



FIRST UNITED  
METHODIST CHURCH  
— LOVELAND —

# Safe Sanctuary Policy

**April 2011**

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## Safe Sanctuary Policy of the First United Methodist Church of Loveland

### Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child 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, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse” (§ 162C).

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 within 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*, pp. 180-181. Copyright © 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.]

## **Purpose**

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy for prevention of abuse and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety, mental well-being and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

## **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 individuals in our church community as well as all of those who work (paid or volunteer) in this church community. 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, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods; 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, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each individual will be "surrounded by steadfast love . . . established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" ("Baptismal Covenant II," *United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).

## **Contents**

The following pages provide the specific safe sanctuary procedures that have been adopted by Church Council for application in First United Methodist Church (FUMC) programs dealing with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

## **Questions**

Questions or comments may be addressed to any of the committee members developing this material:

Andrew Haines, Chair  
John Kindred (current)  
Rev. Brian Riecke (current)  
Judy Stout  
Marlene Thurman

Or to other current committee members:

Rev. Lauren Miller  
Julie Harden

## Child/Youth Safe Sanctuary Procedures

Approved by Church Council 20 September 2010

### Definitions

Child/youth – any individual under the age of 18.

Staff/Volunteer – any person who is working with any First United Methodist Church (FUMC) program or activity with children or youth. This includes paid staff, and non paid volunteers.

Adult (Section 3) – a staff/volunteer with current screening and training in place.

### Procedures

We adopt these **minimum** standards for FUMC ministries with children and youth:

1. Screening and recruiting of potential staff/volunteers
  - a. All potential staff/volunteers will have an active relationship with FUMC of at least six months before being allowed to supervise children or youth. Those who do not hold the above requirement may have that requirement waived by completing ALL of the following:
    - i. employment or volunteer application listing standard contact information, their gifts for that ministry, and three unrelated references.
    - ii. interview with the pastor, applicable staff member, or SPRC representative and/or their designees.
    - iii. references checked; additional contacts may be made.
  - b. All potential staff/volunteers will undergo a background check, including national criminal file check (which includes a sexual offenders' check) and verification of Social Security number.
    - i. Background checks will be initiated and seen only by the designated office administrator. If a concern arises, it will be reported to a pastor who will decide how the situation will be handled.
    - ii. Background checks remain valid and on file for 5 years.
    - iii. Potential staff/volunteers may request that these background checks be destroyed after their service is completed, or if they choose not to accept employment/service.
    - iv. All active staff **MUST** have a completed and cleared background check on file which is less than 5 years old prior to and throughout their service.
  - c. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of a staff/volunteer's confidential personnel file. All forms shall be kept in a locked file on the church premises.

(Child/Youth Procedures 1 of 4)

2. Training
  - a. Abuse Prevention and Emergency Procedures Training is required for all staff/volunteers working directly with children or youth.
  - b. Annual training is required for staff/volunteers working directly with children or youth.
  - c. All staff/volunteers must sign a Safe Sanctuary Covenant Statement every year in connection with the annual training.
  - d. A pastor or his/her designee will assure that training occurs as needed, and that training records are maintained.
  
3. Supervision
  - a. Approval:

All screening and training above must be completed and be current before any staff/volunteer works with children or youth. "Adult" in this section always refers to a screened, trained staff/volunteer.
  - b. Two-adult rule:

There will be two unrelated adults (18 or older) in each applicable classroom/ministry area. If this is not possible, there will be an assigned roving adult who moves through the area with the ability to see into the classroom/ministry area and with the freedom and responsibility to enter at any time. The two adult rule applies until the last child or youth has left the FUMC premises. In addition each adult must be at least five years older than the oldest youth participating in the activity.
  - c. Assistants:

Any other volunteer helper or assistant not satisfying 3.a. and 3.b. shall be under the direct supervision of the adults (3.b.) for that classroom/ministry area.
  - d. Other Participants:

Guest presenters and observers are also under the direct supervision of the adults (3.b.) for that classroom/ministry area.
  - e. Sight-line rules:

Each classroom/ministry area will have a window on the door (or other sight-line into the room from the interior of the building) or the door will be left open at all times. Should an activity be an outdoor program or occur in a setting which makes it difficult to comply with this policy, the adult(s) in charge of the activity shall take appropriate measures to make sure that the setting suits the activity, and the children and youth are properly supervised.
  - f. Registration Forms:

Registration Forms for all activities in which children or youth are outside the direct supervision of their parents/guardians shall require signed written permission and/or release forms that include pertinent health information, and parent/guardian contact information. These forms will remain valid for one year.

(Child/Youth Procedures 2 of 4)

- g. **Transportation to and from FUMC:**  
Arrangement of transportation of children and youth to and from FUMC related activities is the responsibility of the parent/guardian. Volunteers may transport unrelated children/youth to or from any FUMC related activity only with parent/guardian initiated permission. Paid staff may not transport unrelated children/youth to or from any FUMC related activity unless the two-adult rule (3.b.) is applied.
- h. **Church-Sponsored Transportation:**  
When transportation is provided, the implementation of the two-adult rule (3.b.) is required. Use of church vehicles is the preferred method for transportation of children/youth. Parents/guardians must sign permission forms and/or liability waivers. All travel in non-church owned vehicles requires a signed parent/guardian permission form specific to the driver(s) and the vehicle(s) being used.
- i. **Offsite/Overnight Permission:**  
Specific permission forms are required for all offsite or overnight events, unless that permission is explicit within the (yearly) Registration Form.
- j. **Participant Covenant:**  
Youth participants or child's parent(s)/guardians(s) shall sign a covenant of participation listing rules for overnight and offsite activities.
- k. **Rooming Rule:**  
With parent/guardian consent, children or youth of the same gender may room together without an adult during overnight activities. In situations where adults room with youth or children in a hotel, cabin, tent or other similar situation, there must be two adults who are not related and who are the same gender as the children or youth being supervised.
- l. **One-on-One:**  
Unavoidable one-on-one encounters and meetings are in principle subject to the two adult rule (3.b.). This may be implemented by a roving adult, moving the meeting to a public part of the church facility, meeting in open air, or meeting in a fully public facility. Conformance with 3.h. and 3.i. on transportation is required.
- m. **Records:**  
Accurate participation records shall be maintained for all church activities where children and youth are specifically entrusted into our care. At a minimum, these records should list the date and hours of the activity, its location, the names of the participants, check in / check out times, and the names of the adults involved directly in the activity.
- n. **Outside groups:**  
For scouting and other groups involving children or youth that use the church facilities, a pastor or designee will review the **written** policies of the group, to ensure policies are in alignment with Safe Sanctuary policies. If no written policies exist, this Safe Sanctuary policy must be adopted and followed by these groups.

(Child/Youth Procedures 3 of 4)

4. Reporting
  - a. All reporting shall be handled in a confidential manner.
  - b. If a staff/volunteer observes or receives information of alleged abuse, he/she will report immediately to a paid staff member who shall then report it to a pastor, or directly to a pastor. The pastor shall contact proper authorities.
  - c. If the alleged abuse involves a staff/volunteer, the individual in question shall immediately be removed from contact with children or youth until the incident reported has been resolved.
  
5. Responding
  - a. All allegations will be taken seriously. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged abuse will be initiated.
  - b. A pastor or his/her designee is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements must be directed to this individual.
  - c. If the allegation is against a pastor, the District Superintendent shall be contacted immediately, and shall assume responsibility for 5.a. and 5.b., consistent with this policy, civil law, and The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, particularly paragraph 361 (Complaints), and Chapter Seven (Judicial Administration).

This policy applies but is not limited to the following FUMC activities with children or youth:

- Youth activities
- Childrens' activities
- Choirs
- Sunday School
- Wednesday night classes
- Confirmation activities
- Mission and other trips from FUMC facilities
- Ad Hoc or planned consulting or counseling
- Unplanned "drop-in" meetings
- Family Promise

(Child/Youth Procedures 4 of 4)

**Vulnerable Adult Safe Sanctuary Procedures**  
**Approved by Church Council 4 April 2011**

## Definitions

Vulnerable Adult – any person within our midst who has a lesser ability to take care of him/herself, and/or interact fully with other adults. The reason(s) may be mental, physical, situational, or emotional. The reason(s) may be permanent or temporary (e.g., having surgery)

Designated Program – any program identified to be associated with vulnerable adults. To date these are primarily the visitation portions of Care Ministries, and Sunday bus transportation. Church Council may at any time add programs to the Designated Program category.

Staff/Volunteer – any person who is working with a Designated Program (defined above) at First United Methodist Church (FUMC). This includes paid staff, and non paid volunteers.

## Procedures

We adopt these **minimum** standards for specified FUMC ministries with vulnerable adults (Designated Programs):

1. Screening and recruiting of potential staff/volunteers
  - a. All potential staff/volunteers will have an active relationship with FUMC of at least six months before being allowed to participate in Designated Programs. Those who do not hold the above requirement may have that requirement waived by completing ALL of the following:
    - i. employment or volunteer application listing standard contact information, their gifts for that ministry, and three unrelated references.
    - ii. interview with the pastor, applicable staff member, or SPRC representative and/or their designees.
    - iii. references checked; additional contacts may be made.
  - b. All potential staff/volunteers will undergo a background check, including national criminal file check (which includes a sexual offenders' check) and verification of Social Security number.
    - i. Background checks will be initiated and seen only by the office administrator designated by the pastor(s). If a concern arises, it will be reported to a pastor who in turn will decide how the situation will be handled.
    - ii. Background checks remain valid and on file for 5 years.
    - iii. Potential staff/volunteers may request that these be destroyed after their service is completed or if they choose not to accept employment/service.
    - iv. All active staff **MUST** have a completed and cleared background check on file which is less than 5 years old prior to and throughout their service.

(Vulnerable Adult Procedures 1 of 3)

- c. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of a staff/volunteer's confidential personnel file. All forms shall be kept in a locked file on the church premise.
2. Training
    - a. Abuse/Exploitation Prevention and Emergency Procedures Training is required for all staff/volunteers working directly in Designated Programs.
    - b. Annual training is required for staff/volunteers working in Designated Programs.
    - c. All staff/volunteers must sign a Safe Sanctuary Covenant Statement every year in connection with the annual training.
    - d. A pastor or his/her designee will assure that training occurs as needed, and that training records are maintained.
3. Supervision
    - a. Approval:

All screening and training above must be completed and be current before any staff/volunteer works in Designated Programs. "Adult" in this section always refers to a screened, trained staff/volunteer.
    - b. Visibility:

Many meetings and activities, particularly within the Caring Ministries, tend to be one-on-one between two persons. Within FUMC Designated Programs, a single screened and trained adult must be supplemented in one (or more) of the following ways:

      - i. Rules and procedures within the facility (e.g., hospital, nursing care facility) that have been reviewed by FUMC, and deemed to meet FUMC criteria for vulnerable adults.
      - ii. A roving adult who has access to meeting area at any time.
      - iii. Meeting in a public place or public part of a facility.
      - iv. Maintaining a confidential log (or logs) of anticipated and completed visits. Log is to be maintained by someone other than the adult making visits. Logs will be stored under lock and key for a period of three years by a staff person not associated with the visits contained in the logs. Logs shall be available upon inquiry from pastors or other appropriate authority.
    - c. Transportation to and from FUMC:

Arrangement of transportation to and from FUMC Designated Program activities is the responsibility of the individual participant. Paid staff may not transport an unrelated vulnerable adult to or within a Designated Program, unless a second adult (3.a.) is present.
    - d. Church-Sponsored Transportation:

When transportation is provided, two adults (3.a.) are required. Use of church vehicles is the preferred method for transportation of participants in Designated Programs.

(Vulnerable Adult Procedures 2 of 3)

4. Reporting
  - a. All reporting shall be handled in a confidential manner.
  - b. If a staff/volunteer observes or receives information of alleged abuse, stalking, harassment, or exploitation, he/she shall report immediately to the supervisory staff member, who will then report it to a pastor. The pastor may conduct a preliminary investigation, and shall contact proper civil authorities as deemed necessary.
  - c. If the alleged abuse or exploitation happened on church property or during church sponsored activity by staff, the staff in question shall immediately be removed from contact with vulnerable adults until the incident reported has been resolved.
  
5. Responding
  - a. All allegations will be taken seriously. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged abuse or exploitation will be initiated.
  - b. A pastor or his/her designee is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements must be directed to this individual.
  - c. If the allegation is against a pastor, the District Superintendent shall be contacted immediately, and shall assume responsibility for 5.a. and 5.b., consistent with this policy, civil law, and The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, particularly paragraph 361 (Complaints), and Chapter Seven (Judicial Administration).

(sample of log, reference paragraph 3.b.iv.)

**Visit Log**

**Visitor(s) Name(s):** \_\_\_\_\_

Date	Time IN	Time OUT	Name(s) of Person(s) Visited	Type of Visit (home visit, hospital, ..)

(Vulnerable Adult Procedures 3 of 3)