

Christ United Methodist Church

Waynesboro, PA

Safe Sanctuaries

Approved at Church Council: May 15, 2018

Jesus said, "*Let the little children come to me and do not hinder them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.*"

At each baptism, we, as a congregation, assume a HOLY RESPONSIBILITY as we reply, "With God's help we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that these children, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal." By our pledge, we promise to lead the children into a life of faith. By our pledge we promise to support the parents. By our pledge we vow to keep our church a holy place in which all children may come to know God and experience the love of Jesus Christ. In support of these pledges, we at Christ United Methodist Church resolve that we will do all within our power to make our church a safe place, where children, youth and other vulnerable adults are loved and protected from abuse of any nature.

Policy and Procedures

I. Introduction

A. Child Protective Services Law (Appendix 1)

B. Definitions (also see Appendix 2)

1. "Child" and "Youth" and "Vulnerable Adult"

- a) Child – anyone under the age of 18 years.
- b) Youth – a child in the age range of 12 to 18 years, and is a colloquial term used in ministries to mean junior and senior high school age groups.
- c) Vulnerable Adult – any person, 18 years and older, who because of physical or mental infirmity or emotional disability or other physical, mental, or emotional dysfunction may be vulnerable to maltreatment. Or vulnerable adult is any adults who have been abused either as a child or an adult.

2. Staff Member: Adult who have clearances and trained in Safe Sanctuaries Policies.

- a) Teacher – a person engaged in ministry to children, youth, or vulnerable adults at CUMC who performs tasks specified in a mutually agreed upon job description and is accountable to a supervisor for work habits and products.
- b) Helper/Assistant – a person engaged in ministry to children, youth, or vulnerable adults at CUMC who works only in an assisting role under supervision of a teacher.
- c) Employee – a person who works in ministry to children, youth, or vulnerable adults either as a staff person for compensation.
- d) Volunteer – a person who works in ministry to children, youth, or vulnerable adults either as a teacher or a helper without compensation.
- e) Youth Helper/Assistant – a person below the age of 18 years assisting with child or youth activities. They can assist with activities but should not be considered a staff member and should be supervised themselves.

3. Abuse
 - a) Physical Abuse – Violent non-accidental contact which results in injury. This includes, but is not limited to, striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns.
 - b) Sexual Abuse – Any form of sexual activity with a child/youth, whether at the Church, at home, or any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another minor.
 - c) Emotional Abuse – A pattern of intentional conduct which crushes a child's/youth's spirit, attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.

II. Screening and Selection Of Staff Members

A. Volunteers

1. Six month rule: no new Church members will serve in ministry to children, youth, and vulnerable adults until they have been regular attendee and active in church activities for six months and have been part of adult ministries. (Exception: Volunteers helping with a non-regular activity as long as there is staff supervision.)
2. Recruiting Occasional Volunteers
 - a) Create a bank of potential occasional volunteer teachers and helpers.
3. Volunteer Application Form (see Appendix 3)
4. Volunteer Descriptions
 - a) Children's Ministry Teacher (see Appendix 4)
 - b) Children's Ministry Helper/Assistant (see Appendix 5)
 - c) Children's Ministry Youth Helper/Assistant (see Appendix 6)
5. Participation Covenant Statement (see Appendix 7)
6. Coordinator/Volunteer review and discussion

B. Employees

1. Church Employee Application Form (see Appendix 8)
2. Noah's Ark Application Form (see Appendix 9)
3. Form for Reference Check (see Appendix 10)

C. Required Clearances for both Volunteers and Employees (see Appendix 11 and 12)

1. PA State Police Criminal Check
2. PA Dept. of Welfare Child Abuse Check
3. FBI Fingerprint Check
 - a) FBI Fingerprint Waiver Affidavit – A volunteer can complete this form to waive the FBI fingerprinting requirement if they have lived in PA for all of the past 10 years and hasn't been convicted outside PA of an offense that would disqualify them from working with kids. (Appendix 13)
4. Reports will be stored under double lock - Confidentiality is paramount.

III. Supervision Children, Youth, And Vulnerable Adults

A. Two Adult Rule

1. No fewer than two staff members present at all times during any church sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
2. It is preferable that the two adults be unrelated.

B. Five Years Older Rule

1. The teacher or lead person (the person in charge of any group) will always be at least 5 years older than the children or youth in the group.

2. Youth closer in age than 5 years may assist, but should never be alone with the responsibility of the group
3. Only youth of high school age may work as helpers/assistants in the church nursery or other children's ministries.

IV. Classroom Doors

- A. There will be windows in all classroom doors or doors will remain open.
- B. No adult should be behind closed doors with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult in a one to one situation.

V. Advance Notice to Parents

- A. Advance written notice will be given to parents with full information regarding any activity in which their children will be participating.
- B. Written notice will be publicized in the church bulletin and newsletter

VI. Off-Site and Overnight Activities

- A. Written permission (Permission Slip And Medical Release Form – Appendix 14) must be signed by parents to allow for participation in any event requiring transportation or taking place off site of the church property.
- B. First Aid Kit must be available.
- C. Transportation
 1. When a child/youth is transported in any vehicle, the driver must be either their parent/guardian, or a staff member who is at least 23 years old.
 2. Drivers must be known to the designated adult leader of the event.
 3. Drivers must have a valid driver's license for the vehicle being operated AND meet minimum state automobile insurance requirements.
 4. Drivers must require that seat belts be used at all times and the number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts.
 5. Drivers should obey traffic laws.
 6. Drivers should not use cell phones unless required for emergency communication with other drivers and should not text message while driving.
 7. Drivers should be accompanied by at least one other adult, when possible.
 8. Youth who drive their own vehicles should be reminded regularly of the importance of vehicle safety.
 9. Drivers will read and sign an acknowledgement form indicating that the Safe Sanctuary Policy has been read and will be followed (See Appendix 15).

D. Overnight Activities

1. For all trips, retreats and other events where the children and/or youth gather overnight at, or away from the church, in addition to the requirements as previously stated:
 - a) There will be at least one adult for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two staff members present shall be of the same gender as the child/youth.
 - b) The person in charge of youth/children for each overnight trip and/or retreat shall carry Permission Slip And Medical Release Form.

VII. Annual Training (Appendix 16)

- A. First Aid, AED, and CPR training will be provided to all staff members.
- B. Recognition of child abuse, special needs and review of reporting procedures.

VIII. Response Plan to Allegations of Abuse

As a Christian community, we rely on prayer to strengthen us and help us discern God's direction. No response plan can be completed without prayers for God's guidance and assistance. (Appendix 17)

- A. Remain calm and **LISTEN** to the allegations.
 - 1. Take the allegation seriously.
 - 2. Say nothing that will make the victim think he or she was in any way responsible.
 - 3. Assure the safety of the victim. Do not leave him or her alone.
- B. When you can remove yourself from the victim, call the pastor.
- C. Notify the parents of the victim to come immediately. Assure them their child is safe but their presence is required.
- D. Ask the accused to remove himself or herself from the vicinity with adult supervision. Do not allow the accused the opportunity to approach the victim or the parents.
- E. Once the environment is safe and secure, remain with the victim until the pastor and/or the parents arrive.
- F. Brief the pastor and the parents outside of the child's presence.
- G. In the presence of the pastor, report the allegations within 24 hours to the Childline at 1-800-932-0313.
- H. The pastor will notify the legal and insurance authorities at the Susquehanna Conference.
- I. Complete the *Report of Suspected Incidence of Abuse* (Appendix 18).
- J. Keep a written record of the steps taken by the church in response to the Allegation.
- K. Do not make any statements to the media. Any statements or responses will be handled by the Susquehanna Conference.
- L. A brief, honest statement will be prepared for distribution to the congregation upon directive of the Susquehanna Conference.
 - 1. No names or unnecessary details will be included.
 - 2. No blame will be placed.
 - 3. It will in no way interfere with the privacy of the victim or the accused.
 - 4. No confidentiality concerns will be violated.
- M. Full cooperation will be offered to law enforcement officials and child protective services in their investigation of the allegations.

IX. Counseling Session

- A. The victim and accused as well as their extended families should be offered opportunities for counseling.
- B. No counseling session with a child or youth will take place behind closed doors. It is recommended others in the vicinity be discretely in the background.
- C. It is important to remember that anything and everything said remains confidential.

Cyber Safety: Electronic Communication

I. Advance Written Permission

- A. In addition to general written permission to participate in a church ministry or event, obtain written advance parent/legal guardian permission - Photo/Video Permission Slip for children and youths, and personal permission, from vulnerable adults or their guardian if applicable. (Appendix 19)
 - 1. Taking and using photos or videos of participants, for example, posting on sites, sending by email or by cell phone, reproducing photos in brochures, posters or newspapers.
 - 2. Communicating or transmitting data electronically with children, youths or vulnerable adults sharing any full name or contact information.

II. Use of Names and/or Images

- A. Never post identifiable information.
 - 1. Do not use "broadcast" emails. Use the "Bcc" option (blind carbon copy) so that each recipient sees only his or her address when a message is received.
 - 2. Be cautious when transmitting easily identifiable information such as event dates, times, locations, or participants.
 - 3. Limit what is communicated in prayer requests. When placing a child, youth, or vulnerable adult on a prayer list, use only first names and only if you think a name is necessary.
- B. Use caution when sharing photos/videos.
 - 1. Obtain all necessary legal permission to use photos or other content (poems, songs, etc.).
 - 2. If sharing photos, refrain from using names, and never use last names or other personally identifiable information.
 - 3. Check photos for vulnerable/compromising situations and to make sure they uphold your mission.
 - 4. Use low-resolution photos and slightly blur/pixilate photos whenever possible.
 - 5. Block "save photo as" options on websites.
- C. Do not collect online, or allow third parties to collect online, personal information from children under the age of 13.

III. Social Media Sites

- A. Do not use your personal social media presence for ministry. Use a group social media site that is monitored by senior leadership, for example a Facebook site for the specific group.
 - 1. Monitor the site and remove inappropriate comments, photos, links, etc.
 - 2. Restrict who can be a friend.
- B. Do not post anything that you would not want printed in the newspaper, church newsletter or bulletin.
- C. Be familiar with, and comply with, social media provider policies, restrictions and terms and conditions. For example, according to Facebook's own terms, children under 13 years of age may not sign up for a Facebook account.
- D. Encourage children, youths, and vulnerable adults to follow these same guidelines as appropriate.