



Safe Sanctuary Policy

May 2018

Our Mission

THE MISSION OF FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IS TO MAKE AND NURTURE CHRISTIAN DISCIPLES THROUGH THE PRESENCE AND POWER OF GOD.

Our Purpose

“Then Jesus took a little child and put her among them; and taking her in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.’”(Paraphrase of Mark 9:36-37)

The church above all institutions, is called to welcome and nurture children. Our goal is to maintain a safe, secure, loving place where children may grow and where those who care for them may minister to their needs in responsible ways. As caring Christians we are committed to protect and serve as advocates.

The following policy and procedures are intended to protect our children, youth, workers, employees, volunteers and the entire church body. Careful and confidential documentation is essential to show compliance with policies, to verify information as needed, and to have an accurate record in case of an incident.

Scope of Policy

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all persons including paid and unpaid adults, whether lay or clergy who have any direct or indirect contact with children and youth who participate in any activities or events sponsored by F.U.M.C. All persons who wish to serve within a ministry area at F.U.M.C. are highly encouraged to be active participants in the life of the church.

SAFE SANCTUARIES IMPLEMENTATION MANUAL

DEFINITIONS

Children-persons from Birth to Grade 5

Youth-persons attending Grades 6-12

Adults-persons over 18 years of age and beyond high school

Leader—one who is an adult staff member and/or adult volunteer who is over a program. Teachers who assume regular leadership of Sunday school classes, small groups, nursery workers etc.

Youth Assistant- One who is under the supervision of the leader. Youth may assist in instances where there is at least 3 years age difference between the youth and their oldest student.

GENERAL PROCEDURES

1. All staff members and volunteers must fill out a Safe Sanctuary authorization form and successfully complete a background check before beginning any leadership role. All staff members and volunteers must renew their background checks every 3 years. Files will be kept in the Business Administrators locked office, in a locked filing cabinet for security.
2. All staff members and volunteer will complete an initial Safe Sanctuary training on policies and procedures of F.U.M.C. All subsequent training will coincide with the renewal of their background check or change of policy.
3. To serve in a ministry area related to children or youth, lay leaders must have participated as a member or regular attender within the church for a least six months, at the discretion of the ministers and staff.
4. An adult should never be alone with a child or youth. Acceptable procedures of appropriate adult supervision are as follows:
 - a. Two background checked adults who are unrelated in each class leading in each classroom. If adults cannot be unrelated, for instance a married couple co-leads a small group, it must be approved by the leadership of each program and the pastor.
 - b. Three in a group. One background checked adult must be present in each classroom or small group. The adult must not be alone with the youth or children and must have at least two other people present; either two children/youth or one child/youth and second adult.
 - c. All programming must take place in its assigned location(s) with doors unlocked and doors open, unless there is a window in the door.

5. F.U.M.C. is responsible for each child/youth from the beginning of an event to the end of the event in the location that the event occurs. Parents of children must be attentive to sign in and out procedures because this list becomes our checklist in the event of an emergency.
 - a. Children may not leave prior to the ending of an event without prior notice from a parent.
 - b. Children will only be released to persons other than parents if prior contact has occurred between the parents and the leader or staff person in charge.
 - c. In the event that a church employee must take a child/youth home every effort will be made to bring a second adult along. If no other adult is available and a one-on-one situation occurs, there must be parental consent and the church employee must give the parent/guardian an estimated time of arrival. If that time changes another phone contact must be made.
6. Registration materials for activities in which children are off-campus shall require signed medical release and consent forms in order to participate.
7. All overnight or off- campus events need to have the correct ratio of adults to children/youth and at least one adult of each gender when both sexes are represented. There should never be fewer than two adults for any overnight trips. For youth and children there will need to be one adult for every 10 children/youth (1:10)
8. All drivers of church vehicles must be 25 years of age or older and follow the church rules for the vehicles. All drivers of these vehicles must have a DMV check and be approved by our auto insurance.

Each person in the vehicle must wear a seat belt and no double-buckling of seat belts will be permitted.

- a. During trips, all vehicles must follow one of the approved adult's supervision rules (two adults or three in a group)
- b. During organized youth events, a youth cannot transport another youth. The only exception is a sibling, or with written permission from both parents.
9. If any paid staff member or volunteer of the church suspects that a policy has been broken, he/she must report the incident as stated in the following section entitled "Reporting an Incident."
10. To volunteer in the nursery, a youth must be under the supervision of 2 adults. A babysitting class is recommended for each youth volunteer.
11. When volunteers or paid staff are required to change a diaper, this must be done in a visible area with a second volunteer/staff person present.
12. To ensure bathroom safety, children need to always go to the bathroom in pairs (2 children, 1 leader) Also the bathroom door should be left open, even if just slightly. If a child requires help the bathroom stall door must be left open.
13. To ensure internet safety for our children and youth, only first names will be used on any F.U.M.C. website. Parents will have to sign a photography consent form before any

photo or video is used of their children/youth. (This should be found on the medical release and consent forms)

14. Each year the congregation will be informed of these Safe Sanctuary Policies and any changes made to them. These policies will also be made available on the church website.
15. In accordance with applicable North Carolina law, we recognize that in certain circumstances, we will be unable to welcome onto our premises certain registered sex offenders. Registered sex offenders must not come to church property without prior communication and permission from both the Senior Pastor and the chairperson of the Committee on Staff-Parish Relations. Registered sex offenders who wish to worship, seek pastoral care, and be part of our faith community will be reviewed on a case by-case basis. In no event may a registered sex offender be on the premises during the hours of operation of our preschool, CDC, After-school or Summer Camp programs.

SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY

As communication through digital mediums is ever increasing and evolving, it is essential that the church be thoughtfully present in this mission field. Social media, instant messaging, and email can enhance communication, faith sharing, and deepen relationships.

The following are recommended practices to maintain healthy boundaries when ministries of the church interact with children and youth online. Adults engaged in ministry with youth and children should consider their relationship with the child or youth when interacting with them via social media, and should conduct themselves in a manner that would be acceptable on church grounds.

Connecting through Social Media

1. In addition to participating in communicating with official social media accounts pertaining to the ministry, youth may wish to connect with personal accounts held by volunteers engaged in youth ministry. Adults are asked to use the following guidelines when establishing these connections:
 - a. Adults should not submit friend requests to youth. A youth may not feel like they can reject the request, and such requests may inappropriately leverage the disparity of power between youth and adult. Exceptions to this rule may be when the adult's privacy settings make finding the adult's account

difficult. Then the adult may initiate the friend request if the student has expressed interest.

- b.** Due to the greater potential for misinterpretation, inappropriate discussions, and inadvertent exposure of youth to inappropriate content; personal pages should be maintained appropriately. Church leadership and volunteers should avoid establishing relationships with children and youth online if no relationship exists in person.

Boundaries

2. All church leaders and adult volunteers are encouraged to use strict privacy settings on any personal social networking sites/apps. If an adult does not set strict privacy settings they should avoid posting any inappropriate content and monitor their social media pages to remove any inappropriate content that others may post to their page.
3. For the sake of their own privacy, and the well being of the child/youth, adults should not invite children or youth into any groups, events, pages, chats, etc. that are not solely dedicated to activities directly related to children/youth ministries or activities.
4. Privacy settings should be reviewed often, particularly when social media platforms make changes to the privacy settings offered.

Communication

Social media is an excellent way to communicate with large numbers of people. However, as with all forms of communication, users should be respectful of the privacy of others. This is particularly the case with youth and children's ministry leaders. Leaders should be mindful of how something they post could impact another person, and never share news about a child/youth without prior consent.

5. Use prudent judgement in the time you contact youth and children through social media, email, etc. The "home phone rule" is a basic rule of thumb. Normally do not text or chat with a student during hours when you would not call their home phone (outside the hours of 9:00am-9:00pm).

- a.** Exceptions to this rule include emergency situations when the child/youth has reached out to the church leader or volunteer with issues they feel they need to discuss immediately; or during weekends, vacation times, or other times when the child/youth would have parental permission to stay up later than normal.

In all instances of exception the adult should use their best judgement.

6. All church leaders and volunteers should be mindful of the content they post on church pages as well as personal pages, as they are often viewed as the voice of the church.
7. Video chat calls between an adult and a child/youth are generally not appropriate. Such communication should be used only when face-to-face communication is not possible (such as the youth being in a foreign country, but regularly communicates with the adult).
8. When content shared raises concerns or questions, it should be brought to the appropriate staff persons (pastors, program staff), and law enforcement where appropriate.
 - a. Email is not appropriate communication for matters that are pastorally sensitive, emotionally charged, or that require extensive conversation.
 - b. Email may be the most appropriate communication for matters that may be best conveyed in writing.
 - c. Humor and sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted via email. Use only where appropriate.

Note that all communication sent digitally may be posted anywhere at any time. Adults should be mindful of what they put into writing.

9. When texting a youth, records of those texts should be kept on the phone of the adult in case questions or concerns are ever raised.
10. Phone conversations and face-to-face meetings are the preferred method of communication when responding to emotionally charged matters or pastoral emergencies.

Identity Protection

We will seek to protect the privacy of minors in all official use of social media. All church leaders and volunteers should monitor the privacy settings to ensure any posted images of youth are not visible to those without permission to view the images.

11. All church leaders or volunteers must not post pictures to any church social media page in which a child or youth is identifiable without prior written permission from the parent.
12. Even with written consent a child's first and last name should not be published with the picture. First name (or first name and last initial) listed with the picture is the best way to protect the child's identity.
13. We strongly encourage that any pictures posted maintain the dignity of the person depicted. Appropriateness of the picture should be considered, and adults should avoid posting pictures that would make a youth feel self-conscious, vulnerable, or subject them to ridicule.

Administration of Official FUMC Social Media Accounts

14. Each church related social media page must have at least two non-related adult administrators, who are either church leadership or volunteers engaged in the ministry. The exception to this rule is social media platforms that do not allow more than one administrator, in which case the administrator should be a program staff person.
15. Sites must be monitored frequently to manage content (remove inappropriate content).

Any inappropriate material posted to a church related social media site must be deleted and addressed. If necessary, a report should be made through the “reporting an incident” process.

REPORTING AN INCIDENT

If an adult leader or volunteer observes or suspects a violation of Safe Sanctuary policy, these steps must be taken immediately.

Steps to Reporting a Violation

- 1) Remember that you do not have to know for certain if a violation has occurred, but are obligated legally and morally to exercise good judgement, care, concern, and support for young people and their families.
- 2) A reasonably suspected incident should be reported as soon as possible to the appropriate staff member who will notify the proper persons or groups. (Senior Pastor, Trustees, Staff-Parish etc.)
- 3) Maintain confidentiality with the person to whom you are reporting.
- 4) Document in writing all known facts, circumstances, dates and observations regarding the incident and all steps taken on the Report of Suspected Incident (attached).
- 5) Any organization using F.U.M.C. facilities should also notify the Senior Pastor as soon as possible about any incident or suspected incident of abuse involving any person affiliated with that organization while using F.U.M.C. facilities.
- 6) The confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded to the extent possible under the circumstances.

Steps to Responding to Allegations of a Violation

- 1) A quick, compassionate response to any alleged incident or abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously.
- 2) Notify parents/guardians of the person immediately. Ensure the safety of the minor until parents arrive.
- 3) The person suspected should be removed from further contact with the minor until proper investigation has with been performed.
- 4) The designated investigator should speak with the accuser, including the parents (unless parent(s) are the accused) with another church official as witness.
- 5) If there is sufficient reason to believe that a violation occurred, the investigator should immediately notify necessary parties, including the senior pastor, the proper law enforcement and/or social services, as well as the church's insurance liaison if applicable based upon the violation.
- 6) Keep record of all steps taken by the church in response to the allegations.

Media Response

All media inquiries and other inquiries of a general nature must be referred to the Senior Pastor and/or the Associate Pastor. Inquiries seeking information concerning current or former employees must be referred to the Senior Pastor and the SPRC. Media statements must be approved by the Senior Pastor.

EMERGENCY ACTION PROCEDURES

Evacuation

In the event of an emergency evacuation from the building (fire, flooding, structural damage, etc.)

Evacuation Plan for Children's Ministry

1. Please first COUNT your children to make sure that you have accounted for everyone in your care.
2. Line up children and bring your attendance roster.
3. Take the nearest/safest exit from the building.
4. Report to the playground enclosure on the front lawn of the church, facing Church Street.
5. Sit your class down together in the enclosure and count them again.
6. Remain in the playground area until you are advised otherwise.

Evacuation Plan for Nursery

In the event of an emergency evacuation from the building:

- 1) Please first COUNT your children to make sure that you have accounted for everyone in your care. Bring your attendance roster.
- 2) Infant Nursery: Place all infants safely into rolling cribs and push them to the nearest/safest exit from the building.
- 3) Toddler Nursery: Have all children grab onto the traveling rope and take the nearest/safest exit from the building.
- 4) Report to the playground enclosure on the front lawn of the church, facing Church Street.
- 5) Wait with your class in the enclosure and count your children again.
- 6) Remain in the playground area until you are advised otherwise.

Tornado/Severe Weather

Preparation

- 1) Listen to NOAA Weather Radio or to commercial radio or television newscasts for the latest information. In any emergency, always listen to the instructions given by local emergency management officials.
- 2) Be alert to changing weather conditions. Look for approaching storms.
- 3) Look for the following danger signs:

*Dark, often greenish sky	*Loud roar, similar to a freight train
*Large hail	*If you see approaching storms or any of the danger signs, be prepared to take shelter immediately.
*A large, dark, low-lying cloud (particularly if rotating)	

During a Tornado.

Tornado Plan for Children’s Ministry: If a Tornado Warning is issued, Children’s Ministry leaders and staff are to seek shelter for their classes in the interior hallway where each class is located. Teachers/leaders need to first perform a head count of their children (use sign-in roster if available) and then line up down the sides of the walls in the hallway, kneeling and covering their heads with their hands for protection.

Designated locations: Children and Youth in classes in the Education building will go to the preschool first floor hallway of the Education building. Nursery and Preschool classes will gather in the alcove outside of the bathrooms across from the nursery rooms.

If children/youth are away from the church campus please utilize the following procedure:

Identifying Shelter Locations

An underground area, such as a basement or storm cellar, provides the best protection from a tornado. If an underground shelter is unavailable, consider the following:

- *Seek a small interior room or hallway on the lowest floor possible
- *Stay away from doors, windows, and outside walls
- *Stay in the center of the room, and avoid corners because they attract debris
- *Rooms constructed with reinforced concrete, brick or block with no windows and heavy concrete floor or roof system overhead
- *Avoid auditoriums, cafeterias and gymnasiums that have flat, wide-span roofs.

Lockdown

Used when there is a threat of violence or serious incident that could jeopardize the safety of students/staff (i.e. intruder, shooting, hostage incident, civil disturbances, etc.)

Children and Youth Ministry Directors:

- 1) These staff leaders or designated leader will make the following announcement by going to each classroom. "We are experiencing an emergency situation and need to lockdown our classrooms immediately. Teacher/Leaders are to close their classroom doors (lock when possible) and move students away from all windows. If not in a classroom, leaders/children need to return to the nearest classroom or office and remain until advised otherwise. Staff Directors will lock building entrances if not already secure.
- 2) Call 911 (Designated caller) *Identify the name and address of the church and describe the emergency, state the church is locking down, provide intruder description and weapon (s) if known, and identify the location of any/all children and youth.

3) Leader/Teachers:

- *Clear the hallway and bathrooms by your room moving everyone into the classrooms.
- *Locks your doors (if possible), turn off your lights, and shut your blinds and windows
- *Move children and youth away from the doors and windows
- *If a life threatening situation exists, exit immediately to a place of safety.
- *Take attendance and be prepared to notify the Children or Youth Director of missing children or additional children, staff or guests sheltered in your classroom.
- *Allow no one outside of the classroom until proper authorities (Police, Fire Dept. etc.) or staff gives the "All Clear" signal.