

Safe Sanctuary

Children & Youth Protection Policy

*“... Jesus called to them and said,
‘Let the little children come to me and do not stop them;
for it is to such as that the kingdom of God belongs.’”
Luke 18:16*

Franklin First United Methodist Church

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Mission Statement:

The First United Methodist Church, Franklin community, will foster the faith journey of our children by providing Christian education, fellowship, worship, and outreach opportunities in an atmosphere of love and acceptance.

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Introduction

- “Whoever welcomes [a] child...welcomes me.” Matthew 18:5
- “Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these.” Mark 10:14
- “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
- “Now it is required that those who have been given trust must prove faithful.” 1 Corinthians 4:2

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to our future...the children and youth of our congregation. 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 and youth. The problems cut across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. 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 create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church—1996. © 1996 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission. [pp.384[386])

Thus, in covenant, we adopt this Protection Policy for the general safety of our children and youth and for the prevention of abuse in our church.

Purpose

Our congregations’ purpose for establishing the Children and Youth Protection Policy is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth. Our church, as a holy place of sanctuary, must continue to be a place where people of all ages can come together for worship, study, and service, with the assurance that they are safe and secure in the community of faith.

Scope

The Children and Youth Protection Policy shall apply to all individuals, whether paid staff or unpaid volunteers, whose duties or volunteer activities bring them into direct contact with children and/or youth participating in any activities or events sponsored by First United Methodist Church Franklin. This policy, however, does not supersede or countermand requirements that apply to any paid or unpaid staff/volunteers by reason of applicable law or regulation.

Definitions

A. FUMC Franklin—First United Methodist Church Franklin

B. Types of Abuse

1. Emotional—abuse in which a person exposes a child/youth to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty.
2. Neglect—abuse in which a person endangers a child's/youth's health, safety, or welfare through negligence.
3. Physical—abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child/youth.
4. Ritual—abuse in which physical, sexual or psychological violation of a child/youth is inflicted regularly, intentionally and in a stylized way as part of ceremonies or rites by a person or persons responsible for the child's/youth's welfare.
5. Sexual—abuse in which sexual contact between a child/youth and an adult (or another older and more powerful child or youth) occurs.

C. Recommended Ratio	Infants—3 years	2:10
	4 year—Kindergarten	2:20
	1st Grade—6th Grade	2:30
	7th Grade—12th Grade	2:40

Caregivers have the right to limit children/youth to these recommended ratios or lower. Ratios are determined by the youngest child in the room.

D. Volunteer—person that supervises children/youth activities.

E. Security Code—an alphanumeric code that parent/guardian uses to pick up a child.

Media Response

The Senior Pastor shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse unless there is a reasonable suspicion that the Senior Pastor is involved or complicit in the abuse. In such instance the District Superintendent shall be informed. If investigations or allegations of abuse should come to the attention of the media, a response shall come from the Senior Pastor. If the Senior Pastor is the one accused, the District Superintendent shall make any response to the media.

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 staff/volunteers who work with children and youth. As a staff / volunteer of the Children or Youth of the First United Methodist Church Franklin, I will do my best to be a good example and role model for the children/youth of my church. I understand that as a member of the Children's or Youth Ministry, I will be willing to:

- Attend planning meetings when scheduled
- Prepare for the lesson or program that I am to oversee;
- Attend church worship and participate as fully as possible in the total church program;
- Minister to the children/youth and their families as the need arises;
- Show and share my own Christian faith; and
- Grow in Christian faith by attending training and study opportunities. I prayerfully commit myself to this responsibility as I fulfill my position as a staff/volunteer member in the Children/Youth ministry program of the First United Methodist Church Franklin.

Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children and youth, 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*, p.44).

Adopted on April 21, 2005, Amended October, 2008, February 2016

Screening of Staff and Volunteers

- A. All staff and volunteers shall complete a background check and consent form to be reviewed and kept on file. By signing the form, the applicant will give the staff permission to the review of the results of this screening. On-going review and screening of staff and volunteers will be conducted as deemed necessary by the church staff.
- B. Before being accepted, each volunteer must be either a member or active participant in FUMC Franklin.
- C. A volunteer who has not been screened will be able to serve in the presence of a staff member or volunteer who has been screened and trained.
- D. The forms will be kept on file in the church office under strict confidentiality.

Training

- A. All staff and volunteers will be given a written copy of the safe sanctuary policy and will sign a written acknowledgment that the staff member or volunteer has read and understands the policy.
- B. Certified First Aid/CPR Training will be offered on an annual basis. The paid nursery staff will be required to maintain certification.
- C. Orientation/Refresher Training
 1. A training course will be offered periodically throughout the year for new staff and/or current volunteers to inform them of the church's policies and procedures.
 2. All staff shall participate in mandatory training as deemed necessary and appropriate by the Safe Sanctuary Committee in consultation with the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Paid staff shall be required to annually renew their covenant to abide by and cooperate with the church's policies and procedures.
 3. All volunteers already screened and approved shall be encouraged to renew their covenant yearly to abide by and cooperate with the church's policies and procedures.
- D. Training materials will be available for review from the staff person directly responsible for the ministry area.

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Supervision

- A. “Two-Adult Role”
Two or more volunteers are to be present at all times during any church sponsored program, event or ministry involving children/youth. It is recommended that a five year differential exist between children/youth and their leaders. If one-on-one interactions between adults and children/youth are unavoidable, the interaction should occur in an unenclosed area and with the knowledge of another adult.
- B. Windows in all classrooms
In classrooms where there is not a window, the door must remain open when the room is in use.
- C. Restroom Procedure
Whenever possible, an adult shall escort any child in grades pre-K through 6th to the restroom and wait outside.
For children under PreK, the bathroom door must remain open at all times.
- D. Searches
FUMC Franklin staff/volunteers will be instructed not to search children/youth. Staff/volunteers shall notify parents and the appropriate law enforcement agency immediately if there is reasonable suspicion that a child/youth is committing or has committed an unlawful act upon church grounds, within any church building, or any structure under church control or any vehicle parked on church property or reasonable suspicion of any child/youth possessing any dangerous weapon upon church grounds, within any church building, or any structure under church control or any vehicle parked on church property. Dangerous weapon for purposes of this section is defined as any dangerous instrument or substance capable of inflicting injury on any person. The staff/volunteer will stay with the child/youth until the arrival of either the parents or law enforcement official; but in no event shall the other children/youth participating in any event be left without supervision by staff/volunteers.
- E. Discipline
Staff/volunteers are instructed not to use physical force except in self-defense or defense of others. It is against FUMC Franklin policy to use corporal punishment. Staff/volunteers are to follow the discipline policy provided in the volunteer materials.
- F. Name Tags/Identification
Staff/volunteers shall wear their name tags or other identification at all times when working with children/youth.
- G. Drop Off/Pick Up Procedure
When dropping off children for any activity at the church in the nursery through 6th grade, a designated staff/volunteer shall oversee the parent/guardian signing in and out the child. A security code, matching the child’s, must be presented when the child is picked up, at which time photo identification may be required. If a security code cannot be used, photo ID may also be requested.

Parents/Guardians are responsible for transporting their children from one location within the facility to another (i.e., from Worship to Children’s Church, from Sunday School to worship, etc.). Children who attend the Nursery may remain in the same room through two Worship hours at the parent/guardian’s request.

- H. Activities Off-Site
For any activity held off the FUMC Franklin premises, it is recommended that a stricter ratio of adults to children/youth apply than is referred to in Definition C. Such ratios for offsite activity shall be as deemed appropriate by program staff based upon the age of the children and the location and nature of the activity.

Reporting of Accident/Incidents

- A. Accidents/Injuries
1. The staff/volunteer shall fill out the accident Report Form in duplicate. One copy shall be given to the parent/guardian. The second copy shall be turned in to the director/coordinator of the ministry area to be kept on file.
 2. Each child/youth shall have a Medical Release Form on file.
- B. Abuse Incidents
1. Whenever any type of abuse as defined in the Definition Section is suspected, the individual with this information is to use the following steps:
 - Maintain all confidentiality. This includes not speaking with fellow workers or the child’s/youth’s caregivers.
 - Seek out the director/staff person responsible for the ministry area immediately and give him/her the information. If there is a reasonable basis for concern that the responsible staff person was involved in or complicit in the abuse, the Senior Pastor or the District Superintendent should be notified instead.
 - The individual discovering the suspected abuse shall contact the local office of the Department of Children’s Services or the Department’s abuse hotline at 1-877-237-0004 to report the suspected abuse. The report should include, to the extent known, the name, address and age of the child, the name and address of the person or persons responsible for the care of the child and the facts requiring the report. A report may also be made to the Judge having juvenile jurisdiction over the child, and/or to the appropriate law enforcement agency in the child’s/youth’s municipality or county of residence having jurisdiction.