



Safe Sanctuaries

**Creating a safer environment for
children, youth & vulnerable adults**

First United Methodist Church

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"...Jesus called 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 19:16

Introduction (from 1996 General Conference Resolution)

Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma....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 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.

Purpose

First United Methodist Church, Lebanon, TN ("the Church") is committed to providing and maintaining a safe, nurturing environment for all children, youth, and adults while they are participating in the life of the Church.

Statement of Covenant

We pledge to nurture an environment that is safe for all children, youth, and adults,

- 1) using prayerful discernment in selecting those who will work with children, youth, and adults. This will include at least 6 months of involvement in the life of the church or a call to the church most recently attended for at least 6 months.
- 2) doing background checks.
- 3) conduct initial training of all new workers regarding Safe Sanctuary practices and then required annual refresher classes.
- 4) conduct annual classes for all worker on all church policies, first aid, methods of discipline, etc.
- 5) make all workers aware of the procedure for reporting suspected abuse of any kind. This is a matter of law as well as Christian compassion.
- 6) make all workers aware of TN Conference Media Crisis Response Plan.

Scope

The Safe Sanctuary 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 Lebanon FUMC. Lebanon FUMC is committed to providing an environment that is as safe as possible for children and youth who participate in any Lebanon FUMC ministry to best of our ability within the conditions of the situation. 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. Lebanon FUMC – First United Methodist Church of Lebanon TN

B. Types of Abuse

- a. Emotional-abuse in which a person exposes a child/youth to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty.
- b. Neglect-abuse in which a person endangers a child's/youth's health, safety, or welfare through negligence.
- c. Physical-abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child/youth.
- d. 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.
- e. Sexual-abuse in which sexual contact between a child/youth and an adult (or another older and more powerful child or youth) occurs.

Prohibited Conduct: Prohibited conduct includes any form of physical, emotional, or mental abuse of a child, youth, or adult, which breaches the trust relationship that is a hallmark of a hospitable, safe, nurturing, Christian environment.

- a. Any interaction between a child and an adult in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of an adult. This may or may not entail touching.
- b. Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of sexual conduct towards a minor.
- c. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a protected minor;
- d. Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between an older child and a younger child;
- e. Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor;
- f. Physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision;
- g. Causing mental or emotional injury to a minor;
- h. Possessing or watching obscene or pornographic materials;
- i. Possession or being under the influence of any illegal substances;
- j. Possession of any type of weapon on church property;
- k. Verbal remarks with sexual connotations, overtones, or innuendo directed to or about a minor.

C. Recommended Ratio-Ratios will vary depending on the age. It is the responsibility of the Authority Figure to know the ratio but a minimum of two adults must always be present.

- a. Infants-3 years 2:10
- b. 4 year-Kindergarten 2:20
- c. 1st grade-5th grade 2:30
- d. 6th grade-12th grade 2:40

Caregivers have the right to limit children/youth to these recommended ratios or lower

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

E. Parents/Adult guardian will sign the child in and out of room/event for the child. This includes VBS, children's choir, Sunday School, and Nursery.

Screening of Staff and Volunteers

- A. All staff and volunteers shall complete an application and consent form to be reviewed and kept on file. By signing the form, the applicant will give the staff person in charge permission to submit the application to the business administrator to perform a background check. All Volunteers will have background checks done every 2 years. On-going review and screening of volunteers will be conducted as deemed necessary.
- B. Before being accepted, each applicant must be either a member of or active participant of Lebanon FUMC at least 6 months.
- 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 administrator's office under strict confidentiality.

Training

- A. All staff and volunteers will be given a written copy of the policy and will sign a written acknowledgement 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.
- C. Orientation/Refresher Training
 - a. 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, especially volunteers before VBS and before the new Sunday school year begins in fall.
 - b. All staff shall participate in mandatory training as deemed necessary. Paid staff shall be required to annually renew their covenant to abide by and cooperate with the church's policies and procedures.
 - c. 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.

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

Supervision

- A. "Two-Adult Rule": There will be two adults present with Children and youth at all times. In addition, those in the room and the activity they are involved in will be observable from outside the room. If one-on-one interactions between adults and children/youth are unavoidable, the interaction should occur with the door opened, in an unenclosed area and with the knowledge of another adult.
- B. "Six-Month Rule: All adult volunteer authority figures involved with children or youth of our church must have been members of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment. Persons not meeting this minimum requirement may serve only as an assistant
- C. When 1 driver with 1 child/youth passenger, parental permission must be obtained.
- D. Windows in all classrooms: In classrooms where there is not a window, the door must remain open when the room is in use.
- E. Searches: Lebanon FUMC staff/volunteers will be instructed not to search children/youth. Staff/volunteers shall notify parents and the appropriate law enforcement if necessary and if warranted if a child/youth is committing or has committed an unlawful act upon church campus or at a church function. Such unlawful acts include possession of any weapons, drugs, alcohol or dangerous instrument
- F. Discipline – Staff/volunteers are instructed not to use physical force except in self-defense or defense of others. It is against Lebanon FUMC policy to use corporal punishment.
- G. Rooming- In situations where an adult rooms with children or youth in a hotel, cabin, tent or other similar situation, there must be two accompanying adults. These adults must be the same sex as the children or youth. Adults may not sleep in the same bed with children or youth except that a parent may sleep with his or her own child.
- F. Drop Off/Pick Up Procedure: Parents/Adult guardian will sign the child in and out of room/event for the child. This includes VBS, children's choir, Sunday School, and Nursery.
- H. 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.).
- I. Activities Off Site – for any activity held off the Lebanon FUMC 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 a deemed appropriate by program staff based upon the age of children and the location and nature of the activity.

Reporting of Accidents/Incidents

A. Accidents/Injuries

- a. The staff/volunteer shall fill out the accident report form and make a copy. One copy shall be given to parent/guardian. The second to the director/coordinator of the ministry area and keep on file.
- b. Each child/youth shall have an emergency treatment form on file.

B. Abuse Incidents

- a. Immediately report incident actually witnessed, learned of indirectly, or suspected to a staff person or adult supervisor.
- b. The staff person or adult supervisor will do whatever is necessary to insure the child, youth, or adult is safe and cared for. An adult supervisor is anyone who is in a position of formal responsibility for an event, activity, or group. E.g., teacher, teacher's assistant, youth counselor, leader, or chaperone, etc.
- c. In cases involving alleged sexual harassment or sexual misconduct of a minor child (birth to 18 years), the person receiving the report shall promptly report the incident to the local authorities of child welfare and protective services.
- d. The person making the report shall also notify the ordained clergy.
- e. If a staff person is involved the Staff-Parish Relations Committee chairperson will be notified by one of the pastors.
- f. An ordained clergyperson will contact the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent cannot be reached, the bishop's office will be contacted.
- g. Church staff and members will not speak to the media, but take information that will allow the Conference Media Crisis Response team to make public announcements.
- h. Notify legal counsel and insurance agent.

Media Response

Church staff and members will not speak to the media. The District Superintendent and Senior Pastor (unless the Senior Pastor is involved in the abuse) shall take the information to allow the Conference Media Crisis Response team to make public announcements.