

**SAFE SANCTUARY**  
Personal Protection Policy  
First United Methodist Church – Johnson City, TN  
Updated September 2019

**Purpose:**

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Personal Protection Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and adults. First Church strives to provide a safe place to worship, teach, and minister to our youth and children. First United Methodist Church Covenants to abide by the following procedures and educational guidelines.

**Definitions:**

**Child** – a person in grade 4 or younger

**Jr Youth** – a person in grades 5 through 8

**Sr Youth** - a person in grades 9 through 12 (May be older than 18 but must be in high school)

**Adult** – a person 18 years of age or older and not in High School

**Adult Volunteer/Assistant** – a volunteer or paid worker screened with a minimum baseline from the Tennessee Sexual Offenders Registry to be performed by the church administrator or the recruiting or program related staff member. This person must be at least 2 years older than the group they are working with

**Youth Volunteer** - a youth under the age of 18 and at least 5 years older than the group they are assisting with

**Hourly Contracted Person** - a person 2 years older than the group they are working with and are contracted to assist with riding vans or helping with other church related events or tasks on an as needed basis

**Vehicle Driver** – a qualified adult at least 25 years of age and on the approved vehicle driver list

**Staff Person** – those employed by First United Methodist Church who are hired to supervise a specific ministry

**Please Note:**

- ★ An annual orientation will be held to educate the congregation, all adult and youth volunteers, hourly contracted workers, van drivers and riders, and staff concerning: Safe Sanctuary Policy (Personal Protection Policy), its procedures, and the appropriate steps to take for reporting any incident of suspected abuse.
- ★ Each adult wishing to be a volunteer or youth assistant shall complete an agreement form and a background check consent form.
- ★ First United Methodist Church should provide reasonable insurance coverage for volunteers and staff.
- ★ Our short-term seasonal ministries (example –VBS, camp, children's play, reindeer run, etc) are exempt from this, the church may utilize all available resources to verify information given by a volunteer applicant to ensure personal protection for children, youth, and adults in these events.

## Policies to Reduce the Risk of Harm:

### ***Two Person Policy:***

- Two adults, or an adult and youth volunteer, should be present in a gathering of one or more children or youth during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry activity involving youth or children, except in a parent approved or in an emergency situation.
- If only one adult is present, an adult floater may be utilized to move unannounced in and out of all rooms where activity is present. If a floater is involved, the doors to all rooms being utilized shall remain open. A roving monitor is to be used during all children and youth events.
- While it is preferable to have two adults present, it is acceptable in a public setting for one adult to meet one or more youth, e.g. School sponsored event, coffee shop, Chick-fil-a, etc., where other people are present, the adult and youth are visible, and isolation is avoided.
- Adults nor youth assistants Should Not put themselves in a position to be one-on-one with a child or youth in a private setting.

### ***Volunteer and Background Check policy:***

- Background checks are mandatory for all paid staff positions and for all volunteers working closely with the children and youth.
- Staff persons working in ministry with children and youth should be at least five (5) years older than the group with whom they are working.
- Adult volunteers/assistants working in ministry with children and youth should be at least two (2) years older than the group with whom they are working.
- All counseling sessions undertaken by staff or volunteers will take place in an area with at least one of the following criteria: an open door, a window in the room or door, parental awareness, another staff person's awareness, or proceed in a public setting.
- Youth Volunteers under the age of 18 can assist in Children's Ministry but should not have primary responsibility in a given situation.
- Adult volunteer/assistants working with Youth that are less than 5 years older than the group they are working with should not have primary responsibility in a given situation.

### ***Appropriate Standards of Behavior:***

- It is the desire of this congregation that children and adults are protected not only physically but emotionally while in a relationship with First United Methodist Church. Therefore, all persons who work with children and youth are expected to guard their language, attitudes and behaviors so that children and youth are protected from any form of prejudice (race, gender or ethnicity), inappropriate or profane language, or other behavior that demeans the value and worth of an individual.

### **Pick up Policy:**

- *Parent* Parents or guardians are expected to retrieve their children or youth on time. When the last volunteer or parent leaves the activity, the youth (whose parent is late) and the adult staying with them until their parent arrives, shall wait outside in public for pick-up. If the parent fails to appear, the adult at his/her discretion may deliver the child to their home or may call another adult to accompany them to deliver the child to their home.
- An adult may “pick up” or “drop off” a child or youth at his/her home provided permission has been given by the parent or guardian.

### **Social Media and Photography Policy:**

- *Photographing Children and Youth Policy:* Parents may give permission for their children and youth to be photographed and videotaped when they fill out annual medical/participation forms. Parents are not required to give permission for their children to be photographed in order to participate in programs.
- *Church Sponsored Website/Social Media Policy:* Church-authorized social networking, blogging, and web sites are used to convey information about FUMC, communicate with members and fulfill the church’s mission. These sites must have more than one staff member or church-designated volunteer serving as authorized administrator and should monitor the site regularly.
- *Social media Communication Policy:* When communicating through social media, FUMC should ensure that content is appropriate at all times, reflecting the church’s Christian identity and values. The publication of confidential information is prohibited and any content deemed inappropriate will be deleted.
- Church staff shall not “friend” (or any site equivalent) any child under the age of 13 or the minimum age required by the social networking site. Volunteers are discouraged from communicating via social media with anyone under the age of 18 except through church-sponsored social media sites, pages or groups. (For example, volunteers “friending” minors on Facebook is discouraged).
- Conduct any communications in a professional manner. When texting with a child or youth it must be professional and be only related to church business. Save all confidential cyber-communications you have with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. An electronic paper trail can be important.
- If you are uneasy about any topic addressed in communication, send a BCC to a parent/guardian (if appropriate) or another trusted adult. Honor privacy, but not secrecy.
- If abuse is divulged electronically, follow standard reporting procedures.

### **Transportation Policy:**

- When one vehicle or any church owned vehicle is used for an out of area or out of town event, two adults should be present in each vehicle.
- If multiple church vehicles or personal vehicles are used for an event, a single adult may drive if multiple vehicles travel together.
- A church owned vehicle may have one vehicle driver if the event is 35 miles or less from FUMC. (This would cover all of the Johnson City district and into Kingsport and Bristol for youth events.)

### **Overnight Policy:**

- On overnight children or youth events, all participants shall sleep in segregated areas with at least 1 adult of the same sex. An adult shall not share a room with less than two youth or children. Specific information concerning the sleeping accommodations shall be provided to parents or guardians prior to the event.
- At the discretion of the staff member in charge of an event, a waiver to this policy may be granted, provided the variance is written and signed by the child or youth's parent or guardian.
- If hotel rooms are being utilized during an event no less than 3 people should be assigned to a room.

### **Discipline and Abuse Policy:**

- Corporal punishment will never be used as a means of discipline of children and youth. This includes hitting, pinching, and any other forms of physical discipline.
- Reasonable suspicion of abuse or neglect of children and youth will be reported immediately according to the church's reporting procedures and applicable law.

**These policies are designed for the routine meetings and activities that occur in a confined space and would not necessarily be applicable in a public setting.**

### **What is child abuse and neglect?**

**Physical Abuse-** Non-accidental physical trauma or injury inflicted by a parent or caretaker on a child. It also includes a parent's or caretaker's failure to protect the child from another person who perpetrated physical abuse on a child. In its most severe form, physical abuse is likely to cause bodily harm or death.

**Neglect-** Failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child's health or safety. This may include, but is not limited to abandonment, lack of supervision, life-endangering physical hygiene, lack of adequate nutrition, lack of shelter, lack of medical or dental care that results in health-threatening conditions, and the inability to meet basic clothing needs of a child. In its most severe form, physical neglect may result in great bodily harm or death.

**Sexual Abuse-** Includes penetration or external touching of a child's intimate parts, oral sex with a child, indecent exposure or any other sexual act performed in a child's presence for sexual gratification, sexual use of a child for prostitution, and the manufacturing of child pornography. Child sexual abuse is also the willful failure of the parent or the child's caretaker to make a reasonable effort to stop child sexual abuse by another person.

**Psychological Harm-** A repeated pattern of a parent or a caregiver behavior or extreme incident(s) that convey to children that they are worthless, flawed, unloved, unwanted, endangered, or only valued in meeting another's needs and may include both abusive acts against a child and failure to act. Neglectful behavior when age-appropriate action is required for a child's health development (e.g. child is shown no affection) includes verbal assaults, ignoring and indifference or constant family conflict.

## **You are a mandatory reporter of Child Abuse and Neglect Child (1-877-237-0004)**

### **Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Abuse:**

1. Assure the child/Youth's Safety
2. Do not confront the accused abuser with anger or hostility
3. Immediately report to TN Dept of Child Services or local law enforcement. When you have a reasonable cause to suspect an incident of child or youth physical or sexual abuse, neglect, or exploitation, Tennessee State Law REQUIRES all persons to make a report **within 24 hours**. Failure to report child abuse or neglect is punishable by law. According to the TN Dept of Children's Services (DCS), a child or youth's statement of abuse is sufficient cause to make a report. **DO NOT** investigate the incident yourself-the TN DCS has advised that your well-intentioned "investigation" may interfere with their investigation. Rather, immediately report to the DCS or appropriate law enforcement agency.
  - a. Where the victim is **under age 18**, the person observing or receiving disclosure of the abuse should report immediately by calling **TN DCS Hotline 1-877-237-0004**. All information received by this central intake is confidential. The reporter is free from civil or criminal liability for reports of suspected child abuse or neglect made in good faith. Central intake will then contact the local child protective service agency to determine whether further investigation is needed. You do not need to call the local child protective service agency.
  - b. Where the youth is **age 18 or older** they should be encouraged to make a report.
4. **Then, immediately report to church staff** For suspected incident of child abuse or neglect, you should immediately report it to the Children or Youth Directors and/or the Pastor. The Pastor will then report directly to the District Superintendent or the Bishop's office. If the Pastor is accused of abuse then the Children or Youth director will report directly to the District Superintendent or Bishop's office. If the Children or Youth Directors are not available then you must report to the Pastor and they will report it to the District Superintendent or Bishop's office. Any Subsequent reporting/notification by church staff should honor the confidentiality of the original reporter, providing only information necessary about the original reporter to supervising staff, unless the consent of the original reporter is obtained.
5. **Church staff will determine whether to advise the parent(s)/guardian(s)** Church staff will determine the appropriateness of notifying parent(s)/guardian(s)
6. **The Pastor will promptly report to the District Superintendent or the Bishop's Office** If any allegation involves church staff or volunteers or a church function or occurred on church property
7. **The Pastor, Director of Children's ministry, Jr High Director, Sr High Director and SPR Chair will determine a faithful response to the accused abuser.**
8. **The Pastor will determine the need for a statement made to the congregation** If any allegation involves church staff or volunteers or a church function or occurred on church property
9. **The Pastor will immediately notify the Church's attorney and the insurance agent** If any allegation involves church staff or volunteers or a church function or occurred on church property.
10. **The Pastor or designee will be responsible for any necessary communication with the media.** None but the designated spokesperson is authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the congregation.

**Conclusion:**

In all of our ministries with children, youth, and adults, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person will be “surrounded in steadfast love, established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.”

**First United Methodist Church  
Participation Covenant Form**

The congregation of FUMC is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and adults who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving the church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter and as a place in which people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse of any kind should work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.

**Have you ever been convicted of child abuse? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

2. Adult volunteers and staff who work with children and youth shall observe the policies outlined under Section IV. Procedures and Policies for Working with Children and Youth.

**Do you agree to observe/enforce these policies to the best of your ability? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

3. Adult volunteers/staff who work with children and youth shall attend annual Safe Sanctuaries trainings and regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.

**Do you agree to participate in training and educational services provided by the church, including annual Safe Sanctuaries Training? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

4. Adult volunteers who work with children and youth shall immediately report suspected child abuse to proper authorities, including the appropriate staff person when appropriate.

**Do you agree to promptly report child abuse to the proper authorities? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

5. **Do you agree to abide by all policies and procedures as outlined in the Safe Sanctuaries Policy as well as any other supplemental policies or procedures in the children and youth ministry areas (examples include: discipline policy, evacuation procedures, etc.)? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

I have read this Participation Covenant. I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Full Name

**First United Methodist Church  
Youth Volunteer Covenant Form**

The congregation of FUMC is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and adults who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving the church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter and as a place in which people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. All volunteers and staff who work with children and youth shall observe the policies outlined under Section IV. Procedures and Policies for Working with Children and Youth.

**Do you agree to observe/enforce these policies to the best of your ability? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

2. All volunteers/staff who work with children and youth shall attend annual Safe Sanctuaries trainings and regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.

**Do you agree to participate in training and educational services provided by the church, including annual Safe Sanctuaries Training? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

3. **Do you agree to abide by all policies and procedures as outlined in the Safe Sanctuaries Policy as well as any other supplemental policies or procedures in the children and youth ministry areas (examples include: discipline policy, evacuation procedures, etc.)? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_**

I have read this Participation Covenant and I understand that as a student volunteer much is expected of me. I will do my best to serve as a leader in the children's ministry area. I will focus on the children in my care and ask for help when I need it. I will let someone know if I cannot serve in my position in plenty of time to find a replacement. I understand that if my actions become less than what is expected of me, I will be corrected, and dismissed of my duties if necessary. I understand the importance of my own relationship with Jesus Christ and how it will influence my ministry in the children's program.

I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Full Name

I understand the commitment that FUMC expects of my son/daughter and I accept the responsibility of keeping him/her accountable in fulfilling these responsibilities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Full Name





**First United Methodist Church  
Incident Report**

Date of incident: \_\_\_\_\_ Time of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of child/youth involved: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Address of child/youth: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Location of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person(s) who witnessed the incident:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe the incident: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Action taken: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Parents notified: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person reporting: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of reporter

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent Signature

Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Director of Children and Family/

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Director of Youth Ministries

**First United Methodist Church**  
**Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse**

1. Name of adult observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse: \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. Victim's name: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Date/place of initial conversation with/report from victim: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
4. Victim's statement (detailed summary here):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
5. Name of person accused of abuse: \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship to victim (staff, volunteer, family member, other) \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. Reported to local authorities: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_  
Summary: \_\_\_\_\_
  
7. Reported to appropriate staff person: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Summary: \_\_\_\_\_
  
8. Reported to conference: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date/Time: \_\_\_\_\_  
Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_  
Summary: \_\_\_\_\_
  
9. Any additional contacts/notes/information: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of reporter

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Full Name

**\*Note: Be very careful about contacting anyone other than authorities.\***