

Safe Sanctuaries Policy

A policy regarding the protection of children and youth in ministries or activities of First United Methodist Church Northville, MI

(This policy does not apply to Northville First Care, as they must comply with policies and regulations established for day care/preschool centers.)

Covenant Statement

First United Methodist Church Northville pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that ensure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of our workers who serve in these capacities. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement appropriate operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with children and youth on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse.

Our Responsibility

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5). Children 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 children and youth.

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at eliminating any potential for child sexual abuse in the church. 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, *2012 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*).

We adopt this policy in accordance with the statement we as a congregation make at each Baptism; that we will "nurture children and youth in the Christian faith and life and include them in our care." With this policy, we renew our Baptismal pledge to "live according to the example of Christ" and surround children and youth with a "community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be thus confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal." (Baptismal Covenant II, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, p.96).

Classifications

Children: Infants to 5th grade, **Youth MS:** 6th—8th grade, **Youth HS:** 9th—12th grade.

Ministry Lead: Church Staff person or Primary Worker (see definition below) in charge of the ministry or event.

Church Staff: Ministry worker who is a paid staff of FUMC.

Primary Workers: Primary workers are staff and volunteers in roles with a greater responsibility or risk. Primary workers have responsibility for, more interaction with, and greater access to children and youth. A primary worker must be a minimum of 18 years of age. Primary workers must have Safe Sanctuaries training. They must have read and signed the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and have successfully completed a national background check. It is strongly recommended that primary workers have current CPR and First Aid certification.

Secondary Workers: Secondary workers are volunteers who work with children and youth and are supervised by a Primary worker or Church Staff person. A Secondary Worker must be at least 16 years of age and meet the Four Year Older Rule (see below). They must have read and signed the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and have successfully completed a national background check. It is strongly recommended that secondary workers complete Safe Sanctuaries training and CPR and First Aid certification.

Assisting Workers: Assisting Workers are welcome to assist with ministries involving children and youth. However, they must be supervised by a Primary or Secondary worker. Workers 16 years of age and older must also read and sign the Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

Covenant and Responsibility Acceptance

Signature and acceptance of Worker _____ **Date** _____

I. Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

A. Four Year Older Rule

In recruiting and hiring Primary and Secondary workers and Church Staff to work with children and youth in any position of authority, Primary workers must be at least 18 years of age and Secondary workers must be at least 16 years of age. Primary Workers, Secondary Workers and Church Staff workers must be at least 4 years older than the age of the oldest registered person they are serving.

B. Six Month Rule

First United Methodist Church will not use anyone as a Primary or Secondary worker for children or youth in the church unless he or she has been a member of the church or a steady attendee for at least six (6) months. In some situations this rule may be waived only by the senior minister or designee, with appropriate reference checks.

C. National Background Checks

Background checks shall be made of all clergy, payroll staff, and Primary and Secondary workers to the extent permitted by law, prior to employment or service. Background checks will be performed by the church.

D. Spiritual Gifts Considered

All interested workers must be considered for suitability for the work they desire to do. Consideration for service will be conducted by the leader of the program in which the applicant will work, or by other persons designated by the program leader. A team of interviewers may be used. All final placements must be approved by the appropriate Program Staff Director.

E. Confidentiality of Information

FUMC Business Manager will make arrangements to store securely all confidential records from the background checks and Safe Sanctuaries Covenants.

F. Required Forms and Signatures

Each person 16 years of age and older who serves children or youth will sign this Safe Sanctuaries Policy. Primary and Secondary workers must sign a permission form to have a Background check.

II. Staff Supervision Guidelines

All First United Methodist Church Northville calendared meetings of children and youth will be governed by the following guidelines:

A. Two Adult Rule

Two Primary or Secondary Workers must be present at all times during youth and children's activities, though it is understood that at times one of the adults may be present via proximity. This applies to church activities, and activities away from the church facility. When feasible, both male and female leaders should be present. If an adult has to accompany a child or youth to the bathroom, the bathroom door must be left slightly open. If the group stays overnight at the church, or if a church sponsored group leaves the premises, two or more leaders must be present and there should be both male and female chaperones present if the group is mixed gender. See additional specifications for youth overnight outings in section **II E 3** of this document.

B. Floater Rule

This rule allows for only one Primary or Secondary Worker to be in a classroom when there is another approved Primary Worker floating through the building regularly. When using this rule, the classroom door must remain open at all times. Floater's cell phone information will be available.

C. Medical Release and General Permission

All children and youth left under the supervision of Primary or Secondary Workers or Church Staff are required to complete a Medical Release/General Permission Form annually in order to participate in activities on or off site.

D. Scheduling of Events

Primary workers will schedule all church sponsored events through the church office.

E. Outings Away From Church Property

1. If the outing involves water activities such as swimming, it must occur in a designated swimming area, a CPR trained Primary worker or qualified designee must supervise the activity, and rescue equipment must be on site.
2. Under no circumstance is one adult to take a child or a group of children on an outing alone.
3. For overnight activities, female Primary or Secondary Workers will supervise female youth in their sleeping quarters and male Primary or Secondary Workers will supervise male youth, following the Two Adult Rule. Female and male participants will have separate sleeping quarters. With the exception of a parent/child combination, a worker and child/youth will not occupy the same bed or sleeping bag.

4. Transportation options and guidelines:

Parent Coordination: Parents are responsible for coordinating safe transportation, in both directions, so their children may attend the event. Primary or secondary workers are not responsible for coordinating rides and driving record checks are not required for drivers.

Ministry Lead Coordination: If Ministry Leads choose to coordinate transportation by car, the following criteria must be met: (a.) Approval of the transportation plan by the Business Manager, Youth Director or Sr. Pastor at least four (4) weeks before the planned event. (b.) All drivers are responsible for obtaining a driving record check (available “same day” at the DMV) and must submit the results to the Business Manager, Youth Director or Sr. Pastor two (2) weeks before the event. (c.) All cars must have two Primary or Secondary Workers, age 25 or older, with at least one of them having a driving record check. Again please note that only cleared Primary and Secondary Workers can drive.

Ministry Lead Coordination of bus(es): If numbers warrant and monies are available, Ministry Leads can choose to transport children and youth by chartered bus. All supervision by Primary and Secondary Workers on the bus will follow the Safe Sanctuaries Policy. All information regarding the travel arrangements must be submitted to the Business Manager, Youth Director or Sr. Pastor at least four (4) weeks before the event.

F. Goals for Worker to Child Ratios

First United Methodist Church has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry workers to children. These ratios are goals. The church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible, such as an unexpected number of children showing up for an event. No children (ages infant – 5th grade), however, should be left in a room without supervision of a Primary or Secondary Ministry Worker.

<u>On Church Campus</u>		<u>Off Church Campus – Day Trip</u>	
Infant	2:10	4-5 years	2:8
2-3 years	2:14	1 st -5 th grade	2:10
4-5 years	2:16	6 th -12 th grade	2:14
1 st -3 rd grade	2:16		
4 th -5 th grade	2:20	<u>Off Church Campus – Overnight Trip</u>	
6 th -12 th grade	2:30	6 th -12 th grade	2:14

G. Nursery Checkout Procedure

Church Staff, Primary or Secondary Workers need to ensure that all parents utilizing the church nursery will observe the check-in/check-out procedure.

H. Open Door Policy

Parents of the children served and the Church Staff have the right to visit and observe any children’s/youth activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced.

I. Outside Access

There must be access to a phone, cell phone, or pager when groups are at or away from the church facility. The church office or authorized church representative will be given this number prior to the group’s departure from church property.

J. Doors and Windows

All classroom and office doors should have a window for visibility from the hallway or remain open while occupied. Windows should be kept free from adornment that would obstruct clear view into the room.

K. Shower Usage

Whenever youth under the age of 18 are using the shower, a same gender adult must be in the bathroom or in the hallway right outside of the bathroom door in case of emergencies. Persons using the showers will undress and dress behind the privacy curtain at the front of each shower stall. At no time will a person be undressed outside of the privacy curtain. There are to be no youth and adults in the shower room at the same time unless there is an emergency. At no time will two persons occupy the same shower stall at the same time. Children below 6th grade will not use the showers. People who use the showers must provide their own soap, shampoo, and towels. Any outside groups must abide by these procedures; the person in charge of the outside group is responsible for enforcing these procedures with his/her group. Any persons who violate these rules may forfeit their use of the showers.

L. Confidential Discussions

When a one-on-one interaction is required between a Primary/Secondary Worker and a child/youth, care must be taken that they be conducted in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. Another Primary/Secondary Worker is to have knowledge of the one-on-one whereabouts or be in the vicinity. The Primary/Secondary Worker is to make clear that these discussions can be shared with a parent or other adult if they feel the child/youth is at risk. All incidents of suspected abuse and neglect revealed during the session will be reported in accordance with **Section III** of this policy.

M. Touch

Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child or youth. (For example, it is generally appropriate for a three-year-old to sit in a nursery worker's lap and give a kiss on the cheek, but it is not appropriate for a teenager and youth leader to behave this way.) Touching should not be initiated by an adult. It should be a response to the child's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It is strongly recommended that side hugs, with only one arm, be used. Touching and affection should only be given in the presence of other children's ministry or youth workers. Church workers must promptly discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with their ministry staff person.

N. Classroom Discipline

No physical punishment or verbal abuse will be used at any time to discipline children or youth. If isolating the child or youth within the classroom or removal of the child from the room becomes necessary, the teacher will notify a Ministry Lead or Church Staff.

O. Gifts

No Primary, Secondary, Assisting Workers or Church Staff are to give gifts to individual children or young people without the prior knowledge of the parent(s) or Ministry Lead. Because gift giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, gift giving should be done on a group basis, or for special occasions only. Gifts should not be elaborate but should be modest and appropriate to the occasion.

P. Addressing Known Offenders in the Congregation

First United Methodist Church welcomes all people into its doors. Those who have a history of child abuse are welcome to participate in adult worship, adult Christian Education, and adult social events. However, they are not to initiate direct contact with children or youth on church property and/or church sponsored events. No person convicted of a felony or misdemeanor involving physical or sexual abuse or neglect will be allowed to work with children or youth. Pastors and outside counseling organizations using FUMC facilities to meet with known sex offenders will only schedule those meetings at times when there are no scheduled calendared events for children or youth.

Q. Drugs, Alcohol, Tobacco, Weapons and Fireworks

Under no circumstances is Primary, Secondary, Assisting Workers or Church Staff to use tobacco, illegal drugs, alcohol, or to carry weapons or fireworks while involved in any church programming including children or youth. Any suspected use of the above substances by children or youth while involved in church programming will result in parental notification by ministry workers, and the individual will be removed from said activity. Permission for further involvement of the child/youth will be evaluated by the parent and the appropriate Program Staff Director.

R. Training

Prior to working in Youth or Children's Ministries, Primary Workers must undergo Safe Sanctuaries Policy training. The training will include a thorough reading, explanation and discussion of this Safe Sanctuaries Policy. It is strongly recommended that Primary or Secondary Workers maintain current certification in basic first aid and CPR. The church will pay expenses for this training. New employees must get this certification within 90 days of the start of their employment. It is strongly recommended that Primary nursery workers undergo training in infant and toddler CPR. Other workers are encouraged to get training if they frequently accompany children or youth on such activities as: water sports, camping, home-building mission trips, etc. Annual Safe Sanctuaries training for new and existing volunteers will be provided by the church. Existing workers will review and sign the Safe Sanctuaries Covenant at least every two years or anytime this policy is revised. It is the worker's responsibility to attend training when it is offered.

S. Annual Review

This Safe Sanctuaries Policy will be reviewed annually by FUMC Staff or Church Council to make any needed changes.

T. Additional Limits

Additional limits may be added to specific ministry events. At no time may this policy be reduced or relaxed.

III. RESPONSE BY CHURCH WORKERS TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE OR INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

It is our responsibility to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to our attention regardless of where that abuse takes place. We shall report suspected abuse to stop potentially existing abuse and to prevent further abuse. In situations of confirmed abuse, it is our intention to provide support, information, and assistance. We seek to provide a supportive atmosphere, offering both objectivity and empathy as we seek to create a climate in which healing can take place. If abuse is suspected by, observed by or disclosed to a worker and/or paid staff member

of the church, that person shall report the incident immediately to the pastor who will then contact the chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee. They will then follow specific procedures. (If the accused is the pastor, contact the chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.)

Safe Sanctuaries Policy Procedures

If abuse is seen or suspected:

A. IMMEDIATELY ensure the protection of and tend to the immediate needs of the child, as the situation requires.

B. IMMEDIATELY contact the senior pastor or pastor on call 248-349-1144 ext. 7. If a pastor is the accused party, the chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee is to be notified. The chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee will then notify the district superintendent.

C. If deemed necessary, the senior pastor or chairperson of the Staff Parrish Relations Committee or designee will notify the proper authorities.

1. The senior pastor will notify the Northville Police Dept. at 248-349-1234. This is a requirement of the law. No attempt by Primary or Secondary Workers, Assisting Workers or Church Staff will be made to investigate the incident. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.

2. The senior pastor or designee will make sure that written documentation concerning the incident is recorded on the designated form with the Michigan Department of Human Services: https://www.michigan.gov/documents/dhs/DHS-3200_224934_7.pdf

D. The senior pastor or chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee will notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety of the child/youth until the parent(s) arrive. It is important to emphasize that the proper authorities **must be notified**, even if the parent(s) does not wish the incident to be reported. (Note: If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, contact the proper authorities listed above.)

E. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the incident is to be reported immediately to the church's attorney, the church's insurance company, and the district superintendent. The district superintendent will report the allegation to the bishop's office. If the accused is a clergy (deacon or elder), member of an annual conference, local pastor, or diaconal minister, provisions of The 2012 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church must be followed.

F. If the accused is working in a volunteer or paid position with children or youth in the church, immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the person, remove the accused from further involvement with children or youth.

G. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child or youth is secured, the pastor or chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee must tell the accused that a report has been made. If the accused is a volunteer or paid staff of the church, that person shall be relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the accused is a paid staff person of the church, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

H. Any contact with the media should be handled by the Sr. Pastor or designee. Care will be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. The spokesperson should generally convey that the matter is under investigation. Any comments made prior to the conclusion of the investigation would be premature.

I. A written report of the basic information shall be kept to ensure on-going ministry to, and advocacy for, victims and others involved. It shall be filed in a secure place in order to ensure confidentiality. It shall be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed. The church must also file a copy of the report with the bishop's office of the Michigan Conference where it shall remain confidential.

Safe Sanctuaries Policy Acceptance

Signature and acceptance of Worker _____ **Date** _____