



## **Safe Sanctuaries Policy of Hawleyton/Conklin Forks UMC**

### **Introduction**

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child ... welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They 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 the little ones, the children.

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. 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. 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* - 1996, pp. 384-386).

Increasingly churches are greatly impacted by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse. God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. Thus, in our covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

### **Purpose**

Our church is committed to providing an environment that is as safe as possible for children, youth and vulnerable adults who participate in our ministry. We are also committed to taking the necessary precautions to protect any person working in our ministry from false accusations or suspicions. As Christians we take our responsibilities to children and youth very seriously. When we neglect to take adequate precautions to protect them from abuse while in our care we fail in our responsibilities as Christians. Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuaries Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical and emotional safety, as well as the spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. In addition, it is to protect our staff, both paid and Volunteer, from potential allegations of abuse. We understand that "abuse" includes but is not limited to physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and ritual abuse. The following policy and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in workers but instead are intended to protect our children youth, workers, employees, Volunteers, and the entire church body.

### **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 adults as well as all of the paid staff and Volunteers who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the recruitment and selection of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will provide training for workers regarding the required observance of all appropriate policies and methods; we will have clearly defined procedures for reporting a 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. In addition, we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the alleged perpetrator.



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### **Definitions**

Abuse – any act committed by a person in a position of trust (parent, teacher, Pastor, etc.) which harms or threatens to harm a person’s welfare, physical, spiritual, or mental health. We recognize that abuse may fall into four categories:

- 1) Physical abuse – Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person’s physical or mental health (inflicting bodily harm constitutes physical abuse and does not always leave visible marks).
- 2) Sexual abuse – Any time a minor is used for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older minor, abuse has occurred.
- 3) Emotional abuse – Submitting a person to verbal assault or emotional cruelty
- 4) Neglect – Not hearing or addressing a person’s basic needs for health, welfare, or safety resulting in harm to the person. It can include failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing; abandonment; refusal to seek treatment for illness, inadequate supervision, health hazards in the home, school, or church.
- 5) Ritual Abuse - abuse in which any of the aforementioned forms are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child's welfare. The abuser may appeal to some higher authority or power to justify the abuse.

Youth – those ages 12-17. They are invited to assist adult volunteers but are not to be considered an adult for the “two-adult rule”.

Child – any person under the age of 12.

Vulnerable Adult – someone aged 18 and over; who due to age, illness or a mental or physical condition, is less able to take care of himself/herself, or less able to protect himself/herself against harm or exploitation; including but not limited to physical and sexual abuse, neglect by self or other, financial or material exploitation, emotional or psychological mistreatment. Vulnerable adults are also those adults who work with children and youth who can be in a position where accusations of abuse could mistakenly arise; or, adults who have been abused either as a child or an adult.

Adult Staff and Volunteers – those who are at least 18 years old and who are at least five years older than the oldest minor present, whom they are leading, ministering to or supervising.

Immediate Family Member – spouse, sibling, paren, guardian, and child.

Appropriate – the conduct that a reasonable person would consider to be acceptable and permissible.

Sexual harassment – any advance or demand, either verbal or physical which is perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive.

### **Oversight**

The Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), or its designated representative, shall maintain all paper-



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work (background checks, etc.) necessary for implementing and monitoring this policy. The background check results for the Pastor shall be kept in the District office. The Safe Sanctuaries Committee will be responsible for arranging for and/or providing all requisite Safe Sanctuaries training.

### **Education**

All adults who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be Safe Sanctuaries® trained. Topics should include but not limited to the need for Safe Sanctuaries®, types and signs of abuse, recognizing signs of abuse and neglect, basic procedures in hiring/selecting workers, basic procedures in supervising workers and program participants, responding when abuse or neglect is disclosed or suspected, and reporting abuse. All adults who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall have an annual orientation that includes but is not limited to the church's/ministry's Safe Sanctuaries® policies and procedures as it applies to the ministry/event. The Upper New York Annual Conference shall make available a standardized training program to assist each charge, district, agency, and ministry to fulfill the covenant to "educate all of our workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding the use of appropriate policies and methods." (2011 Safe Sanctuaries® Resolution)

### **Reasonable Safety Standards in Recruiting, Screening and Selecting Workers**

One aspect of Safe Sanctuaries care includes conducting criminal background checks on persons, both staff and Volunteers, who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Doing background checks on those who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults provides uniformity in treatment of workers and demonstrates that background checks are not targeted or random.

#### **1. Recruiting Workers**

a. A written position description that includes the essential functions of the job shall be provided for positions in ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

b. Interested workers shall complete an application or Volunteer Information Form that includes identification, address, employment history for the past five years, volunteer work during the past five years, experiences and skills specifically related to the position, prior church membership (if any), personal references (not related to the applicant) with complete address and contact information, waiver of any right to confidentiality and of any right to pursue damages against the church/charge caused by the references' responses, certification that the information provided is true and correct, voluntary disclosure of past criminal convictions, and authorization to conduct a criminal background check.

#### **2. Screening Workers**

a. References provided by the applicant shall be checked by the pastor or a designated Safe Sanctuaries committee/team member. The reference check shall include questions about the applicant's ability to work with children, youth or vulnerable adults (depending on ministry) and leadership ability.

b. A personal interview shall be conducted by the pastor and the SPRC or designee(s) prior to the applicant assuming a position.

c. A criminal background check and state central child abuse registry shall be authorized by and completed for all clergy, paid workers, and volunteers who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The criminal background check shall be performed after every two



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(2) years of service and at the beginning of service and after a break in service of one or more years. Background check results shall be kept in a secure manner.

d. A criminal background check will be performed on all staff and Volunteers who possesses a key to any church building. The background check must be completed before the key holder takes possession of the key.

e. All applications and the results of all background checks will be maintained in secure files. The maintenance of such documents shall reside in a locked file or cabinet in the Charge office with only the chair of the SPRC, the Pastor, and the chair of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee having access.

f. No one shall serve as a staff member or Volunteer if he/she is known previously to have been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest to any of the following offenses: child abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual, neglectful or ritual; violent felony offenses including but not limited to murder, rape, assault, domestic violence.

g. Anyone applying for Staff or Volunteer positions how have a drug related conviction within the five years immediately prior to application may serve only with permission of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee. Persons with a DUI or DWI conviction within five years immediately prior to application may not serve as a driver.

3. Adult volunteers shall demonstrate an active relationship with the local church/charge for at least six (6) months before being allowed to be in a supervisory role in activities for children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

### **4. Selecting Workers**

a. Only workers that have successfully completed the application and screening process shall be eligible to be considered for selection to a ministry position with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults.

b. In the event that the criminal background check reveals a conviction or other cause for concern, the pastor and/or another ministry leader shall consult with the applicant.

c. Adults convicted of child abuse or named as the perpetrator in a founded or indicated child abuse report through a designated state or county agency, or who are under investigation for, or who have charges pending for child abuse, shall not be accepted as paid employees or volunteers to have direct access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults in any church-sponsored activity or setting.

### **Procedures for Conducting Ministry Programs and Events for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults**

1. Adult staff and volunteers and clergy shall observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times so that no adult is ever alone with children or youth or vulnerable adults at a church/charge, district or conference sponsored event or activity. The two-adult rule requires that regardless of the size of the group, there shall always be two unrelated adults present. This may include the presence of an adult "roamer" who moves in an out of rooms/ministry activities. No child, youth, or vulnerable adult shall be left unsupervised while attending a ministry program or event.



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2. Should the case arise when family members work together (husband/wife/parent/child/siblings/etc.) an additional Volunteer shall be present.
3. Adult staff and volunteers are those who are at least 18 years old and who are at least five years older than the oldest minor present, whom they are leading, ministering to or supervising. Youth (those ages 12-17) are invited to assist adult volunteers but are not to be considered an adult for the “two-adult rule”. Nursery helpers must be at least 16 years old and not immediately related to the supervising adult.
4. All adult staff and volunteers and clergy shall be observant for unusual behaviors and signs of child, youth, and vulnerable adult abuse and shall report them immediately to the appropriate supervisor.
5. All adult staff and volunteers and clergy working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall receive a copy of the applicable local church/charge, district or conference ministry or program Safe Sanctuaries® Policy before starting their service and shall agree to covenant with the (local) United Methodist Church, District or Conference ministry or program to fully cooperate with these abuse prevention strategies.
6. All ministry activities shall occur in open view. Each room or space where ministry events occur must be open to public view. This may require enclosed spaces such as classrooms having a viewing window, a glass panel in the door, a half door configuration or an open door.
7. Attendance records shall be kept for all ministry events/activities involving children and youth. These records shall include at a minimum, the date and names of all participants and shall be kept in perpetuity.
8. Ministry activities involving transportation shall require a written permission slip/form and signed by a parent/guardian. Drivers of children, youth and vulnerable adults must be 21 years of age. The ministry supervisor shall be required to keep a copy of their current license and proof of insurance card on file with the appropriate ministry program (i.e., church/charge, district, conference ministry). Additionally:
  - There shall never be one adult and one child riding alone together unless the adult is the child’s parent, grandparent, other authorized family member or guardian. Exceptions to this rule are allowed only in emergency situations.
  - All occupants of vehicles must wear seatbelts. Children shall not sit in the front seat of vehicles with airbags.
  - No youth may transport others to any off-grounds church sponsored event.
  - No vehicle will be allowed to carry more than the passenger capacity as specified by the vehicle manufacturer.
  - The church van and/or any other vehicles owned by the church may only be driven by an adult who has previously been approved by the Van Committee and is listed with the charge insurance company as an approved driver.
9. Facilities shall be free from conditions that pose a safety or health hazard to the participants.
10. Every clergy in any active status or relationship with the Conference whose appointment is set or approved by the bishop, every person serving as a supply pastor (assigned by the district superintendent)



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and retired clergy performing ministerial functions shall regularly review and be familiar with public sex offenders registries maintained by New York State law enforcement agencies.

This is done by accessing:

- New York: [http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/SomsSUBDirectory/search\\_index.jsp](http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/SomsSUBDirectory/search_index.jsp)
- PA: <http://www.pameganslaw.state.pa.us/EntryPage.aspx?returnURL=~/SearchCounty.aspx>

11. "Social media are tools whereby effective and fruitful ministry may grow and be nurtured. Although these tools can aid us and increase the scope of contact and connection as well as the breadth of people who may be touched by our ministry offerings, social media cannot be the source or foundation of ministry. Our foundation is Jesus Christ. Social media are creations of human ingenuity that provide for us one more way to express and proclaim the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We are called to use social media with care, consideration, intentionality, and a Christ-like spirit." Safe Sanctuaries in a Virtual World, Joy Thornburg Melton and Michelle L. Foster, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN; 2014. Social media guidelines should be reviewed at:

[http://gbod-ssets.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera-files/safe-sanctuaries/SafeSanctuaries\\_SAMPLESocialMediaGuidelines1.pdf](http://gbod-ssets.s3.amazonaws.com/legacy/kintera-files/safe-sanctuaries/SafeSanctuaries_SAMPLESocialMediaGuidelines1.pdf)

12. Pastoral counseling is expected to be confidential in nature. For the protection of both parties, when at all possible such sessions shall take place where other people are nearby even if not within hearing distance. Only rooms with an interior glass window or an eye level window in the door should be used.

### **Restroom Policies**

In situations where an escort is needed for a trip to the restroom, a Volunteer will stand outside the restroom and only assist the child if needed. Whenever a Volunteer is in the restroom with a child the door will remain open. The Volunteer shall never be in a closed-door situation with a child.

If a child soils themselves during Sunday School, Children's Church, Nursery, or another church activity two Volunteers will be present while cleaning up the child. This cleanup shall not take place behind closed doors unless the door contains an interior glass window or an eye level window in the door.

### **Overnight and Trip Policies**

A signed parent permission form will be required of each child/youth prior to the activity. These will be collected and approved by the group leader prior to the activity.

All participants in the event must be authorized for participation by the leader responsible for the event. Unauthorized visitors/Volunteers will not be allowed to remain with the group.

If the group of children/youth contains both males and females there shall be at least one female Volunteer and one male Volunteer at the activity.

None of the children/youth will be allowed away from the designated overnight or trip destination area without prior permission of the group leader and the parent's signed permission.

When children/youth share a room with a leader, the leader will not be allowed to sleep in the same bed with a child/youth unless the child/youth is their child. No leader shall be housed with only one child unless that child/youth is immediately related to them.

No members of the opposite sex will be allowed to sleep in the same room unsupervised with the excep-



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tion of immediate family members.

### **Outside Groups**

All groups meeting in any of the Hawleyton Charge buildings will be asked to sign a statement acknowledging receipt of and intent to comply with this Safe Sanctuary policy on an annual basis.

### **Nursery/Sunday School/Children's Church Procedures**

#### **Worship Service Nursery**

Adults wishing to leave a child (aged infant to Kindergarten) in the nursery during Sunday worship or other programs/events where nursery care is provided must complete the sign-in log before leaving the child. A Sunday School/Nursery form must be completed on an annual basis or when previously supplied information has changed. All *Supervision* and *Restroom Policies* outlined in this Safe Sanctuaries Policy are applicable to nursery coverage.

#### **Conklin Forks**

Should a student need to leave the classroom for restroom or other reasons, they may be released to a designated Volunteer serving as a hall monitor, allowing the classroom Volunteer to remain in the classroom.

At the conclusion of Sunday School, no child or vulnerable adult will be released from the classroom without being met by a designated parent or guardian, or an individual noted at sign-in for transportation. If the designated person picking up the child is unknown to the Sunday School teacher/Volunteer, he/she will need to show a pictured identification to the worker. Youth are not required to wait for an adult escort and will be dismissed following class.

For special activities, a positive identity security system shall be used so that the person picking up the student can be positively matched.

Opening exercises begin immediately following the weekly worship service at approximately 10:45 a.m. and classes run from 11 a.m. to 11:45 a.m.

#### **Hawleyton**

All parents or custodians are to complete a Sunday School/Children's Church Information Form for their children that shall be kept on file in the common Sunday School/Children's Church meeting room. The form will ask for the child's name, parent or custodian name, home address, release information, and medical information which should include allergies and medical conditions.

Parents/custodians/designated persons will drop off their children and will sign them in for Sunday School in a designated area (Family Life Center dining room). They will pick up their children from their designated area (child's classroom) and will sign their release with their initials. The only person allowed to pick a child up will be the parent/custodian who dropped off the child or other person designated on the registration form. In this situation, if the person picking up the child is unknown to the Sunday School teacher/Volunteer, he/she will need to show a pictured identification to the worker.

Children in fourth grade and higher may be released from Sunday School or Children's Church by the Volunteer without being picked up by a parent or other designated person if the parent provides the Volunteer permission to do so. A Volunteer may release a student to a designated Volunteer serving as a hall



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monitor in order to stay in the classroom.

### REPORTING AND RESPONSE

#### Reporting

Reporting shall be required by any staff or volunteer that personally witnesses an incident of abuse or exploitation, when an allegation of an event of abuse or exploitation is made to staff or a volunteer by a third party and/or when a child, youth, or vulnerable adult discloses abuse or exploitation to a staff member or volunteer. It is crucial that reporting be immediate and the allegations dealt with as soon in time as possible to the incident or disclosure.

1. The staff person or volunteer who observes alleged abuse or to whom such abuse is reported or disclosed, or who suspects abuse shall be required to report the incident/suspected abuse **immediately** to the person in charge of the ministry/activity. Upon receiving the information, the person in charge of the ministry/activity shall **immediately** call:

- New York 1 state Child Protective Services Hotline: (800) 342-3720
- Pennsylvania state Child Protective Services Hotline: (800)932-0313
- New York state Justice Center Vulnerable Adults Hotline: (855) 373-2122
- New York state Office of Children and Family Services Adult Abuse Hotline: (844) 697-3505

Identification information for the alleged victim and the adult responsible for their care is required for the report. The pastor in charge and immediate staff supervisor are to be informed immediately before or subsequent to the making of a report. The person in charge of the ministry/activity in which the alleged abuse was observed or disclosed shall immediately attempt to obtain necessary information such as the name of the alleged victim and his/her address and family information.

2. If the accused is the appointed clergy, supply pastor or a member of his/her family, the allegations shall be immediately reported to the district superintendent. The district superintendent shall immediately report to the proper authorities as set forth in paragraph 1 above. The district superintendent shall take responsibility and act according to the established rules in *The Book of Discipline* with respect to claims against the pastor. If the district superintendent is not available, the incident shall be reported to the bishop's office.

3. Every clergy in any active status or relationship with the Conference whose appointment is set or approved by the bishop, every person serving as a supply pastor (assigned by the district superintendent) and retired clergy performing ministerial functions are included in mandatory reporting as required by *The Book of Discipline*<sup>1</sup>.

4. After the person in charge of the ministry/activity has reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the appointed clergy/supply pastors shall report the incident immediately to the district superintendent. If the district superintendent is not available, the incident shall be reported to the Bishop's office.

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<sup>1</sup> The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church ¶1341.5, All clergy of The United Methodist Church are charged to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences, except in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law.





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5. The person in charge of the ministry/event must keep a written report of the steps taken by the church/charge in response to the reported abuse. The report should be kept brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. This report should be kept in a secure place. It should be written or typed to prevent it from being changed.

6. **NEVER** discuss allegations with any other people except law enforcement or designated county investigators. To do so can cause irreparable harm to the victim, their family, the church/conference and community.

### Response Plan

A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse is expected. All allegations shall be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse there shall be cooperation with all official investigating agencies.

1. All media requests for statements shall be directed to the Annual Conference director of communications.

2. Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the 1 victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the **first** priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.

3. Immediately, and with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children, youth, or vulnerable adults and advise the accused that there has been an allegation of abuse. Details of the allegations of the abuse should not be discussed with the accused at the time of the removal. In any removal of a staff member or volunteer from any activity/ministry, care shall be taken to handle the removal in a discreet manner, recognizing that there will be an investigation by either state or church authorities, or both.

4. When it has been alleged that a member of the church staff or volunteer, has committed an act of abuse or exploitation, the staff member or volunteer shall be required to refrain from all ministry/activities with children, youth, and vulnerable adults until the incident has been fully resolved by the appropriate state authorities and/or in accordance with *The Book of Discipline*.

5. Notify the parents/guardians of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and well being of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult until the parent(s)/guardian(s) arrive. **NOTE:** If one or both of the parents/guardian is the alleged abuser follow the advice of the authorities concerning notifications of others.

6. The church/charge shall provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing may take place.