

Safe Sanctuaries Policy

Faith United Methodist Church, Fox Chapel, Pennsylvania

Adopted by Administrative Council October 18, 2023

Covenant Statement

Faith United Methodist Church 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, youth, and vulnerable adults 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 consistent with Pennsylvania state law.

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. Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to children, youth, and vulnerable adults. 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 and sexual exploitation and abuse." (Paragraph 162C, 2016 *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*) Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. 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.

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: 6th—12th grade.

Vulnerable Adults: Those over 18 years of age who are mentally and/or physically challenged.

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, youth, and vulnerable adults. A primary worker must be a minimum of 21 years of age.

Secondary Workers: Secondary workers are volunteers who work with children and youth and are supervised by a primary worker or staff person. A secondary worker must be at least 18 years old.

Assistants: Assistants are those under 18 years of age. Assistants are welcome to assist with ministries involving children and youth. However, they must be supervised by a primary or secondary worker.

I. Recruitment and Selection

A. Five Year Older Rule - In recruiting primary and secondary workers and hiring paid staff to work with children and youth in any position of authority, primary workers must be at least 21 years of age and secondary workers must be at least 18 years of age. Both primary and secondary workers must be at least 5 years older than the age of the children/youth they are serving.

B. Six Month Rule - Faith United Methodist Church will not approve any volunteer to serve as a Primary or Secondary Worker unless they have been regularly involved for at least six (6) months. In some situations, this rule may be waived only by the Senior Pastor or their designee, with appropriate Background Checks (see below).

C. Background Checks - Background checks shall be made of all clergy, paid staff, primary workers, and secondary workers to the extent required by law, prior to employment or service. The following Background checks are required:

	Clergy & Paid Staff	Volunteers who have resided in PA less than 10 years	Volunteers who have resided in PA more than 10 years
PA State Police Background Check	X	X	X
PA Child Abuse Clearance	X	X	X
FBI Background Check, including fingerprinting	X	X	
Disclosure Statement Application for Volunteers			X

All background checks must be less than five years old, and shall be renewed every five years, in accordance with PA state law. The original documents must be presented to the church office, and copies must be maintained in the church records.

D. Confidentiality of Information - The Senior Pastor and Staff Parish Relations Committee will make arrangements to store securely all confidential records from the background checks and Safe Sanctuaries Covenants.

E. Application Process – All paid staff, clergy, Primary Workers, Secondary Workers, and Assistants will submit a written application (see Appendix B) prior to serving with children, youth or vulnerable adults.

II. Supervision Guidelines

All meetings of children, youth, and vulnerable adults affiliated with Faith United Methodist Church will be governed by the following guidelines. Fox Hill Preschool and Roots of Faith, as ministries of Faith United Methodist Church, are also required to abide by these guidelines.

A. Two Adult Rule - It is strongly recommended that at least two primary workers or one primary and one secondary worker be present at all times during activities with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This applies to online activities, activities at church facilities, and activities away from church facilities. The preschool is required to hire two primary workers or one primary and one secondary worker for each of their classes. When communicating electronically with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, a parent/guardian or another primary worker should be included on the communications. If a primary or secondary worker has to accompany a child, youth, or vulnerable adult to the bathroom, the bathroom door must be left slightly open. If the group stays overnight at the church or off-site, two or more unrelated non-cohabitating primary or secondary workers must be present and there should be more than one gender of primary or secondary workers present if there is more than one gender of participant present. See additional specifications for youth overnight outings in section II-C below.

B. Roamer Rule - This rule allows for only one primary or secondary worker to be in a room with children, youth, or vulnerable adults when there is another approved primary worker roaming through the building regularly. When using this rule, the classroom door must remain open at all times, unless the door is equipped with windows and has clear visibility.

C. Outings Away From Church Property - All children and youth participating in activities away from church facilities must have written consent by a parent /guardian. If the activity is overnight, each youth or child must have written parental/guardian consent and a medical release form. If the outing involves water activities such as swimming, a primary worker must supervise the activity. When transporting youth, children, or vulnerable adults in church buses, the driver must be approved and trained to drive the bus and there must be another worker on the bus; at least one of the adults must be a primary worker. Under no circumstance is one adult to take children, youth, or vulnerable adults on an overnight outing alone. Students and adults will have separate shower times. Students will be given complete privacy for changing and bathing. A one person per bed/sleeping bag/air mattress policy will be followed for all students and adults, with the exception of cohabitating adult chaperones if they will have their own room/tent.

D. Goals For Worker to Child Ratios - Faith United Methodist Church has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry workers to children/youth:

- Ages Infant-2 years old 2:10
- Age 3 2:14
- Ages 4-5 2:18
- Ages 6-12 2:20
- Ages 12-18 2:30

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.

E. Check-in & Check-out Procedures - All parents/guardians utilizing the church nursery or childcare for other programming will observe the check-in/check-out procedure. It is recommended that for other programming where minors attend separately from their parents/guardians:

- middle school and high school students should utilize a sign-in and sign-out page
- primary or secondary workers should take attendance for preschool and elementary school students and only release children to the parents/guardians or other adults designated by the family to pick-up the child.

F. Open Door Policy - Parents or guardians of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults served and the church staff have the right to visit and observe the children's/youth activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced.

G. Outside Access - There must be access to a phone or cell phone when groups are at or away from the church facility. For off-site activities, parents or guardians of participating children, youth and vulnerable adults will be given a cell phone number for at least two of the primary and secondary workers attending the activity away from the church facility. For overnight, off-site activities, the church office or authorized church representative will be given cell phone numbers for all primary and secondary workers attending the activity, a roster of participants, and an itinerary prior to the groups' departure from church property.

H. Doors and Windows - All rooms 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.

I. Confidential Discussions - One-on-one interactions with children, youth, or vulnerable adults are sometimes necessary and appropriate but care must be taken that they be conducted in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. If at all possible, a second primary/secondary worker is to be notified in advance and have knowledge of the whereabouts of clergy, paid staff, or primary/secondary workers while meeting individually with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Children, youth, and vulnerable adults who have confidential discussions with clergy, paid staff, or primary/secondary workers should be told they are free to discuss any aspects of the discussion with a parent or guardian or other adult. All incidents of suspected abuse and neglect revealed during the session will be reported in accordance with Section III of this policy.

J. Touch - Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult. 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 the Senior Pastor.

K. Safety of LGBTQIA+ Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults - The United Methodist Social Principles say: *"Primary for us is the gospel understanding that all persons are important—because they are human beings created by God and loved through and by Jesus Christ and not because they have merited significance. We therefore support social climates in which human communities are maintained and strengthened for the sake of all persons and their growth."*

Faith UMC will create a welcoming environment for everyone so that the message of the Good News of Jesus Christ can be heard. We will secure every individual's right and expectations to fully experience ministry free from prejudice and harassment, and work to prevent and address any gender, sexual-orientation, or identity-based slurs or bullying. We will ask for and use individuals' preferred names and pronouns and respect individuals' right to privacy by not disclosing their gender identity or sexual orientation, rather allowing them to choose if and when they share it. If a child or youth decides to disclose a different identity while at a ministry event (such as camp, overnighter, or something similar) than the one that was indicated in registration it will be handled with sensitivity to the comfort and safety of all. If a child or youth shares that he/she (or a family member or friend) are or might be transgender, transsexual, or gender non-conforming, we respond with compassion and support and help

children, youth, and vulnerable adults identify resources for further help and reflection. We will provide privacy to all children, youth, and vulnerable adults for changing clothes, taking showers and going to the bathroom. In the event of a medical emergency, we will share pertinent information only as necessary to care for the individual, as we do for any other emergency situation. We will train all staff and volunteers in this policy and in basic cultural and compassionate responsiveness in working with trans* and gender non-conforming people.

L. Classroom Discipline - No physical punishment or verbal abuse will be used at any time to discipline children, youth, or vulnerable adults. If discipline issues with a child, youth or vulnerable adult are severe or become a pattern, the primary or secondary worker in charge will notify the Preschool Director, NextGen Director, Outreach Director, Senior Pastor and/or parent/guardian as appropriate.

M. Gifts - No staff or workers are to give gifts to individual children or young people without the prior knowledge of the parent/guardian(s) or responsible staff. Because gift giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, gift giving should be done on a group basis, as a random prize, or for special occasions only. Gifts should not be elaborate but should be modest and appropriate to the occasion.

N. Addressing Known Offenders - The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church declare: “We recognize that family violence and abuse in all its forms – verbal, psychological, physical, sexual – is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the Local Church (Church) to provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the victim. While we deplore the actions of the abuser, we affirm that person to be in need of God’s redeeming love.”

Faith United Methodist Church welcomes all people into its doors. Participation in church programs by individuals who have been charged or convicted of violence or child abuse, or who are registered sex offenders will be governed by the WPAUMC Sex Offender Involvement Policy as adopted by Faith UMC on 2-15-2023. No person who has been charged or convicted of violence or child abuse, or who is a registered sex offender, will be allowed to work with children, youth or vulnerable adults.

O. Training - Primary and secondary workers must complete Safe Sanctuaries training and read and sign the Safe Sanctuaries policy within 30 days of working, and complete renewal training every two years. The training will include a thorough reading and explanation of this Safe Sanctuaries Policy and teaching and discussion on the law and issues of child sexual abuse in church settings. It is strongly recommended that primary workers and secondary workers have current CPR and First Aid certification. It is recommended that Assistants become familiar with the Safe Sanctuaries Policy of the church.

P. Annual Review This Safe Sanctuaries Policy will be reviewed annually to make any needed changes by the Administrative Council.

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

It is our legal and moral 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. If abuse occurs, it is our intention to act as an advocate for all affected persons, providing support, information, assistance and intervention. 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 primary or secondary worker and/or paid staff member of the church, that person shall report the incident immediately to the Senior Pastor who will then contact the chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

(If the accused is the Senior Pastor, contact the chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.) They will then follow the procedures specified below.

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. If a pastor is the accused party, the chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee is to be notified. The Senior Pastor or the chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee will then notify the district superintendent.

C. The Senior Pastor or chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee will encourage the individual reporting suspected abuse to contact the PA Abuse Hotline and file their own report. If deemed necessary, the Senior Pastor or chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee or their designee will notify the proper authorities, and file a report on behalf of the church.

D. The 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/vulnerable adult until the parent(s) or guardians arrive. It is important to emphasize that the proper authorities must be notified even if the parent(s) or guardian(s) do not wish the incident to be reported. (Note: If one or both of the parents or guardians 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 Paragraphs 361-362 of the 2016 *Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church* must be followed.

F. A list of emergency numbers will be available to the staff and church members at all times:

- In case of emergency.....911
- Church Office.....412.963.8155
- PA Child Abuse Hotline (Childline)...800.932.0313
- Pittsburgh District Superintendent..412.281.7152
- Bishop's Office.....724.776.1499

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

H. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child, youth or vulnerable adult is secured, the pastor or chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee may tell the accused that a report has been made. If the accused is a volunteer or paid staff member of the church, that person shall not be permitted to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults until the investigation is finished. If the accused is a paid staff person of the church, arrangements should be made to adjust work responsibilities and/or to either maintain or suspend their income pursuant to advice from counsel until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

I. Any contact with the media should be handled by the Senior Pastor or their 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.

J. A written report of the basic information shall be kept to ensure on-going ministry to, and advocacy for, victims and others involved. A form for this purpose (see Appendix A) shall be available in the church office. It shall be filed in a secure place 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 Western Pennsylvania Conference where it shall remain confidential.

Appendix A

FAITH UMC ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORT

Please use ink or type.

Name of Reporter: _____ Age: _____

Name(s) of persons involved (additional names may be listed at the end of this form):

Age: _____

Age: _____

Age: _____

Age: _____

Date and time of accident/incident: _____

Place of accident/incident: _____

Describe the accident/incident:

Describe the nature of any injury:

Witness(es) to accident/incident:

What action was taken at the time of the incident?

If a child, youth, or vulnerable adult was involved, was the Parent/Guardian contacted? YES NO

Time: _____ How were they contacted? _____

Describe any medical treatment/first aid: _____

Appendix A

If incident is a case of seen or suspected abuse (documentation of response from section III of Safe Sanctuaries Policy):

- B.** Name(s) of Church Official Notified (Senior Pastor or Pastor on call; if Senior pastor is alleged, chair of Staff Parish Relations to be notified instead) _____
Date/Time of Notification _____
Name of person who did notification _____
- C.** Date/Time of Report/s to PA Child Abuse Hotline _____
Name of person who did notification _____
Any additional reports or authorities filed _____
- D.** Name(s) of Parent/Guardian notified (If a parent/guardian is alleged abuser, contact proper authorities instead.) _____
Date/Time of Notification _____
Name of person who did notification _____
- E.** Name of District Superintendent notified _____
Date/Time of Notification _____
Name of person who did notification _____

For all other accidents/incidents, notify the Senior Pastor and your supervisor.

Name of Supervisor Notified _____
Date/Time of Notification _____
Name of person who did notification _____

Name of Senior Pastor Notified _____
Date/Time of Notification _____
Name of person who did notification _____

Follow up action by church official _____

Signature of Reporter date/time

Signature of Church Official date/time

Date/time when the Senior Pastor was notified of the incident _____

Additional name(s) of persons involved (continued from above):

Age: _____

Age: _____

Age: _____

Age: _____

Age: _____

Appendix B

FAITH UMC APPLICATION TO SERVE WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH OR VULNERABLE ADULTS

Complete and submit to church office prior to serving with children, youth or vulnerable adults.

First Name: _____ Middle Name: _____

Last Name: _____ Age: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

How long at present address? _____ Cell Phone: _____

Previous address (if at present address less than 2 years):

Position Desired (Circle one and then fill in title):

Volunteer or Paid Staff _____

I am...

() Student Current Grade/Year in School _____ School/University _____

() Adult () Retired () Unemployed () Employed (part or full-time)

Occupation _____

Current Employer _____ May we inquire of your employer? _____

Church/faith community of which you are a member or attending: _____

If not Faith UMC, list phone number and Pastor's name: _____

How long? _____ If less than 1 year, list name and phone number of previous church/faith community you regularly attended:

Have you ever filled out an application to volunteer here before? _____ If so, when? _____

Position requested on former application _____

Our church has an open-door policy, which means that a parent, volunteer or church staff may visit/observe at any time. Are you comfortable with this atmosphere? _____

In most instances, our church requests two teachers/leaders for all activities with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults. Are you comfortable with co-leading? _____

Do you have a valid driver's license? _____ If yes, state and license number: _____

Do you have driver's liability insurance? _____ If yes, carrier name: _____

Appendix B

Have you had a traffic violation within the past 5 years? If yes, specify for what and date(s) of the ticket(s).

Have you ever been charged with, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, or other crimes of violence, theft or serious motor vehicle violations)? _____ If yes, please explain:

Have you ever dealt with a child abuse situation in any way, including being abused, being accused of abuse, knowing someone who was abused, etc.? _____ If yes, please explain:

References: List three personal references (people who are not related to you by blood or marriage) and provide complete contact information for each.

Name: _____ Phone (cell preferred): _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Email: _____

How long known? _____ Relationship to Applicant: _____

Name: _____ Phone (cell preferred): _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Email: _____

How long known? _____ Relationship to Applicant: _____

Name: _____ Phone (cell preferred): _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip: _____ Email: _____

How long known? _____ Relationship to Applicant: _____

Faith UMC reserves the right to deny volunteer opportunities to anyone in its sole discretion.

By signing this form, I am affirming that the above statements I have made are true and factual to the best of my knowledge. I am granting permission to FUMC to contact and or all persons, organizations, or agencies for the expressed purpose of screening before serving with children, youth or vulnerable adults.

Applicant's Signature

Parent/Guardian Signature if under 18

Date

Safe Sanctuaries Policy Signature Page

With my signature, I verify that I have read this Safe Sanctuaries Policy and am committed to abide by all of the policies and procedures contained therein.

Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Please tear off the signature page and return to the church office, retaining the rest of the policy for your records.

Complete bottom section if first or refresher training completed in conjunction with review of written policy.

If you viewed video of Safe Sanctuaries Training:

Date Viewed: _____

Comments/Questions: _____

If you completed in-person or online live Safe Sanctuaries Training:

Date of Training: _____

Name of Trainer/s: _____