

## **Faith United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy**

### **Introduction**

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. The adopted resolution in 2000, 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 and sexual exploitation and abuse."

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, 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 in their 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 abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (From The Book of Resolution of the United Methodist Church—2000. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House.

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### **Purpose**

Our congregation's purpose for establishing the Safe Sanctuary 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 to protect our staff and volunteers from potential allegations of abuse.

## **Statement of Covenant**

Therefore, be it resolved 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 as well as all of the volunteers who work with our children.

We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of volunteers;

We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events;

We will educate all of our volunteers who work with children 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;

We will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs;

We will inform parents of our policies and procedures.

### **Conclusion**

In all of our ministries with children, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child 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)

## **Definitions**

*For this policy the following will apply:*

**Adult** means a person 18 years of age or older.

**Child/youth** means any person under the age of 18 years.

**Children's/youth activity** means any activity or program in which children or youth are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers.

**Leader** means any non-staff adult who supervises a children's/youth activity. This person has regular and direct contact with children/youth and is counted in the Two Adult rule.

**Helper** means anyone not counted in the Two Adult rule, including a youth ages 14-17, who aids in ministry. Guests are considered helpers.

**Parent or guardian** means any parent, step-parent, foster parent, grandparent or appointed guardian who has general responsibility for the health, education or welfare of a child/youth or vulnerable adult.

**Persons required to report abuse** means staff persons, leaders and volunteers. These persons will follow the Faith UMC reporting procedures detailed in this policy.

**Response Team** means all persons, individually and collectively at Faith UMC who serve for the purpose of investigating and responding to allegations of abuse. The team shall include the pastor &/or associate pastor, Lay Leader, member of the Board of Trustees, a member of the Staff Parish Committee, Director of Family Ministries and Safe Sanctuary Chairman.

**Roamer** means a person who provides additional supervision when the Two Adult Rule cannot be met. They also supervise hallways and other open areas in the church.

**Staff person** means any person employed by Faith United Methodist Church who is responsible for children/youth activities. This person has regular and direct contact with children/youth and is counted in the Two Adult rule.

**Two Adult Rule** means no fewer than two adults shall be present at all times. When it is impossible to staff two adults in every room, an additional adult must serve as a roamer with visual and physical access to all areas.

**Volunteer** means any adult who assists in conducting children's/youth activities under the supervision of a staff person or leader and has direct contact with children/youth and is counted in the Two Adult rule.

**Vulnerable adult** means an adult whose mental or physical condition makes them susceptible to abuse.

## **Requirements and Standards of Staff and Volunteers**

### **Documentation Requirements**

1. All staff will complete an application and written permission will be received for a background check. The Staff Parish Committee will interview the applicant.
2. All volunteer leaders in direct contact with children at church activities will complete an application and written permission will be received for a background check.

### **Eligibility Requirements**

1. Leaders working with children/youth (birth to age 17) must have six months of regular participation in Faith UMC (excludes Nursery Attendants), complete an application, submit to a background check, have one reference check (Nursery Attendants only) and complete Safe Sanctuary training before they are eligible to begin a direct contact position. Volunteers with less than 6 months of regular participation at Faith UMC may serve as helpers.
2. No one shall serve the congregation who, in the belief of the leader of the event, may represent a potential threat of committing abuse or violating the Faith UMC Safe Sanctuary Policy.
3. Faith UMC will not allow anyone whom we are aware has been convicted of child abuse, child molestation or similar crimes to work with children/youth. Other felony convictions will be reviewed by the Safe Sanctuary Committee.
4. All paid staff and volunteers working with children/youth must participate in training and a background check every 3 years.

### **Staffing Requirements**

1. All activities involving children/youth will be supervised by two Safe Sanctuary approved unrelated adults.
2. Whenever reasonable, the Two Adult Rule will require that no fewer than two adults be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event or ministry involving children/youth. Where it is impossible to staff two adults in every room, an additional Safe Sanctuary approved adult must serve as a roamer with visual and physical access to all areas.
3. Guests can be considered as helpers, so long as the Two Adult Rule applies.

## **Transportation Rules**

1. Drivers must be at least 21 years of age.
2. Driver must be accompanied by at least 2 children unless transporting their own children.
3. Driver must have a completed "Driver's License and Insurance Information Form" which should be updated yearly before serving as a driver.

## **Cyber Safety, Cell Phones, and Computer Use**

1. Inappropriate use of computers, cell phones or other electronic devices on church property or at a church event is not allowed.
2. A parental release form must be signed before photos are published on any website. Only first names of children/youth may be displayed.
3. Leaders will determine cell phone policy during a given activity.
4. Cyber bullying is prohibited.
5. Pornographic sites may not be visited at any time.

## **Policies and Procedures for the Care and Supervision of Children and Youth**

### **Supervision**

1. At Faith UMC we follow the Two Adult Rule, which requires that no matter the size of the group, there will be two leaders present, one leader must be an adult and the other adult leader must be at least 5 years older than the age of the group. In some circumstances (including Sunday School) the second leader will be an adult roamer.
2. All activities should occur in open view. All classrooms at Faith UMC will have a window with an unobstructed view to the hallway.
3. Children of elementary age will be allowed to visit the washroom with the consent of the classroom leader. Children who are kindergarten age or younger will be taken by the class leader or roamer.
4. Should the children's or youth activity be an outdoor program or occur in a setting which makes it difficult to comply with this policy, the leader in charge of the activity shall take appropriate measures to make sure that the setting suits the activity that the children are properly supervised.
5. Children or youth with special needs will be handled on a case-by-case basis. We will do our utmost to accommodate all children/youth.

### **Discipline of Child/Youth Participants**

1. No form of punishment that involves physical or mental pain or discomfort may be used. Disruptive children or youth may be separated from the group to another part of the room.
2. If necessary, the adult roamer will get the child/youth's parent to come for him/her. The leaders should explain to the child/youth that a particular behavior is unacceptable.
3. In the case of disruptive behavior at an activity outside the church, or at an activity other than Sunday School, the parent/guardian will be called to pick the child/youth up from the activity. Leaders will carry all phones numbers.

### **Required Registration and Permission Forms**

1. All children/youth who attend Sunday School, VBS, or children/youth activities must be registered. The program leader will keep the information on file.
2. Signed written permission slips that list pertinent medical/health information will be collected before children/youth are allowed on trips outside the church. A copy will be left at church.
3. Accurate participation records shall be maintained for all children's/youth activities. At a minimum, these records should list the date and hours of the activity, its location, the names of the children participating (including whether any were dismissed early and the times of such dismissals,) and the names of the adults involved in the activity and other supervisors on site that day. These records will be kept by the Director of Family Ministries.

### **Restrictions**

1. The following items are not allowed at church or at any church-sponsored event: alcohol, weapons, tobacco, vaping products, illegal drugs, dangerous substances, fireworks, pornographic materials, explosives and other dangerous materials.
2. All leaders must be discreet in the use of tobacco in the presence of minors.

### **Nursery Procedures**

1. At least two leaders or a leader and a roamer will serve in the nursery during each worship service.
2. The nursery will maintain a list of attendees, the names of those authorized by the parents or guardians to pick up the children, the pertinent health information, i.e. allergies. Parents or guardians will be required to supply this information on a written registration form before leaving their child.
3. Parents or authorized persons should bring their child(ren) to the nursery. A parent or authorized person must enter child's name, adult's name and the time on the sign-in sheet. Parents or authorized adults can assist their child in the nursery, but their presence does not subtract from the need to have a leader and helper present in the nursery.
4. To release a child from the nursery, the leader should make sure the adult is a parent or authorized person.

## Safe Sanctuary Response Protocol

When a staff person, leader, or volunteer suspects that a child or youth has been abused by a caretaker, the following steps will be taken.

1. Said adult must immediately verbally notify a member of the response team, complete the Appendix G reporting form, and place in a confidential file kept in Program Director's locked safe. (Forms are available in the Safe Sanctuary drawer outside room 4.)
2. Staff person, leader or volunteer and response team member will then decide which, if any, of the following actions they will take:
  - a. Further observation
  - b. Notify Orland Park Police @ 708-349-4111.
  - c. Notify the Department of Children and Family Services @ 1-800-252-3543.
  - d. Meet with family to discuss disclosure observation or concern.

When a person other than the child/youth's caretaker allegedly abuses a child, the following steps will be taken:

1. Have the complainant complete the Appendix G reporting form which will be given to the Safe Sanctuary Chair. (Forms are available in Safe Sanctuary drawer outside room 4).
2. A member of the response team will immediately notify the parents or guardians of the alleged victim.
3. When the child's/youth's safety is ensured, the response team will meet to develop and implement an appropriate response.
4. If necessary, the response team will contact the Orland Park Police, the Department of Children and Family Services, Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church, and Faith UMC's insurance carrier and lawyer, and advise the congregation of any special actions it must take.
5. The response team will designate one of the spokespersons to work with the media. All church members will be encouraged to direct media questions to the spokesperson. If the accused is an appointed clergy, the spokesperson will be designated by the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church.
6. The response team will prohibit the alleged perpetrator from participating in activities with children/youth at Faith UMC while allegations are pending.



7. Depending on the position held by the alleged perpetrator, the Response Team and congregation will need to take different action.
  - a. If the alleged perpetrator is an appointed clergy, the Response Team and congregation will abide by the counsel of the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church. Generally, such actions will include placing the alleged perpetrator on an “administrative leave of absence” with pay and housing continued for a reasonable length of time. Access to Safe Sanctuary files will be withdrawn.
  - b. If the alleged perpetrator is employed by Faith UMC (for example: the choir director, custodian, secretary), the Response Team will seek counsel from the Northern Illinois Conference to determine the appropriate action. Generally, such action will include placing the alleged perpetrator on an “administrative leave of absence.”
  - c. If the alleged perpetrator is a leader or volunteer or church attendee and the allegation becomes a formal charge in court, then the Response Team will immediately relieve the alleged perpetrator from any church leadership role and any role involving children/youth until the court decides the case.
  - d. If the alleged perpetrator does not fall into categories a-c, and the allegation becomes a formal charge in court, the Response Team will prohibit the alleged perpetrator from any involvement with children/youth until the court decides the case.

**Appendix A**  
Faith United Methodist Church  
15101 S. 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Orland Park, IL 60464  
(708) 444-8560

Confidential information supplied in this application is to be used for the sole purpose of the Safe Sanctuary. This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. This is not an employment application form. Persons seeking a position in the church, as a paid employee will be required to complete an employment application in addition to this screening form. This is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities.

**Personal**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
First Middle Initial Last

Present Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Street City State Zip Code

How long have you lived at this address? \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Office Phone \_\_\_\_\_

**Previous Addresses for the last five years:**

Address	How Long at Address
_____	_____
_____	_____

**Education Background:**

School	Year Graduated	Degree
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

**Work experience of the last five years:**

Company Name	Address	Phone	Position	# Years
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Please indicate the type of children's or youth work you prefer: \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate the date you are able to begin: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the minimum length of stay you can make? \_\_\_\_\_

List any medical conditions: \_\_\_\_\_

Are you CPR or First Aid certified? \_\_\_\_\_

If so, list last date of certification: \_\_\_\_\_

### Church History and Prior Youth Work

Are you a member of Faith United Methodist Church? \_\_\_\_\_

Date Joined: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous church attended regularly in the last 5 years:

Name	Address	Phone Number
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

List all previous church work involving children or youth. List each church's name and address, type of work performed, and dates. Use separate page, if necessary:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List all previous non-church work involving children or youth. List each organization's name and address, type of work performed, and date:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List gifts, calling, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for working with children or youth:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List a reference other than a relative and former employer, who are familiar with your character or your experience with children:

Name	Title, if applicable	Address	Phone Number
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This information is confidential. It will be kept in a separate file accessed only by the Senior Pastor or staff member designated by the Safe Sanctuary Committee.

Is there any other information that should be known that was not covered in the information described above?

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Have you been convicted of or pleaded guilty to a crime in the past 10 years? \_\_\_\_\_

If yes, give details (attached a separate page, if necessary):

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If you have answered yes to the above question, you are not automatically excluded from consideration. The following information must be considered:

1. The type of crime
2. The number of crimes
3. The nature of the offense(s)
4. The age at the time of conviction
5. Length of time elapsed since last conviction
6. Relationship of the crime and capacity to care for children
7. Evidence of rehabilitation
8. Opinions of community members regarding your character

Evaluation of these factors is to be documented and attached to this form.

Were you a victim of abuse or molestation while a minor? \_\_\_\_\_

(If you prefer, you may refuse to answer this question, or you may discuss your answer in confidence with the Senior Pastor rather than answering on this form. Answering yes, or leaving question unanswered, will not automatically disqualify an application for children or youth work.)

**Appendix C**  
Faith United Methodist Church  
15101 S. 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Orland Park, IL 60464  
(708) 444-8560

**LETTER OF RECEIPT**

I, \_\_\_\_\_, have received a copy and read the Safe Sanctuary Policy of Faith United Methodist Church.

Furthermore, I understand and agree to abide by and be bound by this plan in my service and ministry on behalf of Faith United Methodist Church.

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Signed

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Dated

**Appendix D**  
Faith United Methodist Church  
15101 S. 80<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Orland Park, Il 60464  
(708) 444-8560

**FAITH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
DRIVER'S LICENSE AND INSURANCE FORM**

**Transportation Rules**

1. Drivers must be at least 21 years of age.
2. Drivers must have proof of insurance/valid driver's license and no serious moving violations in the past 5 years.
3. Drivers must be accompanied by at least 2 children unless transporting their own child.
4. Drivers must have completed "Driver's License and Insurance Information Form".

Copies of valid driver's license and proof of insurance are attached. I have read the "Transportation Rules" as stated above.

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Signature of Driver

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Date

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Signature of Leader

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Driver's License Number