

Safe Sanctuary

Protection Policy

In all our ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable people, Franklin First United Methodist Church is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each of God's children here will be "surrounded by steadfast love, established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal." (Baptismal Covenant 11, United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44)



Franklin First United Methodist Church

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Introduction

- “Now it is required that those who have been given trust must prove faithful.” 1 Corinthians 4:2
- Where no counsel is, the people fall; but in the multitude of counselors there is safety. Proverbs 11:14
- “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

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, and vulnerable people. The problems cut across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the individual, 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, youth and vulnerable people and for the prevention of abuse in our church.

Purpose

Our congregations’ purpose for establishing the Safe Sanctuary Protection Policy is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth and vulnerable people. 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 Safe Sanctuary 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, youth and vulnerable people participating in any activities or events sponsored by First United Methodist Church Franklin.

Whenever FFUMC hosts an activity involving children, youth, or other vulnerable people from another church or community organization, groups using the church facility will follow FFUMC’s Safe Sanctuary Protection Policies and procedures.

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. FFUMC —Franklin First United Methodist Church

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.

Screening of Staff and Volunteers

- A. All staff and volunteers in contact with children, youth and vulnerable populations shall complete a background check administered by and reported to FFUMC.
- B. On-going review and screening of staff and volunteers will be conducted as deemed necessary by the church staff, at a minimum of every three years.
- C. Before being accepted, each volunteer must be either a member of or active participant in FFUMC.
- D. A volunteer who has not been a regular attendee for six months may require additional references to serve with children.

Training

- A. All staff and volunteers will be given a written copy of the Safe Sanctuary Protection Policy and will sign a written acknowledgment that the staff member or volunteer has read, understands and will abide by 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 on the church website.

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

Supervision

- A. "Two-Adult Role"

Two or more adults are to be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event or ministry involving children, youth and vulnerable people. 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 PreK 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 and vulnerable people.
- G. Drop Off/Pick Up Procedure
 - When dropping off children for any activity at the church in the nursery through 6th grade, all children must be checked in. A security code, matching the child's, must be presented when the child is picked up or the adult's photo must match the authorized pick up person. Photo ID may also be requested.
- H. Activities Off-Site
 - For any activity held off the FFUMC 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.
- I. Transportation
 - Whenever FFUMC transports children, youth, or other vulnerable people away from the church campus, no youth should drive to/from events. An adult should never transport a child/youth/other vulnerable person alone. Drivers of church vehicles should be approved and covered by the church's insurance company. Drivers should go through the same screening process as all other paid/volunteer staff.

J. Overnight Events

For overnight events at the church and church-sponsored off-campus activities, two or more screened adults must be present. This arrangement must include at least one male and one female if the group is mixed gender. Adults may not share beds with youth unless they are father/mother and child.

Rooming Policy for FFUMC Youth and Children's Ministries

A. Body Boundaries

Staff members and volunteers in FFUMC Children's/Youth Ministries should maintain appropriate body boundaries when in the presence of children or youth. This includes never being nude in the presence of children or youth in their care. Students should also maintain appropriate body boundaries with other students. This includes respecting personal boundaries and practicing appropriate touch. Plans should be made to have separate bathing and changing areas or schedules for males and females. Students should not change in front of one another and should take care to keep all private areas of one's body covered when in the presence of other students or leaders.

B. Housing

1. All children/youth should room with others of the same age range and birth-assigned gender. See below for extenuating circumstances.

2. Rooms will consist of only birth-assigned gender (including adults.) No co-ed lodging.

3. Individuals will not room with anyone they are in a romantic relationship with.

4. A child/youth should never sleep alone in a room with an adult. (unless they are parent/child)

5. Sleeping rooms should only be for those assigned to the room. They are not a gathering place for other children/youth.

6. There should be a process in place for nightly check-in and assurance that all children/youth are in their assigned room for the night.

7. When male and female students are present on an overnight trip, there should always be both male and female adults.

8. When children/youth are in lodging with no adult in the room, there should be a minimum of three children/youth in that room.

C. Additional Considerations for Activities and Overnights

1. All persons are to use the restroom of their birth-assigned gender or a private/single bathroom if available.

2. When a child/youth who identifies as gender-fluid or transgender participates in an overnight activity, they will have the option to stay with their biological gender or in a private room.

3. The trip leader shall use their best discretion when navigating rooming and sleeping arrangements in conversation with children's/youth's parents as needed. Any additional costs incurred (for a private room or room with parent) to help provide appropriate rooming boundaries shall be split equally between the participant and Franklin First UMC.

Technology & Social Media

The use of electronics or media communications may be useful tools in supporting ministries with children, youth, and other vulnerable people. However, in such circumstances, the following requirements shall be met:

- The volunteer or staff member shall never initiate a connection (friending, following, etc.) with FFUMC children or youth on their personal social media account.
- If an adult leader receives a private text from a child, youth, or vulnerable person that seems to be questionable, the adult leaders should immediately end the conversation in the virtual space and offer opportunities to have the conversation in person and in compliance with the Safe Sanctuary guidelines for one-on-one conversations. The ministry supervisor and/or parent/guardian should be made aware of the incident immediately.
- Adult leaders should post photos on social network sites only with prior written permission granted by a parent/guardian. When posted, photos must not be tagged with names or location indicators. All photos must be appropriate and in keeping with the spirit of the ministry event.
- All in-person protection policies apply to online platform meetings like Zoom, Skype, Messenger, and so on. (For example, two unrelated adults should be present in the virtual room at all times, just as they would be in a physical room.)
- An official church account should be established and used for online activities, not a personal account.
- Communication about online meetings should be shared with parents/guardians as well as with children, youth, and vulnerable people.
- Adult leaders and participants should use their real names as usernames. Attendance of online meetings should be documented.

Anti-Bullying

Our organization will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of one individual by another individual. In addition, our organization will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps needed to eliminate such behavior.

A. Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, is repeated over time, and involves an imbalance of power or strength. Bullying can take on various forms, including:

Physical bullying— when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.

Verbal bullying— when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.

Nonverbal or relational bullying – when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, or gossip. This type of bullying also includes intimidating another person by using gestures.

Cyberbullying – the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs).

B. Anyone who sees an act of bullying, and who then encourages it, is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all individuals, employees and volunteers.

Reporting of Accident/Incidents for all populations

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 in the church office.

2. Each child or youth shall have a Medical Release Form on file if parents are not on the FFUMC premises.

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 Adult Protective Services hotline is 1-888-277-8366. 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.

Third Party Relationships

FFUMC recognizes that there may be circumstances when a church member or family that participates in church ministry ("Third Party") may wish to engage the services of an individual who is an FFUMC staff member outside of the auspices of the church's programs and ministries.

In the event that a Third Party engages an FFUMC staff member to provide services apart from FFUMC programs and ministries, such engagement shall be undertaken by the employee as an individual, not within the scope and course of his/her employment with FFUMC and not subject to the supervision or oversight of FFUMC.

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, youth and vulnerable people as well as all of the staff/volunteers who work with these populations. 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 volunteer, 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 others and their families as the need arises
- Show and share my own Christian faith
- 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 FFUMC.

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 Oct 2008, Feb 2016, Apr 2022, Jan 2024

