

Safe Sanctuary at Church of the Master United Methodist

1. Introduction and Theological Rationale

Why do we have SS Policies:

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 Resolutions of the United Methodist Church. P.384-385) Therefore, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, our church adopts this Safe Sanctuaries Policy (“Policy”) for the prevention of abuse of children, youth, and older/vulnerable adults. As such:

- A. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the screening and selection of leadership, both paid and volunteer.**
- B. We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs, events, and ministries.**
- C. We will educate all our leadership—both staff and volunteers— who interact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods.**
- D. We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting an observed or suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law, and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.**

Nothing in this Policy is designed to hinder or prevent the investigation of suspected, reported or confirmed violations of any Ohio state criminal laws.

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to those who cannot protect themselves. We affirm this responsibility at each person’s baptism by our congregational response, pledging: “With God’s help we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this person, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (Book of Worship, Baptismal Covenant, Congregational Pledge, 105).

2. Inclusivity

We are an inclusive church. *We celebrate everyone unconditionally as a child of God, made in God’s infinite image. Jesus calls us to love ALL people – no exceptions, no conditions. Guided by the Holy Spirit, we seek to be a church that loves and affirms all people.* Our faith calls us to offer hospitality and protection by being inclusive of all people, especially those who are vulnerable. When welcoming children, youth, and adults, all staff, leaders, and volunteers will:

- Make no assumptions about a person’s sexual orientation or identity
- Always use an individual’s preferred pronouns

- Educate themselves and train their volunteers on proper use of terminology
- Be intentional about creating a safe environment and culture by awareness and training around homophobic language and bullying

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this Policy, the following terms will be used:

- A. **Abuse:** Sexual contact, physical or emotional harm, or neglect as defined by the relevant statutes of the State of Ohio or other relevant jurisdictions
- B. **Adult:** Any person at least eighteen years of age
- C. **Appropriate:** Conduct that one understands would be acceptable and permissible by a parent or guardian
- D. **Child or Children:** Any person(s) under eighteen years of age
- E. **Leader:** Any adult—paid or volunteer—who has supervision or management responsibilities for an event, program, or ministry
- F. **Sexual Contact:** The intentional touching of the intimate parts or the clothing covering the intimate parts of a Youth, Child, or Vulnerable Adult
- G. **Staff:** Any employee of the Church. This can include both paid and unpaid staff members but is particularly used in reference to paid employees
- H. **Volunteer:** A person who participates as a leader or assists a leader in activities relating to any event or ministry without compensation
- I. **Unrelated Adults:** Adults who are not: biologically related, spouses, or individuals in a cohabitating environment
- J. **Vulnerable Adult:** Any person at least eighteen years of age who needs special care, support, or protection due to diminished physical, mental, and/ or emotional capacities or at risk of abuse due to the power dynamics of the situation
- K. **Youth Volunteer:** A Youth under 18 who assist with ministries.
- L. **Youth:** a child in grades 7-12

4. Scope

This Policy shall apply to all activities sponsored by Church of the Master, regardless of location, as well as any activities utilizing its facilities.

Outside groups utilizing the Church's facilities shall be required to adhere to this policy or adopt and adhere to equivalent policies. Where the two policies are in conflict, the more conservative approach shall be taken.

5. Policy Requirements

5.A Liability Insurance

The Church shall have adequate liability insurance for all ministries, including sexual abuse or misconduct coverage.

5.B Screening and Selection

All persons serving in leadership with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults shall:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Be at least 5 years older than the oldest person they are supervising/leading (*Exception: This does not apply to Adults in ministry with Vulnerable Adults.*)

As part of the selection process, applicants must follow these steps:

1. Submit an application (either Employment or Volunteer as appropriate)
2. Consent to a National Criminal Background Check which must be renewed every three years
3. Complete Safe Sanctuaries training endorsed by the Church which must be retaken every three years
4. Sign the Volunteer Covenant

Any conviction involving abuse of or harm toward Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults will disqualify the applicant from participating in ministries involving such groups.

All other convictions will be reviewed by the senior pastor and the director of the appropriate ministry to ensure the safety of all involved. All documentation collected as part of the application and screening process shall be maintained in a secure file for 7 years.

5.C Youth Volunteers

Youth Volunteers serving in ministry shall:

- Be at least 12 years of age
- Be five years older than the oldest participant in the group
- Never be alone with children without an Adult

As part of the selection process, applicants must follow these steps:

1. Submit a Youth Volunteer application
2. Complete a Youth oriented Safe Sanctuaries training, which shall be retaken every three years
3. Sign the Youth Volunteer Covenant

5.D Training

Staff or lay leadership will facilitate Safe Sanctuaries training at the church, at least once a year or when requested. The Church community shall be informed of the Safe Sanctuaries training opportunities. A record of completion, and the Volunteers attending, shall be kept on file for 7 years.

7. Building Usage

- A schedule of building usage should be available to Staff and Volunteers.
- Procedures and agreements for both ministry groups and outside groups should be maintained by the Office Administrator and kept on file in the Church office.
- All outside groups must sign a facility use agreement and should be given a copy of this Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

8. Policy Waiver

Portions of this Policy may be waived occasionally for exceptional circumstances. The goal of the Church is to promote safety while maintaining practical flexibility in Children and Youth ministry. Waiving of policies may be authorized by agreement of two of the following persons: the Leadership Council Chair, the Trustees Chair, the SPRC Chair, Associate Pastor, or the Senior Pastor.

9. Policy Review

A team comprised of the senior pastor (or designee), representatives of age-level ministries and Leadership Council, as well as others whom they invite to participate in the team's work, shall be responsible for reviewing this Policy and attached appendices on an annual basis for relevance and adherence to requirements established by the West Ohio Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Link to Quiz: <https://forms.gle/cTRkdyzyuzsTrYcp9>



SESSION 1: OVERVIEW

SAFE SANCTUARY



Why?

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A. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the screening and selection of leadership, both paid and volunteer.

B. We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs, events, and ministries.

C. We will educate all our leadership—both staff and volunteers—who interact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods.

D. We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting an observed or suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law, and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.



Important

Nothing in this Policy is designed to hinder or prevent the investigation of suspected, reported or confirmed violations of any Ohio state criminal laws.



Baptismal Covenant



Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to those who cannot protect themselves. We affirm this responsibility at each person's baptism by our congregational response, pledging: "With God's help we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this person, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal"

(Book of Worship, Baptismal Covenant, Congregational Pledge, 105).



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Definitions

Leader

Any adult—paid or volunteer—who has supervision or management responsibilities for an event, program, or ministry

Unrelated Adults

Adults who are not biologically related, spouses, or individuals in a cohabitating environment

Volunteer

A person who participates as a leader or assists a leader in activities relating to any event or ministry without compensation

Vulnerable Adult

Any person at least eighteen years of age who needs special care, support, or protection due to diminished physical, mental, and/or emotional capacities or at risk of abuse due to the power dynamics of the situation



Scope

This Policy shall apply to all activities sponsored by the church, regardless of location, as well as any activities utilizing its facilities.

Outside groups utilizing the church's facilities shall be required to adhere to this policy or adopt and adhere to equivalent policies. Where the two policies are in conflict, the more conservative approach shall be taken.



Policy Requirements

- Liability Insurance
- Screening & Selection
- Youth Volunteers
- Training

1. Overview (Session 1) *current session*
2. Reporting, Response, & Age-Appropriate Healthy Touch (Session 2)
3. Contextually Appropriate Awareness & Etiquette (Sessions 3)
4. Appropriate Boundary Setting (Session 4)

- Building Usage
- Policy Waiver
- Policy Review



Screening & Selection

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As part of the selection process, applicants must follow these steps:

1. Submit a Youth Volunteer application
2. Complete a Youth oriented Safe Sanctuaries training which shall be retaken every three years
3. Sign the Youth Volunteer Covenant



Safe Sanctuary Training



A record of completion and the Volunteers attending shall be kept on file for 7 years.



Every 3 years, each person working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults must:

1. Be Safe Sanctuary trained
2. Undergo a background check



Building Usage

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[REVIEW SESSION 1: TAKE QUIZ](#)

