

**First United
Methodist Church**

**Safe Sanctuary
Policy &
Procedure
Manual**

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Introduction, Purpose, and Statement of Covenant Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures First United Methodist Church

INTRODUCTION

In April 1996, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. The adopted resolution calls for all churches to welcome children and to make our churches safe places for children and youth. It is our responsibility to be proactive in our recruiting and training to find people with a gift for caring for children, youth, and adults and also to protect volunteers from false accusations. It is our responsibility to oversee all programs involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults to make sure that there is a safe environment and that we have a plan of response in place should an accusation arise. The General Conference resolution affirmed that every local church must have in place a policy for protecting minors and vulnerable adults.

PURPOSE

The purpose of First United Methodist Church is to share God's love and make disciples for Christ. Our purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures manual is two-fold: (1) to demonstrate our unwavering commitment to strive to secure the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and (2) to protect the staff and volunteers who work with our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. By completing background checks and developing appropriate guidelines and boundaries for all those who work directly with our children, youth and vulnerable adults, we may be in a better position to ward off false accusations. We are also in a better position to avoid placing a volunteer in a position where they may be consciously, or unconsciously, tempted to sin.

STATEMENT OF COVENANT

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, we pledge to strive to conduct all of our activities and ministries in such a way that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers. We will be responsible in overseeing our programs and events. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as required by state law and our Christian conscience, and we will be prepared to minister to families of both the abused and the alleged perpetrator.

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

Definitions

Safe Sanctuary Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

First United Methodist Church

The following terms are defined for the specific purpose of this document:

- A. Adult: A person who is 18 years of age or older.
- B. Child: A person who is 0-11 years of age.
- C. Youth: A person who is 12 – 17 years of age.
- D. Outside Groups: Any group whose activity involving children or youth does not fall under the responsibility of First United Methodist Church.
- E. Volunteer: A person who assists in conducting activities under the supervision of a staff person. A volunteer may be a youth or adult.
- F. Vulnerable Adult: Any person, 18 years of age or older, with diagnosed diminished physical, mental, or emotional capacities.
- G. CHILD ABUSE may be any act committed by a person in a position of trust (parent, caregiver, Sunday School teacher, Pastor, or other) which harms or threatens to harm a child's welfare, physical, spiritual or mental health.

We recognize child abuse may fall into four categories:

PHYSICAL ABUSE: Inflicting bodily harm to minors constitutes physical abuse.

Instances of physical abuse include any physical act of undue force such as assault with a knife, strap or other implement; burns, fractures and bruises resulting from being beaten, pushed down, shaken, pinched, slapped or thrown. Physical abuse does not always leave visible marks.

SEXUAL ABUSE: Any time a minor is used for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older minor, abuse has occurred. The minor is powerless either to consent to or resist such sexual acts. This includes fondling, sexual intercourse, participation in sexual acts, incest, exploitation for the purpose of pornography or prostitution and/or exposure to adult sexual activity.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE: Emotional abuse deeply affects a minor's self-esteem by submitting him/her to verbal assault or emotional cruelty. It does not always involve injuries we can see. The minor receives the message that he/she is not good and never will be. Emotional abuse can include closed confinement (being shut in a small area), making racial remarks, excessive punishment, use of profanity, knowingly permitting drug or alcohol abuse, ignoring or encouraging peer abuse.

NEGLECT: It is not hearing or addressing a minor's basic needs for health, welfare or safety resulting in harm to the minor. It can include any of the following acts of negligence or maltreatment:

- Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing
- Abandonment
- Refusal to seek treatment for illness
- Inadequate supervision
- Health hazards in the home, school, or church
- Ignoring a minor's need for contact, affirmation, stimulation and nurture

Codes of Law: A child protection program is mandated by statute, which means there are state laws which declare a child's right to be free from abuse and neglect. Refer to the Tennessee Code Annotated for additional information. Refer also to the written policy of the Memphis Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Safe Sanctuary Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults First United Methodist Church

“God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and youth from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.” *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2000, p. 180.*

First United Methodist Church (“FUMC”) takes very seriously the call of Jesus Christ to minister to all people and to seek to meet their needs. The goal of this policy is to make sure we do everything possible to make First United Methodist Church and all of its ministries a Safe Sanctuary for children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The following policies will aim to reduce the risk for our children, youth, and vulnerable adults and will also serve to protect our leaders from false accusations of abuse.

SELECTION AND SCREENING

Careful screening is one way to reduce the potential of sexual abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults at FUMC. Screening includes background checks, completion of a volunteer application form, execution of the FUMC Covenant Commitment, and the completion of Safe Sanctuary training. All screening results will remain confidential.

1. Each volunteer and staff member shall complete a volunteer application. By completing this application, the applicant gives FUMC permission to perform any necessary investigation, including contacting appropriate law enforcement agencies and references. Background checks will only be run by a designated staff person, and the results will be kept confidential.
2. The following staff persons shall review the applications and follow through each stage with each applicant:
 - a. The Senior Pastor will be responsible for having all paid staff employees screened.
 - b. The Director of Children’s Ministry will be responsible for having all Children’s Program staff and volunteers screened.
 - c. The Director of Student Ministry will be responsible for having all Student Ministry staff and volunteers screened.
 - e. The Minister of Music and Worship will be responsible for having all staff and volunteers in the music ministry who work with children or youth screened.
 - f. The Director of Parents’ Day Out will be responsible for having all Parent’s Day Out staff and volunteers screened.
 - g. The Director of Operations will be responsible for having all Operations and Hospitality volunteers screened.
 - h. The staff person over mission teams will be responsible for having all mission team members screened.
3. Outside groups that use the church facility and/or church grounds will abide by FUMC’s Safe Sanctuary Policy. Such organizations will be asked to sign a covenant that they have read and agree to abide by FUMC’s Safe Sanctuary Policy.

4. Background checks will occur every five years.

SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

1. Two-Adult Rule: Two adults are to be utilized in all programming with children, youth and vulnerable adults. Where it is impossible to staff two adults in every room, an additional adult will serve as a “floater” with visual and physical access to all areas.
2. Minimum Age: Authority figures working with youth (grades 6th and above) must be 21 years of age or 4 years older than the participants. We will always strive to have the Authority Figures working with children (infant-5th grade) be at least 21 years of age. However, Authority figures working with children (infant-5th grade) must be a minimum of 18 years of age. Volunteers and staff must be four years older than the age of the persons they will be responsible for. The youngest age a volunteer may be is 12, or in the sixth grade with written approval of a FUMC staff member.
3. Adult/Child Ratios: We will meet or exceed the standards set by the State.

Infants (special needs & not walking) - 1 Adult to 4 Infants
Toddlers (walking, non special needs) - 1 Adult to 6 toddlers
2 years of age - 1 Adult to 7 children
3 years of age - 1 Adult to 9 Children
4 years of age - 1 Adult to 13 Children
5 years of age - 1 Adult to 16 Children
6 years of age & above - 1 Adult to 20 Children

For groups of mixed age, the adult to child ratio for the youngest child present applies.

4. Participants With Special Needs: In the judgment of FUMC staff, and in consultation with the participant’s parent, the above ratios may be adjusted depending on the nature and degree of a participant’s special needs.
5. Transportation: We will always strive to have more than one adult or more than one child in a vehicle. However, it is often out of the church worker’s control as to the manner and procedures by which children or youth arrive for and depart church events. In the rare event that a single adult worker may be asked to drive a child or youth, and it is impossible for a second adult to be in the vehicle, the minor should sit in the back seat of the vehicle, if possible. The adult worker should call the minor’s parents, stating the time the vehicle is leaving and when the vehicle should arrive (the parents know how long it takes to get home). Then, when the adult worker drops the child off, the worker should watch the child or youth enter the home.
6. Six Month Rule: All adult volunteer authority figures involved with children or youth of our church must have been members of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment. Persons not meeting this minimum requirement may serve only as an assistant with another trained adult.
7. Policy instruction: All volunteers and paid staff must go through policy instruction and educational training once a year.

RESTROOM POLICY

Infant and Toddler

Diapering should be done at the diaper changing tables and in close proximity to other care providers. For potty-trained children, use the bathroom in the Nursery with visual access.

Preschool

An adult leader should accompany preschool children to the restroom. The “floater” will count as the second adult for the classroom. Leave the larger, outside door open. Allow the child to enter the stall alone. Wait outside the stall door and offer assistance if needed.

Younger Elementary (Kindergarten – 2nd grade)

An adult leader should accompany younger elementary children to the restroom. The “floater” will count as the second adult for the classroom. Allow the child to enter the bathroom alone. Wait outside the larger, outside door for the child.

Older Elementary (3rd - 5th grade)

Children in older elementary may go to the restroom without an adult leader. Leaders should watch from their classroom door until the students return to class.

Showers

When children or youth are showering, we will strive for adults not to be present in the restroom facility at the same time.

INCIDENT REPORTING

Tennessee law requires volunteers who work with children under the age of eighteen to report any type of suspected child abuse to the proper authorities. Any volunteer who makes such a report in “good faith” is protected by law from any form of liability. But failure to make such a report can give rise to criminal and/or civil liability. You may report in “good faith” anonymously.

REPORTING STEPS:

1. If suspected child abuse has occurred, contact one of the agencies listed below:
 - State of Tennessee Department of Children Services Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline, 1-877-237-0004 (24-Hour Service)
 - Jackson Police Department, 425-8400
2. If immediate danger exists to a child, ensure the child’s safety and then contact the Police, Sheriff or Highway Patrol immediately and await their arrival or follow their instructions.
3. Incidents of child abuse or reasonably suspected cases of abuse, whether allegedly perpetrated by individuals associated with the church or outside the church, shall be reported to the director of the particular program after the above call has been made.
4. The director of the particular program will then follow these guidelines:
 - a. The Senior Pastor shall be informed immediately.
 - b. In the event the victim feels uncomfortable reporting to the Senior Pastor or if the suspected abuse involves the Senior Pastor, reports are required to be made to the Staff Parish Relations Chairperson (SPRC).

- c. All facts and circumstances of an incident shall be documented with the cooperation of the reporting person.
 - d. All steps taken in the handling of the incident and/or report shall be documented.
 - e. An additional report shall be made with Child Protective Services.
 - f. The Senior Pastor shall file a report to the church legal counsel, who will notify the liability insurer for the church.
 - g. The parents/guardians of the suspected victim shall be notified immediately unless the parents/guardians are suspected to be involved in the abuse.
 - h. In-depth investigation shall be carried out by the civil authorities rather than by church personnel.
5. The Senior Pastor or his or her designee shall be the sole spokesperson for the Church, insofar as media inquiries are concerned.

EMOTIONAL CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Adults are encouraged to be sensitive to the potential for child abuse. They should not hesitate to caution others that activities they observe are, or may appear to be, inappropriate.
2. Children are to be taken seriously. Stay calm and reassure the child that you will protect them. Reassure the child that you are concerned about what happened to her/him and that you would like to get some help. Since reporting is required, the child should be told that you have to tell the proper authorities.
3. Persons accused must be treated with dignity and support. Such persons shall be immediately relieved of further responsibilities until the investigation is completed and the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND TRUTH-TELLING

The confidentiality of all persons involved shall be safeguarded. But mandatory reporting shall be done. The Church will not try to hide or cover up any truth that is necessary to deal with allegations. As public records are available we will exercise Truth-Telling. Truth-Telling is proper sharing of public record without details.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER A REPORT IS FILED?

Every report of suspected abuse will be investigated by the appropriate agency. In cases of extreme physical and sexual abuse, a review team consisting of a physician, a psychologist or psychiatrist, a social worker and a state department of human/child services employee will prepare a report for the local Juvenile Court and Prosecuting Attorney's office.

WHY DO MOST CHILD VICTIMS OF SEXUAL ABUSE KEEP THE ABUSE SECRET?

A victim of child sexual abuse is under a great deal of pressure to keep the abuse secret. In many cases of child molestation, the molester has threatened to harm the child or a member of the child's family. The molester might have told the child that he would not be believed even if the child did tell. Another common situation is that the molester will tell the child that if the child tells about the abuse, he/she will get into trouble. The clear message is given to the child that if another person finds out, something bad

will happen to the child. This pressure to maintain silence can often be successfully overcome by establishing open communication between children and adults through a proper educational program for children and nurturing safe relationships with children.

Children / Youth Off-Site Activities

TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURES

The following procedures are for providing transportation for children / youth to and from activities sponsored and / or supervised by First United Methodist Church. These procedures relate to transportation provided by the church, by parents of children / youth, by volunteers with children / youth, and peers.

A. Vehicle and Driver Requirements

1. Proper passenger restraints must be used while transporting children / youth, if required by law.
2. All vehicles shall have insurance coverage as required by Tennessee law and a copy of this coverage must be on file in the church office.
3. All vehicles must be multi-passenger vehicles. No motorcycles, scooters, or mopeds will be allowed.
4. All drivers will have a current valid driver's license with the classification for the vehicle being driven.
5. All drivers are expected to obey all traffic laws. Failure to do so may disqualify them from driving for church-related activities.
6. Drivers are prohibited from using cell phones while their vehicle is in motion. The exception would be in case of emergencies with preference to someone other than the driver be the cell phone user.
7. Parental permission must be given for a child or youth to ride with a peer during FUMC sponsored events and all of the above guidelines must be followed. Written permission is preferred.

Driver's Guidelines for FUMC Vehicles

The following guidelines apply to drivers of vehicles owned by First United Methodist Church.

First United Methodist Church Restrictions:

Must have Motor Vehicles Records checked and comply with above insurance restrictions.

Must give name, a copy of their driver's license, state, and date of birth to business manager to be placed on church vehicle insurance.

Per the church's insurance requirements, for drivers ages 66 to 74, a doctor's statement indicating there are no physical conditions that would affect their driving ability will be required.

Tennessee Department of Transportation Restrictions:

To apply for CDL:

Must be at least twenty-one years old

Must have physical and drug test to receive medical card

Must take computer and driving tests

OVERNIGHT PROCEDURES

The following procedures are for children and youth activities which require an overnight stay and are sponsored and / or supervised by First United Methodist Church. This includes, but is not limited to, camping, lock-ins, hotels / motels, and overnight stays in a personal dwelling.

A. General Guidelines

1. Approval: A signed parent permission form will be required of each child / youth prior to the activity. These will be collected and approved by the group leader prior to the activity.
2. None of the children / youth will be allowed away from the designated overnight area without prior permission of the group leader and the parent's signed permission.
3. No adult may sleep in the same bed as a youth or child unless they are the parent or guardian of that child.
4. A husband and wife cannot serve as the second adult for one another.

B. Rules of Conduct for a Dormitory / Cabin-Type Setting:

1. At least two adults of the same gender as the residents should be assigned to each room of youth or children.
2. Adults should not be alone with a youth or child in a room.

C. Rules of Conduct for a Motel / Hotel Setting:

1. When two adults cannot be assigned to a room housing youth, the youth should be roomed separately from the adults.
2. Where adults need to be assigned to separate rooms, it is recommended that one adult room be located between every two youth rooms on the hall.
3. Adults should develop a rotating schedule allowing for the hallway to be monitored throughout the night.
4. If room checks are needed, they should involve two adults of the same gender as the room residents.

Evacuation Procedures

Tornado Warning

In the case of a **Tornado Warning**, children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be evacuated to the basement. Care givers should use the sign in-out sheet to take a head count to insure everyone is out. Infants are to be placed in 1 or 2 cribs and rolled out of the nursery. For safety purposes, parents are urged to wait until the emergency is over before picking up their child or youth in the designated area.

Fire / Bomb / Hazardous Material

In the case of a **Fire / Bomb / Hazardous Material**, children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be evacuated via the evacuation route that is posted in all classrooms. Care givers should use the sign in-out sheet to take a head count to insure everyone is out. Infants are to be placed in 1 or 2 cribs and rolled out of the nursery. We urge parents to not seek out their child inside the building. Do not re-enter the building until an all clear has been given.

Intruder / Missing Child

In the case of a **Missing Child** or **Intruder** (a person who is in the building with the intent to cause harm), we will go into “Lock-Down Mode.” All children, youth, and vulnerable adults will remain in their designated classrooms with doors closed until teachers receive the “All Clear” by proper authorities. For safety purposes, parents are urged to wait until the emergency is over before picking up their child.

Forms

First United Methodist Church Volunteer Application

Name: _____ Male () Female () Age: _____

Address: _____ City / State / Zip: _____

Previous Address: _____ City / State / Zip: _____

How Long at Present Address: _____ How Long at Previous Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Social Security Number, if 14 years of age or over: _____ Birthdate: _____

Email: _____ Date joined FUMC: _____

Occupation: _____ Employer: _____

Previous **volunteer (church and non-church)** work involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults:

Special Interests, Hobbies, Skills:

Have you at any time ever:

Been arrested for any reason? ____ Yes ____ No

Been convicted of, or pleaded no contest to, any crime? ____ Yes ____ No

Been accused or arrested for any kind of verbal or physical domestic assault? ____ Yes ____ No

Participated in, or been accused, charged or convicted of child abuse, molestation, or any improper conduct involving a minor or vulnerable adult? ____ Yes ____ No

Do you use illegal drugs? ____ Yes ____ No

If you answered "Yes" to any of the above questions, please explain in detail: _____

Are you interested in driving the church van or bus? _____ If yes, complete the following:

Driver's License Number: _____ Expiration Date: _____

Type of license: _____ Make of vehicle: _____ Year: _____

Vehicle insurance coverage (liability, comprehensive, etc): _____

Name of insurance company: _____

Have you had any moving traffic violations in the past five years? ____ Yes ____ No

If so, what and when? _____

Please provide three references over the age of 21 and not immediate family. One of these references should include a present or former pastor, youth director or other church official. Email is the preferred form of contacting your references, but if an email cannot be provided, please give complete address information for mailing purposes.

Reference Information:

Name and Email Address	Street Address, City, State, Zip	Phone	
			Hm
			Wk
			Cell
			Hm
			Wk
			Cell
			Hm
			Wk
			Cell

Application Verification and Release:

I recognize that First United Methodist Church is relying on the accuracy of the information contained herein. Accordingly, I attest that all of the information that I have provided is absolutely true and correct.

I authorize First United Methodist Church to conduct a criminal background investigation. I voluntarily release First United Methodist Church and those persons designated from liability involving the receiving and reviewing of information relating to my background or qualifications.

I have carefully read the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures of First United Methodist Church, and I agree to abide by them and to protect the health and safety of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults of First United Methodist Church.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent / Guardian Signature, if under 18: _____ Date: _____

First United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Covenant Commitment

The congregation of First United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and vulnerable adults that participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through safe relationships with others.

1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (sexual, physical, or emotional abuse) will be permitted to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults in any church-sponsored activity.
2. Adult volunteers with children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times so that no adult is ever alone with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
3. All volunteers (with a minimum of 12 years of age) must be at least four years older than the age of the persons they are working with in order to serve or work in an assistant capacity.
4. All volunteers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall attend annual training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
5. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to the appropriate authorities any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.
6. Every 5 years all adult volunteers will have a background check conducted.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a volunteer in the congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in the ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults? ____ Yes ____ No
2. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times? ____ Yes ____ No
3. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events once a year, provided by the church, related to your volunteer assignments? ____ Yes ____ No
4. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to the appropriate authorities? ____ Yes ____ No
5. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to have a background check conducted every 5 years? ____ Yes ____ No

I have read this Covenant Commitment, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**First United Methodist Church
Safe Sanctuary Policy
Training Compliance Form**

I, the undersigned, attended a Safe Sanctuary training session for the prevention of child abuse at First United Methodist Church. I understand the policy and procedures for the prevention of child abuse set forth at the training and agree to abide by those policies in order to protect the health and safety of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults of First United Methodist Church.

Trainee Name: _____

Trainer's Name and Title: _____

Signature of Trainee

Date

Signature of Trainer

Date