a group of children and/or youth at least one of the workers will be at least five years older than the oldest member of the group. The Five Year Older Rule is not applicable to those working with vulnerable adults.

Six Month Hospitality Rule

FUMC will not utilize a worker for children, youth and vulnerable adults ministries unless such person has had continuous active involvement or has been a member of this church for at least six months. This rule does not apply to paid staff. All persons must participate in an annual orientation and screening process.

Open Classrooms Windows will be included in classroom doors. Floaters will be used to go in and out of classrooms at irregular time intervals. Classrooms may be visited at any time without prior notice by church staff, parents, and other volunteer church workers such as Children’s or Youth Coordinators.

Notification to Parents Full information will be provided to parents regarding the event(s) in which their children or youth will be participating. A signed permission form is required for all children and youth prior to participation in a ministry event.

Safety for Vulnerable Adults

By 2030 more than 21% of Americans will be older than sixty-five. For the first time in history the percentage of older adults will match that of children and youth. Elder Abuse can happen to any older person. No one is immune from this reality. The same screening rules that apply to leaders working with children and youth will apply to leaders working with vulnerable adults with the exception of the “5 year older rule”. No fewer than two supervising adults will be present for any program where vulnerable adults participate (such as Nursing Home visitation, Meals on Wheels, and adult trips and retreats). Allegations of Elder Abuse will follow the same protocol as other reporting, with the exception of reporting to Adult Protective Services.

One-on-One Counseling, Meeting, or Training One-on-One counseling (meeting/training) may include, but is not limited to, ministerial staff, and communion servers. Counseling (meeting/training) with children, youth and vulnerable adults will be done only while others are present in the same building and will be held in a room with a window in the door.

Individual Staff Instruction

With the informed consent of Staff Parish and the Senior Pastor, Staff may offer individual, one-on-one instruction such as instrumental or voice lessons. These lessons may be offered only during regularly scheduled church office hours and office doors will remain open during the entirety of scheduled lessons. Parents have the right to be present at all times during lessons and will be required to sign an Acknowledgement and Authorization form consenting to individual instruction.

Community Groups

Community groups of children or youth who use the church facility are required to execute a User Agreement that will include, but is not limited to, the following commitments: 1. The leaders of the community group have read and understood the FUMC Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures.

The leaders, on behalf of the community group, expressly represent that the community group:

- a) has in place and is in compliance with its own screening process for all adults working with children or youth, and vulnerable adults.
- b) has in place and is in compliance with its own policies and procedures to ensure the safety and well being of the children, youth and vulnerable adults interacting with community group.

The community group will indemnify and hold harmless FUMC for any and all claims arising out of the community group's use of the church facility and/or any failure by the community group to protect the physical and/or mental health or welfare of children or youth participating in its program or activities. The church facility will not be available to any

community group of children, youth or vulnerable adults that is unable or unwilling to execute a User Agreement with the above-stated commitments.

Safe Sanctuaries in the Virtual World

Our twenty-first-century world is flooded with a myriad of ways to stay in contact with one another. From e-mails to cell phones, social networking sites to blogs, video chats to virtual worlds, we are constantly connected without regard to geography, time zone, or depth of relationship. We as humans are made in the image of the triune God, and we long for companionship and connection with one another. Technology and its ease of use fuels our hunger for connection, relationship, and companionship. For the first time in human history we have the ability to develop and cultivate relationships with people whom we have never met, whose identities we cannot immediately verify, and whom we may never see face-to-face. Multimedia usage is an everyday part of our culture. It is a mechanism we use to engage in ministry and equip others for discipleship and ministry in the world.

Two of the biggest problems facing the church today in the area of technology are (1) online sexualized behavior and (2) the use and abuse of pornography. Both of these stem from a third problem, which is inappropriate personal and interpersonal boundaries. We are living in a society in which cultural norms and values are quickly shifting.

It is the expectation that all volunteers who participate in social media use will understand and follow these guidelines: As a children of God, members of the church universal, and volunteers of FUMC, we covenant and agree to use social media in ways that bring honor to God and show respect for self and for all others who might view our posts.

In particular we covenant to:

1. Recognize and respect that behavior and actions online are also a reflection of how other Christians and people associated with FUMC may be portrayed.
2. Posted words, images, and links are reflections of us individually as disciples of Jesus Christ and as volunteers of FUMC. We will refrain from posting anything regarding inappropriate conduct such as drug use or any items that contain profanity, degrading humor of any kind, ethnic or racial slurs, personal insults, obscenity, vulgarity, nudity, or pornography.
3. Obey the laws governing defamation, discrimination, harassment, and copyright and fair use of proprietary or confidential information.
4. Work within assigned ministry area(s) to establish appropriate boundaries especially as related to building relationships online with children, youth, parents, and other constituents of FUMC.
5. Do no harm to the staff, pastors, members, or ministries of FUMC.
6. Speak respectfully in online posts and communications of and to all persons; and refrain from negative or disrespectful posts as well as posts on objectionable or inflammatory topics.

Reporting Abuse

Should there be an allegation of abuse at FUMC, the following procedures shall be followed:

1. Any allegation of abuse shall be treated as serious.

2. Immediately begin documenting all procedures which occur in handling the allegation of abuse.
3. Immediately notify the staff person in charge. The staff person notified shall immediately contact the Senior Pastor and other members of the Safe Sanctuary Committee.
4. Do not confront the accused but do remove them from any further involvement with children, youth or vulnerable adult until the allegation is investigated.
5. Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused until advised to the contrary by the Safe Sanctuaries Committee.
6. The chair of the Church Council or someone designated by the Church Council will be the sole spokesperson for the Church should an incident occur.

Thank you again for your willingness to serve. At this time I ask that you complete the covenant statement found within your volunteer packet and by signing agree that not only have you listened and understood this video in its entirety but that you will join us in our unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all under the shadow of the steeple. This final screen will help you identify all paperwork within your volunteer packet and what you now need to return to the church office in order to have completed your safe sanctuary training.

Keep	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures 2. Copy of Video Test Sheet
Fill Out Sign & Return	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participant Covenant Statement 2. Authorization and Request for Criminal Records and Background Check 3. Video Test Sheet 4. Hold Harmless/Idemnificaion Agreement (Community Groups Only)