

# **Madison United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Child Abuse Prevention Policy**

**Adopted and Implemented 10/21/14**

## **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 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." (Paragraph 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] occurs 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. 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 consequence 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 community of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.

*(From "The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church 2000",*

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### **Purpose**

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth.

### **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 of our children and youth as well as all of the workers with children and youth. 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 and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first 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 with children and youth, Madison UMC is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be "with God's help we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this person, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" (*Book of Worship, Baptismal Covenant, Congregational Pledge, 11*).

The following policy and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in workers, but are intended to protect our preschoolers, 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 the case of an incident.

### **Scope of Madison United Methodist Church Child Abuse Prevention Policy**

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all persons involving children and youth. Examples include, but are not limited to the following: Madison United Methodist Preschool Program, Sunday School, Worship, UMYF meetings and events, Special services and events requiring child care or nursery care, church related activities meeting in private homes, field trips and any other activities connected to the church.

**Definition of Childcare Provider, Assistant Leader and Leader at Madison UMC Events**

- Childcare provider is someone who is eighteen (18) years of age or older with a high school diploma or equivalent.
- Assistant Leader is someone 18-20 years of age with a high school diploma or equivalent who is supervised by a leader.
- Leader is someone who is twenty-one (21) years of age or older.

**Supervision**

To achieve compliance with the Safe Sanctuary Policy it may be necessary to combine youth groups; recruit, train and reference additional volunteers; or cancel an event. Recognizing that there is safety in numbers, children and youth will be instructed to use the “buddy system.” It is also strongly encouraged that there be present at least one leader who is trained and certified in First Aid and CPR at all church events.

Supervision for Nursery/Childcare at MUMC events:

- There shall be a minimum of two (2) childcare providers who are not related to each other per room.
- We recommend that whenever possible State Childcare Minimum Standards shall be followed, particularly in relation to the number of childcare providers to child ratio which are mandated in G.S. 110-91(7) as follows:

<b>Age</b>	<b>Ratio Staff/Children</b>	<b>Group Size</b>
0 to 12 months	1/5	10
12 to 24 months	1/6	12
2 to 3 years	1/10	20

### Supervision of children and youth at MUMC events:

- MUMC events shall observe the “2 Adult Rule” (2 adults per classroom, 2 adults within line of sight when outdoors). There shall never be an event or situation whereby there is only one person. When groups are separated by walls, two adults shall be present in the building with the groups occupying adjacent rooms and doors remain opened. At no time shall there ever be a “one-on-one” situation in a closed door room.
- Exception to allow 1 leader / 1 assistant may be made with the approval of the event leader on a case-by-case basis.
- Any one-to-one mentoring or consulting shall be conducted in sight of another adult.
- Understanding that there is safety in numbers, one leader can be in contact with multiple youth (6th-12th grade) so long as they are in line of sight of other adults.

### Overnight Accommodations

#### At events that require overnight accommodations”

- We strongly recommend at least (2) adults be present in every room
- When staying in a hotel, leaders shall sleep in separate rooms from children/youth; or if necessary for children/youth to share a room with a leader, leaders shall sleep in separate beds from children/youth so long as any one leader shall not be alone with any one child/youth.
- Recognizing accommodations may be restrictive in some cases, one leader is adequate, so long as any one leader shall NOT be alone with any one child/youth.

### Definitions of Abuse

- Verbal Abuse: Any verbal act that humiliates, degrades or threatens any child or youth.
- Physical Abuse: Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person’s physical or mental health. In the case of child or youth physical abuse, this definition includes any intentional physical injury caused by the individual’s caretaker. Physical abuse may result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual’s age or condition. In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to the physical health of a child or youth.

- Sexual Abuse: Child or youth sexual abuse is the sexual exploitation or use of same for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not limited to: 1) incest, 2) rape, 3) prostitution, 4) romantic involvement with any participant, 5) any sexual intercourse, or sexual activities, 6) sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content. Examples: innuendo about one's own or another person's body, touching another person's body, hair or clothing, touching or rubbing one's self in the presence of another person, kissing, and sexual intercourse (#6 taken from Resolution #36, Book of Resolutions 2004).

### Screening for Leaders, Assistant Leaders, and Childcare Providers

Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse of children and youth.

Screening calls for a careful gathering and review of information in search of those who can provide safe and caring supervision in a safe environment.

- Prior to employment or acceptance of a leader, assistant leader or childcare provider (paid or unpaid), the event leader in charge of an event or program shall direct each prospective applicant to complete the application/consent form. By signing the form, the applicant gives permission to the event leader, local congregation and/or MUMC Safe Sanctuary Certification Authority to contact references and perform the necessary investigations to complete the review of the application.
- MUMC is responsible for conducting references and screening. This may be done through the local church, District Office, or the Western North Carolina Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. All screening shall be done in accordance with guidelines mandated by Chapter 110 of the North Carolina General Statutes Child Care Facilities (G.S. 110-90 2).
- If any of the reports raise questions about the fitness of the applicant, MUMC Safe Sanctuary Committee should disapprove the application and notify the event leader and/or local church. MUMC reserves the right to turn away any persons for service.
- If the applicant (paid or unpaid) is found that have been involved in any activity in which the applicant abused or exploited children or youth, the applicant will not be approved. Any conviction of a crime against children or youth shall disqualify any applicant.

Results of screens shall be kept confidential. The determination of whether a particular crime is serious enough to result in MUMC giving a negative recommendation shall be made by MUMC in its sole discretion. Without in any way limiting those crimes which MUMC may determine to be serious, MUMC offers the following examples as guidelines:

Persons having a criminal history of any of the following types of offenses shall not be allowed to serve in any ministry with children and youth:

- Child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual, or neglectful
- Violent offenses, including murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, etc...
- Persons having a criminal history of DUI or DWI conviction within five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to act as a driver.
- Persons having a criminal history of a drug related conviction within the five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to participate in the event.

### **Training**

MUMC shall develop and implement training and orientation procedures for all persons in leadership who work with children and youth at MUMC activities and events. Training shall include but is not limited to appropriate discipline, appropriate physical and emotional boundaries, leader misconduct, and this policy. No person shall, after August 1, 2005, have any direct or indirect contact with children and/or youth until they have completed this training program. We recommend that at the beginning of each event a review of this policy be conducted.

### **Committee Membership**

The following persons shall comprise the MUMC Safe Sanctuary Committee: Pastor, Staff/Parish-Relations Chair, Board of Trustees Chair, Lay Leader, Educational Chair, Church School Superintendent, Youth Leader, Preschool Board Chairperson, Preschool Leader, Administrative Board Chair and Council on Ministries Chair.

### **Reporting of Incidents**

- When a leader of a MUMC program, event or activity suspects that abuse or any suspected violation of the North Carolina Penal Code is taking or

has taken place, he or she shall call 911 when needed and report the abuse to the appropriate local law enforcement agency. The leader shall contact the administrator or event leader immediately, and cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.

- Address any needs the child or youth may have, medical or otherwise. Report to the parent(s) and/or legal guardian(s).
- The person suspected of abuse (respondent) shall, for the safety and well-being of the children or youth, be removed with dignity from further contact with the children and youth until an appropriate investigation has taken place. The matter shall remain confidential. If the event leader is the respondent, then the report should be made to that person's supervisor, pastor, or member of the Safe Sanctuary Committee.
- Following the report of an incident, the event leader, or supervisor in charge shall document the report, and then speak with the alleged victim, being careful to use open ended questions.
- All such conversations shall be documented. Careful and confidential documentation is essential. The documentation shall include the following:
  - The name of the leader observing or receiving the disclosure of abuse, including the date, time and place, and any action taken by this person
  - The alleged victim's name, age and date of birth.
  - Any statement made by the alleged victim.
  - Name of the respondent, the date, time and place of any conversation or any statement made by the respondent.
  - Any action taken, i.e. suspension of the respondent.
  - Date and time of call to the appropriate agency, name of the contact, content of that conversation and case number assigned.
  - Date and time of call to law enforcement agency, name of investigating officer, and content of that conversation.
  - Date and time of any other contacts made regarding the incident.
- Notify the Conference/District authorities
- It shall be the goal to provide supportive care to both the victim and the respondent and to restore such persons to wholeness. Supportive care can include the procedures of the criminal justice system, provisions of the current *Book of Discipline*, appropriate counseling referrals and continued pastoral visitation.

- Confirmed reports of proven incidents or abuse shall be retained in a confidential MUMC Safe Sanctuary Authority file for future screening purposes.

### **Media Response**

The District and/or Conference Office shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse. If investigations or allegations of abuse should come to the attention of the media, a response shall come from a spokesperson in the Conference Communications Office as designated by the Bishop. Refer all inquires to the spokesperson. Do not give out any information, simply state that all inquires will be answered by our spokesperson.

### **The following forms are included as requirements for MUMC Safe Sanctuary Child Abuse Prevention Policy:**

These forms must be completed for each person who will have supervisory responsibilities for children or you.

- Employment Application or Volunteer Application
- Authorization and Request for Criminal Records Check
- Form of Reference Check
- Participation Covenant Statement