



Craft Memorial
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



**The Safe Sanctuaries Policy
of Craft Memorial
United Methodist Church**

adopted November 2011

SAFE SANTUARIES POLICY FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

I. INTRODUCTION

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

Jesus said, *“Whoever welcomes a child, welcomes me.”* (Matt.15:5).

Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our invitation; 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 a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.”* (Matt18:6).

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children.

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.

Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse occur in churches, large and small, urban and rural.

The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing.

Many 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.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the 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.

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Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy in our church.

A. Purpose

Our congregation’s purpose for establishing the Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

B. Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, Craft Memorial United Methodist Church (hereafter referred to as CMUMC) pledges to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our minors as well as all of the workers with minors. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with minors regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure 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 necessary.

C. 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*)

II. DEFINITIONS

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

A. Physical Abuse

The act of inflicting bodily harm of any form. Instances of physical abuse include (but are not limited to) any physical act of undue force such as assault with a knife, strap, or other implement; burns, fractures and bruises resulting from being beaten, pushed down, shaken, pinched, slapped, or thrown. Physical abuse does not always leave visible marks.

B. Sexual Abuse

Any occurrence where a minor is used for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older minor. The minor is powerless either to consent to or resist such sexual acts. This includes (but is not limited to) fondling, sexual intercourse, participation in any sexual act, incest, exploitation for the purpose of pornography or prostitution and/or exposure to adult sexual activity.

C. Emotional Abuse

Deeply affecting a minor’s self-esteem by submitting them to verbal assault or emotional cruelty. It does not always involve injuries we can see. The minor receives the message that they are not good and never will be. Emotional abuse can include closed confinement (being shut in a small area), making racial remarks, excessive punishment, use of profanity, knowingly permitting drug or alcohol abuse, ignoring or encouraging peer abuse.

D. Neglectful Abuse

Not hearing or addressing a minor’s basic needs for health, welfare, or safety resulting in harm. It can include any of the following acts of negligence or maltreatment:

1. Failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing
2. Abandonment
3. Refusal to seek treatment for illness
4. Inadequate supervision
5. Health hazards in the home, school or church
6. Ignoring a minor’s need for contact, affirmation, stimulation, and nurturing

E. Ritual Abuse

Ritual abuse refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites’, ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be.

The term ritual abuse is generally used to mean repeated, extreme, sadistic abuse, especially of children, within a group setting. The group’s ideology is used to justify the abuse, and abuse is used to teach the group’s ideology. The activities are kept secret from society at large, as they violate norms and laws.

Ritual abuse can be defined as organized sexual, physical, and psychological abuse, which can be systematic and sustained over a long period of time. It involves the use of rituals, with or without a belief system.

III. STANDARDS

A. Minimum Ages

The following standards for Authority Figures are designed to separate Authority Figures from the group they are serving by age or enough years to reinforce recognition of the Authority Figure's role.

CMUMC adopts the following standards for Authority Figures and Assistance.

1. Authority Figures – the primary leader of youth and children's activities.
In Youth Group (grades 6th & above) the Authority Figure must be a minimum of 21 years of age.
In Children's Class (infant to 5th grade) the Authority Figure must be a minimum of 18 years of age.
2. Assistants – persons who lend aid to, and act at the direction of the Authority Figure, this includes volunteers.
In Youth Group or Children's Class any assistant must be at least 12 years old.
Also, in the judgment of a CMUMC staff member, be competent to assist in the activities.

B. Two Adult Rule

Two adults not related or married are to be present during all church sponsored programming with children and youth. All adult / child ratios must be followed (see III.C). Where it is impossible to staff two adults in every room, an additional adult must serve as a floater with visual and physical access to all area.

While mentoring and counseling are encouraged and supported, adults and authority figures should take every precaution to avoid being alone with a minor in inaccessible areas. This can include, but is not limited to:

1. An automobile while transporting a child
2. A classroom with windowless / locked doors
3. Any outing, overnight & otherwise

C. Adult to Child Ratios

An adult is defined as an Authority Figure / Assistant (III.A.1.2) who is also at least 18 years of age.

For all programs, CMUMC adheres to Tennessee State Codes.

1. Nursery / Childcare

Infants to toddlers – 1 adult to 5 children	2 year olds – 1 adult to 7 children
3 year olds – 1 adult to 9 children	4 year olds – 1 adult to 13 children
5 year olds – 1 adult to 16 children	6+ year olds – 1 adult to 20 children
2. Mixed Age Groups

6wks to 30 mth – 1 adult to 5 children	2yo to 3yo – 1 adult to 8 children
2yo to 4yo – 1 adult to 8 children	2 ^{1/2} to 3yo – 1 adult to 9 children
2 ^{1/2} to 5yo – 1 adult to 11 children	3yo to 5yo – 1 adult to 13 children
4yo to 5yo – 1 adult to 16 children	5yo to up – 1 adult to 20 children
3. CMUMC Events

grades 1-4 – 1 adult to 8 children	grades 5-8 – 1 adult to 10 children
grades 9-12 – 1 adult to 12 children	
4. Special Needs

In the judgment of CMUMC staff, and in consultation with the parent, the above ratios may be adjusted depending on the nature and degree of a participant's special needs.

D. Rooming

With parental consent, minors of the same sex may room together without an adult. In situations where adults room with minors in a hotel, cabin, tent, etc. there must be two unrelated adults of the same gender of the minors.

E. Six Month Rule

All adult Authority Figures who wish to be involved with minors of our church must have been members of the congregation for at least 6 months before beginning a volunteer assignment. Persons not meeting this requirement may serve only as an Assistant to an Authority Figure. The CMUMC Safe Sanctuaries Board will consider exceptions.

F. Policy Instruction

All volunteers and paid staff are required to attend policy instruction before working with our minors.

All volunteers and paid staff are required annually to review this policy, to attend a policy instruction session and to sign a new participation statement kept on file in the church office.

G. Written Record of Departure

A written record of any departure from this policy will be kept on file in the church office.

Authority Figures are expected to report any such departure immediately.

H. Cub Scouts

Although Cub Scout Pack #114 is a youth program supported by CMUMC, they abide by the Youth Protection Plan, a policy of the BSA that has been reviewed by UMC Safe Sanctuaries Committee and has the same goals as this policy.

IV. SCREENING PROCEDURES

An essential component of preventing abuse by Authority Figures, Assistants and Staff is careful screening. Although we recognize the integrity of an overwhelming number of the persons with discerned calling to ministries with children, youth and vulnerable people, we realize that abuse may occur in the church. Therefore, we believe that all Authority Figures, Assistants and all Employees must be properly screened. It will be the responsibility of the Church Office and the Senior Pastor to ensure compliance. The following steps are used for screening volunteer and paid applicants:

A. Application

A completed application form will be required for Authority Figures, Assistants and all Staff.

B. Interview

An interview with the Senior Pastor and the SPRC Chairperson will be conducted with all applicants. The interviewers will not ask for information regarding marital status or handicapping conditions as stated in Federal / State discrimination guidelines.

The interviewers will also be sensitive to age and sex discrimination guidelines; however adequate information may be requested to ensure compliance with this policy's standards.

C. Reference Checks

A minimum of two references must be contacted on all applicants.

D. Background Checks

Background checks are required for all applicants and include, but are not limited to:

1. Criminal Histories
2. Motor Vehicle Record
3. Sex Offenders Registry

The background checks will be initiated and seen only by the SPRC Chairperson.

Only concerns will be reported to the Senior Pastor who in turn will decide how to proceed.

E. Federal and State Laws

The requirements of any and all Federal Laws or State Laws affecting or relating to employment or child abuse must be complied with, and in any case where there is a conflict between such laws and the procedure outlined in this document, said laws shall prevail and the procedure outlined in this document shall be modified to the extent necessary to eliminate such conflict.

This policy is subject to all Federal / State Laws relating to employment and child abuse.

V. REPORTING ABUSE & ALLEGED ABUSE

All reports of suspected child abuse MUST be taken seriously. Whenever child abuse is suspected, reports must IMMEDIATELY be made to the Department of Children Services and the Senior Pastor.

In the event the victim feels uncomfortable reporting to the Senior Pastor or if the alleged abuse involves the Senior Pastor, reports may then be made to the SPRC Chairperson. Contact information for the Senior Pastor or SPRC Chairperson may be obtained from the church office without divulging information.

If the abuse reported has taken place within the church or on any church property, by a church member, or employee, the Senior Pastor shall also report the suspected abuse to the District Superintendent.

VI. INVESTIGATION PROCEDURE

Whenever child abuse is suspected, the following information should be obtained and reported to The Department of Children Services and then reported to the Senior Pastor and/or SPRC Chairperson:

1. Names, Ages, Addresses and Telephone Numbers of both the accused and the abused
2. The nature of the alleged abuse, with dates where possible
3. The factual details of the report
4. The name of the person making the report and the date the information was received.

The Senior Pastor and/or SPRC Chairperson shall conduct or direct an investigation into the suspected abuse in conjunction with the CMUMC Safe Sanctuaries Board. Interim measures may be taken during the investigation to safeguard the potential victim or victims. At the conclusion of the investigation, appropriate actions shall be taken. Depending upon the findings, this may include termination of employment and/or criminal charges.

VII. CMUMC SAFE SANCTUARIES BOARD

The CMUMC Safe Sanctuaries Board will consist of four members made up of two classes of two that will each serve two-year terms. At least one member of each class will be elected from within the SPRC. All Safe Sanctuaries Board Members will be listed by class annually in the Report of Committee on Lay Leadership.

The responsibilities of the Safe Sanctuaries Board include:

1. Educating Authority Figures, Assistants and all paid staff about this policy
2. Answering questions about the policy
3. Ensuring compliance with the policy
4. Granting exceptions to the policy, in appropriate circumstances
5. Assisting, as needed, with investigations
6. Reviewing and renewing policy annually or as needed
7. Evaluating board function
8. Other needs as they arise

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