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Introduction

First United Methodist Church is a part of the body of Christ; a community knit together by God that takes seriously its task to “make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” We also take seriously Jesus’ command to love one another and seek always to follow in His way as we think about our covenant life together as brothers and sisters in Christ.

We understand that through our baptism we are called into fellowship with the Triune God and also into fellowship with one another as disciples of Jesus Christ. As a vital part of living in this covenant with God and with one another, we take seriously the task of demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that children, youth, and adults will be safe to grow spiritually. We further commit to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person will be “surrounded by steadfast love, established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to eternal life” (Baptismal Covenant, UMC Hymnal, p. 44).

Thus, we strive to fulfill this commitment of providing a safe and nurturing environment for all who participate in our ministries in order to prevent abuse, neglect, and harm. First United Methodist Church is committed to providing an environment in which children, youth, and adults feel safe, secure, and protected from physical and emotional abuse. We therefore adopt this Safe Sanctuaries Policy and its accompanying procedures in covenant with the United Methodist Church and the North Carolina Annual Conference and dedicate ourselves to always “living lives worthy of the calling to which we have been called” (Eph. 4:1).

The Safe Sanctuaries Policy is a comprehensive and holistic effort for the benefit of the entire FUMC congregation as well as all visitors and participants in our programs and events. Every staff member and volunteer will be expected to conduct their responsibilities and tasks with complete adherence to the guidelines outlined within this policy manual.

Theological Foundation

In 1996, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution designed to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. This resolution contains 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. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that “children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse” (§162C).

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse occur in churches both large and small, urban, and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real and appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within 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 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 (From The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church – 2000, pp.180-181).

Statement of Purpose

Members of First United Methodist Church, Wilson, North Carolina come from a variety of experiences, backgrounds, and needs. FUMC is committed to providing an environment that is as safe as possible for children, youth, and vulnerable adults who participate in any FUMC ministry. Also, FUMC is committed to taking the necessary precautions to protect any persons working in a FUMC ministry from false accusations or suspicions.

Safe Sanctuaries Committee

Each position listed below will be a standing appointment to the Safe Sanctuaries Committee:

Clergy/Staff:

Director of Youth Ministries

Director of Children's Ministries

Director of Weekday School

Committee Representatives:

Staff Parish Relations Committee Designee

Discipleship Committee Representative

Parent Representatives:

Children's Council Representative

Youth Discipleship Team Representative

Weekday School Advisory Committee Representative

Member at Large:

Professional Volunteer (lawyer, social worker, counselor, law enforcement professional, or other church member in a relevant vocation)

The Committee will meet at least annually to update the policy and to verify that the Committee is fulfilling its obligations to the congregation. The Committee will be assembled for emergency purposes at any time, but as soon as practicable, following any reportable incident and as often as necessary to revise procedures, provide instruction/assistance to clergy, staff, or volunteers and to keep members of the congregation properly informed of the FUMC Safe Sanctuaries program and its ongoing administration. The Committee will also be responsible for coordinating training for all staff and volunteer workers in these policies and procedures in either verbal or written form.

Volunteer and Staff Requirements

Volunteers and staff who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be offered training with regard to the implementation of this policy. After training, all participants will be required to authorize First United Methodist Church to complete a background check through a certified agency of the church's choosing and to sign a Safe Sanctuaries Volunteer/Employee Covenant.

An authorization form for the background check will be available in the church office to anyone who has completed the Safe Sanctuaries training. The background check for staff and volunteers will be paid for by the church. The forms should be turned into Office Administrator for submission. All background checks will be kept confidential and maintained in a locked cabinet. Background checks must be renewed every 3 years. Anyone who has been in North Carolina less than three years will have a background check in their previous state of residence.

Volunteers who serve as teachers and leaders of children will be at least 5 years older than the oldest person they are supervising and at least 18 years old unless approved by the Director of Children's Ministries or Director of Youth Ministries.

For a volunteer to serve without the training, they must have a background check, read the Safe Sanctuaries Policy, and sign the Safe Sanctuaries Volunteer/Employee Covenant stating that they have read the policy and that they agree to take the next available training. This volunteer must work as an assistant to a trained leader until after they have received training.

The volunteer training module is offered online continuously.

Two Adult Rule

The two adult rule requires that no matter the size of the group, there will be at least two unrelated adults present. This may include the presence of an adult "roamer" who moves in and out of the rooms.

Safe Sanctuaries Training & Background Checks

- A. All staff and volunteer workers will receive training in the Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures. Training will be offered online continuously.
- B. These policies and procedures shall be made known to the congregation and to all new members.
- C. Volunteers and staff who work with children and youth will be required to submit to a background check.
 1. Volunteers and staff submitting to a background check must complete an authorization form, available in the church office. This form will be supplied to all persons completing Safe Sanctuaries training. Authorization forms should be turned in to the Office Administrator.

2. Background checks for FUMC employees and volunteers will be paid for through the church budget. Background checks for volunteers of other organizations are the responsibility of that organization.
3. Only the Senior Pastor, Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries, Director of Weekday School, and/or Office Administrator will see the results of the background checks and determine the eligibility of persons to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Other staff members will receive a list of persons who have been approved for service with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
4. All background checks will be kept confidential. Files from background checks will be maintained in a locked cabinet with other personnel files.
5. Background checks must be renewed every 3 years.
6. Persons who are found to represent a potential threat of committing abuse or violating this policy will not be allowed to serve as teachers, leaders, or helpers with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

Nursery/Children's Division

Protection Procedures

These procedures cover the activities in the Nursery/Children's Ministry of First United Methodist Church. The Nursery division age is from birth to 3 years of age and the Children's division is from Pre-K through 5th grade.

- A. Drop off and Pick up
 1. All parents or guardians leaving children in the nursery and children's divisions shall follow these procedures to assure proper drop off and pickup.
 2. All parents or guardians are to complete a Registration Form for their children which shall be kept on file with the Director of Children's Ministries. The Registration Form will ask for the child's name, parent or guardian, home address, medical information (which should include allergies and medical conditions), and a cell phone number where the parent or guardian can be reached.
 3. All children left in the nursery will be logged into Brightwheel, an online childcare software tool. Parents will complete the Registration Form the first time their child is dropped off to the nursery. The Director of Children's Ministries or someone on FUMC staff will enter the child's information into Brightwheel before the following Sunday so the child can be checked in and out through the Brightwheel App. All nursery staff will have the Brightwheel app downloaded to their phone to have access to every nursery child's information.
 4. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to indicate to the Director of Children's Ministries if there are any custody concerns regarding the release of the child, and, if this is the case, a copy of the custody order will be required.
 5. The parent/guardian shall fill out the daily roster with his/her full name, the child's full name, where the parent/guardian will be while the child is in the nursery, and a number where the parent can be reached.
 6. Parents or other adults who bring children to FUMC are encouraged to remain on the property while their children are signed into FUMC ministries. Persons who leave the

property while the children for whom they are responsible are signed into classes or events will provide emergency contact information. Parents of nursery age children are required to remain on the property.

7. The only person allowed to pick up a child will be the parent/guardian who dropped off the child unless other arrangements are made when the child is dropped off or later, in the event of emergency. In this situation, if the person picking up the child is unknown to the nursery/children's division workers, they will need to show picture identification to the workers. Additional measures may be taken for special events such as Vacation Bible School.
8. Children not currently signed into a classroom or children's event are the responsibility of their parents and must be attended to by their parents. Children must be supervised at all times while on church property.
9. Nursery workers shall wear identification while working on campus in a ministry. This I.D. will be in the form of an official First Church nametag, special shirt, vest, etc. The I.D. will signify that the worker is approved under this policy.

B. Restrictions

1. Only trained, assigned workers/volunteers will be allowed in the nursery/children's division rooms. No other individuals will be allowed in these areas without an identified need and the approval of the Director of Children's Ministries.

C. Providing Adequate Personnel

1. *On-site* programs that involve Nursery and Elementary age children will include supervisory personnel according to the following ratios under the "Two Adult Rule."
 - a. Children Infant through 2 years of age 1 adult to 4 children
 - b. Children Preschool age (3-5 years) 1 adult to 8 children
 - c. Children 1st – 5th Grade 1 adult to 12 children
2. *Off-site* programs that involve Elementary age children will include supervisory personnel according to the following ratios:
 - a. Children Preschool (3-5 years)

2 adults to 10 children maximum
3 adults to 15 children maximum
4 adults to 20 children maximum
 - b. Children 1st -5th Grade

2 adults to 16 children maximum
3 adults to 24 children maximum
4 adults to 32 children maximum

*No children under the age of 3 will be transported off site.

Rules of Behavior

- A. *Two Adult Rule* – Whenever possible, a minimum of two workers shall be present during any children's activity. We will strive to never have a worker alone with any children. This two adult rule overrides all adult to child ratios. This may include the visible presence of an adult roamer.

- B. *Open Door Policy* – All children’s classrooms will have either a viewing window that will remain free of covering or a dutch door where the top door will remain open at all times. In the event that a room does not have either a dutch door or viewing window, that door will always be unlocked and accessible.
- C. *Visible Presence* – Every effort will be made to have someone present in the hallways during classes or events. This person will act as a visible presence in support of workers, as well as a deterrent to any potentially harmful situations for our children.
- D. *Restroom Policies* – In situations where an escort is needed for a trip to the restroom, a worker will stand outside the restroom and only assist the child if needed. Whenever a worker is in the restroom with a child, the door will remain open. The worker will never be in a closed-door situation with a child. If a child soils themselves during Sunday school, every attempt will be made to locate a parent. If a parent is unable to be located, two adult volunteers will be present while cleaning up the child.
- E. *Discipline* – Corporal punishment, of any kind, is never appropriate. Teachers are asked to redirect a child if they should display inappropriate behavior. In the event that redirection does not work, a child will be separated from the group but remain in the same room and placed in time out for a short period of time.
- F. *Injury* – Injuries requiring on-site first aid will be reported to the parent.

The following behaviors are prohibited for workers:

- A. Threatening or intentionally inflicting emotional or physical injury
- B. Committing any sexual offense or engaging in any sexual contact, including any kind of sexual advance or making a request for sexual favors, engaging in verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature, e.g. back rubs, massages, kissing, or similar behavior
- C. Physical discipline, such as spanking
- D. Discrimination of any type

Touching to comfort or affirm a child in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Side-by-side hugs are suggested instead of full body contact. Appropriate touching need not be completely avoided but is acceptable only in public. Workers shall be aware of how it looks and how the person being contacted may interpret the contact.

The following are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the ministry:

- A. Tobacco - presence or use
- B. Vaping – presence or use
- C. Alcohol - presence or use
- D. Illegal Drugs - presence or use
- E. Energy Drinks – presence or use
- F. Firearms or other weapons
- G. Foul or offensive language

The above examples are not all-inclusive. Any inappropriate behavior that does not reflect our Christian beliefs will not be tolerated.

Procedures for Overnight Activities

These procedures cover children's activities which require an overnight stay and are sponsored by First United Methodist Church. This includes, but is not limited to camping, lock-ins, hotel/motels, and overnight stays in personal dwellings.

- A. *Approval:* A signed parent/guardian permission form will be required of each child prior to the activity. These will be collected and approved by the group leader prior to the activity. Following the activity, the forms will be given to the Director of Children's Ministries.
- B. All overnight or off-property activities require prior permission of the Director of Children's Ministries.
- C. Providing adequate personnel: programs that involve children will include supervisory ratio of 1 adult to 10 children following the 2-adult rule.

Rules of Conduct for Overnight Activities

- A. All persons are to abide by the Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures.
- B. No child will be allowed away from the designated overnight area without prior permission of the group leader and the parent's signed permission.
- C. No members of the opposite sex will be allowed to sleep in the same room unsupervised.
- D. A permission form must be signed by the child's parents before being allowed to participate in overnight activities.
- E. Adults will not be allowed to sleep in the same bed with a child unless the child is their child and of the same sex. (This rule allows for the rare instance when this is necessary on ski trips or other similar events.)

Transportation Procedures

The following procedures are for providing transportation for children to and from activities sponsored and/or supervised by First United Methodist Church. These procedures relate to transportation provided by the church, church staff and/or volunteers, and parents of children to and from activities off the church property.

- A. Vehicle Requirements:
 - 1. These vehicle requirements pertain to vehicles owned by First United Methodist Church, those provided by parents of participating children, those provided by church staff and/or volunteers, and any external commercial vehicles provided for transportation of children.
 - 2. All vehicles shall be in good running order, have a current valid license plate, inspection sticker, and passenger restraints. The passenger restraints must be used while transporting children. If the child requires a booster seat per NC state law, it is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to provide one.
 - 3. All vehicles shall have insurance coverage as required by North Carolina law.

B. Qualification of Drivers:

1. All drivers will be workers (as qualified by the Safe Sanctuaries Policy), parents of participating children, or licensed commercial drivers. The Director of Children’s Ministries will pre-approve drivers.
2. All drivers will have a current valid driver’s license with the classification for the vehicle being driven and be at least 25 years of age, unless they are a staff member of the church.

C. General Rules of Transportation:

1. Unless otherwise approved by the administrator and the parents/guardians, all transportation subject to these procedures will begin and terminate at the church property.
2. All drivers will obey all traffic laws. Failure to do so may disqualify them from driving for church-related activities.
3. For overnight church functions, signed parent permission forms will be obtained from each child prior to being allowed in any of these vehicles. If the child does not have a completed permission form, they will not be permitted to participate in the transportation provided by the church. The permission forms are to be collected and checked by the group leader prior to leaving the church property. Upon return to the church, the forms will be given to the Director of Children’s Ministries.
4. No driver is to transport any child alone, without written or verbal permission from the child’s parents. If possible, there will always be more than one child in the vehicle. In the event there is one child in the vehicle, the minor must be seated in the rear seat of the vehicle.

Weekday School Division

Protection Procedures

These procedures cover the activities in the First United Methodist Church Weekday School. The preschool offers the following classes:

- | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| ● Creative Beginnings | Toddlers – 23 Months |
| ● Little Learners | 2 Years – 3 Years |
| ● Building Blocks | 3 Years – 4 Years |
| ● Explorers | 4 Years – 5 Years |
| ● Trailblazers | 5 Years – 6 Years |

A. Drop off and Pick up

1. All parents or guardians leaving children at the weekday school shall follow these procedures to assure proper drop off and pickup.
2. All parents or guardians are to complete a Registration Form annually for their children which shall be kept on file with the Director of Weekday School. The form will ask for the child’s name, parent or guardian, home address, medical information (which should include allergies and medical conditions), emergency contact, approved pick-up adults, and a cell phone number where the parent or guardian can be reached.

3. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to indicate to the Director of Weekday School if there are any custody concerns regarding the release of the child, and, if this is the case, a copy of the custody order will be required.
4. The only person allowed to pick up a child will be the parent/guardian or individuals listed on the Registration Form. In this situation, if the person picking up the child is unknown to the school staff, they will need to show picture identification to the workers.

B. Providing Adequate Personnel

1. *On-site* programs that involve weekday school age children will include supervisory personnel according to the following ratios under the “Two Adult Rule.”

a. Creative Beginnings	2 adults to 10 children
b. Little Learners	2 adults to 12 children
c. Building Blocks	2 adults to 14 children
d. Explorers	2 adults to 16 children
e. Trailblazers	2 adults to 16 children

2. *Off-site* programs that involve weekday school age children will include supervisory personnel according the following ratios:

a. Preschool and Kindergarten (3-7 years)	2 adults to 10 children maximum
	3 adults to 15 children maximum
	4 adults to 20 children maximum

*No children under the age of 3 will be transported off site.

Rules of Behavior

- A. *Two Adult Rule* – Whenever possible, a minimum of two workers (age 18 or older) shall be present during any children’s activity. We will strive to never have a worker alone with any children. This two-adult rule overrides all adult to child ratios.
- B. *Open Door Policy* – All children’s classrooms will have either a viewing window that will remain free of covering or a dutch door where the top door will remain open at all times. In the event that a room does not have either a dutch door or viewing window, that door will always be unlocked and accessible.
- C. *Visible Presence* – Every effort will be made to have the Director of Weekday School present in the area during classes or events. This person will act as a visible presence in support of workers, as well as a deterrent to any potentially harmful situations for our children.
- D. *Restroom Policies* – In situations where an escort is needed for a trip to the restroom, a worker will stand outside the restroom and only assist the child if needed. Whenever a worker is in the restroom with a child, the door will remain open. The worker will never be in a closed-door situation with a child.

- E. *Discipline* – Corporal punishment, of any kind, is never appropriate. Teachers are asked to redirect a child if they should display inappropriate behavior. In the event that redirection does not work, a child will be separated from the group but remain in the same room and placed in time out for a short period of time. If further action is needed, the child will be taken to the Director of Weekday School and, if necessary, the child’s parent/guardian will be contacted.

The following behaviors are prohibited for workers:

- A. Threatening or intentionally inflicting emotional or physical injury
- B. Committing any sexual offense or engaging in any sexual contact, including any kind of sexual advance or making a request for sexual favors, engaging in verbal, visual or physical conduct of a sexual nature, e.g. back rubs, massages, kissing or similar behavior
- C. Physical discipline, such as spanking
- D. Discrimination of any type

Touching to comfort or affirm a child in an age-appropriate manner is permitted. Side-by-side hugs are suggested instead of full body contact. Appropriate touching need not be completely avoided but is acceptable only in public. Workers shall be aware of how it looks and how the person being contacted may interpret the contact.

The following are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the weekday school area:

- A. Tobacco - presence or use
- B. Vaping – presence or use
- C. Alcohol - presence or use
- D. Illegal Drugs - presence or use
- E. Firearms or other weapons
- F. Foul or offensive language

The above examples are not all-inclusive. Any inappropriate behavior that does not reflect our Christian beliefs will not be tolerated.

Procedures for Overnight Activities

The weekday school will not participate in overnight activities.

Transportation Procedures

The following procedures are for providing transportation for children to and from activities sponsored and/or supervised by FUMC Weekday School. These procedures relate to transportation provided by the church, parents of children, and weekday school staff members to and from activities off the church property.

A. Vehicle Requirements:

1. These vehicle requirements pertain to vehicles owned by First United Methodist Church, those provided by parent of participating children, weekday school staff, church staff, and any external commercial vehicles provided for transportation of children.
2. All vehicles shall be in good running order, have a current valid license plate, inspection sticker, and passenger restraints. The passenger restraints must be used while transporting children. If the child requires a booster seat per NC state law, it is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to provide one.
3. All vehicles shall have insurance coverage as required by North Carolina law.

B. Qualification of Drivers:

1. All drivers will be workers (as qualified by the Safe Sanctuaries Policy), parents of participating children, or licensed commercial drivers. The Director of Weekday School will pre-approve drivers.
2. All drivers will have a current valid driver's license with the classification for the vehicle being driven and be at least 25 years of age, unless they are a staff member of the weekday school or church.
3. All drivers who are staff workers will be subject to periodic checks of their motor vehicle records.

C. General Rules of Transportation:

1. Unless otherwise approved by the administrator and the parents/guardians, all transportation subject to these procedures will begin and terminate at the church property.
2. All drivers will obey all traffic laws. Failure to do so may disqualify them from driving for church-related activities.
3. Signed parent permission forms will be obtained from each child prior to being allowed in any of these vehicles. If the child does not have a completed permission form, they will not be permitted to participate in the transportation provided by the church. The permission forms are to be collected and checked by the Director of Weekday School prior to leaving the church property.
4. No driver is to transport any child alone, without written or verbal permission from the child's parents. If possible, there will always be more than one child in the vehicle. In the event there is one child in the vehicle, the minor must be seated in the rear seat of the vehicle.

Youth Division

Protection Procedures

These procedures cover the activities of the Youth Division at First United Methodist Church. Children are placed in the Youth Division beginning 6th grade through the summer after 12th grade.

A. Supervision of Youth

1. Supervision ratios of youth and adults (under the 2-adult rule)
 - a. For safety purposes, with high school and middle school students there will be, whenever possible, one adult for every seven youth.
 - b. For purposes of supervising youth, an adult is defined as anyone who is at least 23 years old. Anyone under the age of 23 must be approved by the church staff before being allowed to be used in a leadership position.
 - c. Volunteers and staff should be responsible for no more than 7 minors at any given time, regardless of age.

B. Responsibility Times for Youth Ministry Workers

1. The youth ministry is not responsible for youth at times when no youth ministry offerings are scheduled.
2. The youth ministry is not responsible for youth who are supposed to be involved in youth activities who choose not to participate in the youth ministry offerings as scheduled. Their parents will be contacted to pick them up when they choose not to participate.

The following are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in the ministry:

- A. Tobacco - presence or use
- B. Vaping – presence or use
- C. Alcohol - presence or use
- D. Illegal Drugs - presence or use
- E. Energy Drinks – presence or use
- F. Firearms or other weapons
- G. Foul or offensive language

Guidelines for Counseling in Informal and/or Individual Settings

- A. All one-on-one interactions must be conducted in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. Another adult/church staff person is to have knowledge of staff members' whereabouts and with whom they are meeting.
- B. Children, youth, and other vulnerable people receiving individual counseling should be told they are free to discuss any aspects of the counseling process with a parent or other adult, especially if they are uncomfortable about anything that occurs in counseling.
- C. The youth ministry has an interest in helping youth and youth ministry workers maintain appropriate boundaries. Youth workers need to communicate clearly at all times the message "I am your friend, but I am not your peer."
- D. All incidents of suspected abuse and neglect revealed during the session will be reported according to the process outlined.

Procedures for Overnight Activities

These procedures cover youth activities which require an overnight stay and are sponsored by First United Methodist Church. This includes, but is not limited to camping, lock-ins, hotel/motels, and overnight stays in personal dwellings.

- A. Approval: a signed parent/guardian permission form will be required of each youth prior to the activity. These will be collected and approved by the group leader prior to the activity. Following the activity, the forms will be given to the Director of Youth Ministries.
- B. All overnight or off-property activities require prior permission of the Director of Youth Ministries.
- C. Providing adequate personnel: programs that involve youth will include supervisory ratio of 1 adult to 10 youth following the two adult rule.

Rules of Conduct for Overnight Activities

- A. All persons are to abide by the Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures.
- B. None of the youth will be allowed away from the designated overnight area without prior permission of the group leader and the parent's signed permission.
- C. No members of the opposite sex will be allowed to sleep in the same room unsupervised.
- D. The Youth Covenant must be signed by the youth and their parents annually before being allowed to participate in overnight activities.
- E. Adults will not be allowed to sleep in the same bed with a youth unless the youth is their child and of the same sex. (This rule allows for the rare instance when this is necessary on youth ski trips or other similar events.)

Transportation Procedures

The following procedures are for providing transportation for youth to and from activities sponsored and/or supervised by First United Methodist Church. These procedures relate to transportation provided by the church, parents of youth, and youth workers to and from activities off the church property.

- A. Vehicle Requirements:
 - 1. These vehicle requirements pertain to vehicles owned by First United Methodist Church, those provided by parent of participating youth, those provided by youth workers and any external commercial vehicles provided for transportation of youth.
 - 2. All vehicles shall be in good running order, have a current valid license plate, inspection sticker and passenger restraints. The passenger restraints must be used while transporting youth.
 - 3. All vehicles shall have insurance coverage as required by North Carolina law.

B. Qualification of Drivers:

1. All drivers will be workers (as qualified by the Safe Sanctuaries Policy), parents of participating youth, or licensed commercial drivers. The Director of Youth Ministries will pre-approve drivers.
2. All drivers will have a current valid driver's license with the classification for the vehicle being driven and be at least 25 years of age, unless they are a staff member of the church.
3. All drivers who are staff workers will be subject to periodic checks of their motor vehicle records.

C. General Rules of Transportation:

1. Unless otherwise approved by the administrator and the parents/guardians, all transportation subject to these procedures will begin and terminate at the church property.
2. All drivers will obey all traffic laws. Failure to do so may disqualify them from driving for church-related activities.
3. For overnight church functions, signed parent permission forms will be obtained from each youth prior to being allowed in any of these vehicles. If the youth does not have a completed permission form, they will not be permitted to participate in the transportation provided by the church. The permission forms are to be collected and checked by the group leader prior to leaving the church property. Upon return to the church, the forms will be given to the Director of Youth Ministries.
4. No driver is to transport any youth alone, without written or verbal permission from the youth's parents. If possible, there will always be more than one youth in the vehicle. In the event there is one youth in the vehicle, the minor must be seated in the rear seat of the vehicle.
5. Youth are strongly discouraged from driving themselves to youth events outside of Wilson.

Response and Reporting

Mandatory Reporting

- **Who must report**

The North Carolina reporting law applies to every person and every institution in the state. Do not ignore any reported incident of abuse. The law requires any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any child has been abused or neglected, to make a report to the county department of social services (NC G.S. 7B301).

North Carolina's statute does not specifically address religious officials and their duty to report. Therefore, they would be included under the mandate that "any person" with cause to suspect child abuse or neglect must make a report.

- **Reporting**

Having "cause to suspect" child abuse or neglect is not just a feeling about a situation alone. It is important that is connected to something observable or disclosed, such as a child's statements, behavior, or appearance. Legal definitions of abuse and neglect are important, but anyone concerned about a child but confused about whether their concern is reportable or not should make the report. Child Protective Services Social Workers are trained to assess the presenting information and determine whether a report needs to be taken. If CPS determines that the report

does not need to be handled by them, they will automatically forward a report to local law enforcement for investigation. If the report is made in good faith, there is not liability risk in reporting. So, if in doubt, report.

A person who has cause to suspect a child is being abused or neglected has no duty to conduct an investigation to uncover evidence for the report. In fact, that could interfere with a Child Protective Services investigation. They are not required to have detailed knowledge of the abuse to make the report.

If other church officials are notified prior to a report being made to the Department of Social Services, that notification must be intended as communication and awareness for the church and not as a process of screening the reporting.

- **What to include**

When making a report to CPS, include as much of the following as the person making the report knows.

- A. The child's name, age, and address
- B. The name and address of the child's parent, guardian, or caregiver
- C. The names and ages of other children in the home
- D. The child's location if not at the home address
- E. The nature and extent of any injury or condition resulting from the abuse of neglect
- F. Any other information that might help establish the need for protective intervention

Steps to be taken

- **Allegations against volunteers**

- A. Ensure the physical safety of the child/youth. The accused adult should not be confronted.
- B. The Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries, or Director of Weekday School will be notified (by phone or in person).
- C. Independent of that notification, a report to Child Protective Services will be made by the person who received the allegations.
- D. The volunteer will be relieved of duties by the Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries, or Director of Weekday School pending a DSS or law enforcement investigation.
- E. The Director of Youth Ministries/Director of Children's Ministries/Director of Weekday School will report the allegations to the Senior Pastor.
- F. The Senior Pastor and the Director of Youth Ministries/Director of Children's Ministries/Director of Weekday School will determine if the District Superintendent should be notified or other action is to be taken.

- **Allegations against employees**

- A. Do not confront the employee.
- B. Notify the Senior Pastor, Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Children's Ministries, or Director of Weekday School (by phone or in person).
- C. Independent of that notification, a report to Child Protective Services will be made by the person who received the allegations.
- D. The Director of Youth Ministries/Director of Children's Ministries/ Director of Weekday School will report the allegations to the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor and response team.
- E. The Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, and response team will determine if the District Superintendent should be notified or other action is to be taken.

- **Allegations against any Pastor**
 - A. Do not confront the Pastor.
 - B. Notify the Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Children’s Ministries, or Director of Weekday Preschool (by phone or in person).
 - C. Independent of that notification, a report to Child Protective Services will be made by the person who received the allegations.
 - D. The Director of Youth Ministries/Director of Children’s Ministries/ Director of Weekday School will report the allegations to the response team.
 - E. The specific committee chairperson will report the allegation to the District Superintendent.
- **Allegations against someone outside of the church**
 - A. Do not confront the alleged parent, caregiver, or individual.
 - B. If the alleged abuser is a direct parent or caregiver, do not restrict the child from leaving with the parent.
 - C. An immediate report to CPS is to be made by the person with received the allegations.
 - D. Notify the Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Children’s Ministries, or Director of Weekday School (by phone or in person).
 - E. The Director of Youth Ministries/Director of Children’s Ministries/Weekday School Director will report the allegations to the Senior Pastor.
 - F. The Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, and the Director of Youth Ministries/Director of Children’s Ministries/Weekday School Director will determine if other action needs to be taken.
- **Suspicion of child abuse (Weekday School)**
 - A. Do not confront the alleged parent, caregiver, or individual.
 - B. Do not restrict the child from leaving with the parent.
 - C. An immediate report to CPS is to be made by the person with received the allegations.
 - D. Notify the Director of Weekday School (by phone or in person).
 - E. The Director of Weekday Preschool will report the allegations to the Senior Pastor.
 - F. The Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, and the Director of Weekday School will determine if other action needs to be taken.

Response for Abuse

The following steps shall be taken once abuse is reported:

- A. A response team shall be formed and will be assigned to take any further actions that are required. The response team shall follow the advice of legal counsel and the District Superintendent or the District Superintendent’s representative.
- B. The response team shall be made up of the Senior Pastor, the Chairman of the Staff Parrish Relations Committee, the Church Council Chairperson, and a mental health professional.
- C. The response team shall appoint one sole media spokesperson. The response team shall determine the appropriate means of communicating with the congregation.
- D. The Response Team will:
 - 1. Inform the employee or volunteer of the accusation.
 - 2. Suspend with pay (for paid employee) the alleged offender while the confidential investigation is being conducted.
 - 3. Consult with the church attorney.

4. Reassure the victim that he or she has done nothing wrong and that it was right to report the incident.
5. Allow the victim to speak freely.
6. Not coach responses from the victim and will not become defensive to any statements.
7. Cooperate in the investigation conducted by CPS and the insurance company.
8. Provide ongoing spiritual and counseling support for the victim and his/her family.
9. Consider the spiritual needs of the accused and seek assistance from the District Superintendent and Conference personnel to ensure that appropriate counseling and response are provided for the accused and the accused's family.
10. Use response team to ensure all necessary steps are followed, reports made, and documentation completed.
11. Review the process to see if improvements need to be made in policy or procedure.

Notification Contacts

Child Protective Services: Wilson County 252-206-4000

Insurance: John Hackney Agency, Inc. 252-291-3111

Law Enforcement: in accordance with local law as instructed by Child Protective Services

Legal Representation: as provided by the insurance company and a legal representative for the church

Post Reporting Procedure

First United Methodist Church acknowledges that there are many victims beyond the abused who may be affected by an incident or of suspicion of child abuse or neglect. We are mindful that the following persons will require the proper response, care, counseling, and support following any such event.

- Family members of the harmed child or youth
- Peers of the child or youth
- Peers of the child's or youth's parents
- Remaining child/youth workers
- Congregation as a community of faith
- Family of the accused abuser

We believe that failure to address the issues of suffering, anger, fear, and grief that occur within the church after abuse can have extended and unnecessary consequences for everyone. We will not hide nor shrink away from our responsibility to promptly, and appropriately, address any incident of abuse. As a congregation, we will be committed to the prevention of and termination of behaviors which contribute to the cycle of abuse. The following represents the steps we will take to assure that the congregation and those affected may be restored to a feeling of well-being and justice.

First: Truth-telling is the most important component in post-loss recovery. Our communications will be honest, measured, and respectful of all parties involved. Written communication shall be factual and will work to dispel rumor and innuendo and to assure the congregation of the efforts taken to secure the safety of the victim and to resume the functions of ministries and programs.

Second: Senior clergy will host a planned congregational meeting so that members can attend to learn about the church's response to the allegation of abuse. The meeting will be led by appropriate senior clergy, lay leaders, and the District Superintendent. A non-member counselor will be available to address attendee questions and feelings.

Third: A task force will be established to determine how FUMC will adapt its ongoing ministries to appropriately acknowledge and recover from the incident. Educational programs in various forums (Wednesday night classes, Adult Sunday School Curriculum, Youth, etc.) will be implemented to promote healing, justice, education, and restored worship.

Fourth: The Safe Sanctuaries Committee will work closely with the response team and clergy to modify any procedure and policies based upon incident outcomes and will diligently engage in every effort to prevent further incidents of abuse or neglect.

Documentation for Reported Abuse

The Pastor or appropriate church staff will be responsible for maintaining the following documents and assuring the confidentiality of same:

- Staff background checks
- Volunteer background checks
- Motor vehicle reports
- Suspicion of incidents
- Incident meeting notes/correspondence
- Instructions from law enforcement/Child Protective Services
- Insurance claims records and correspondence
- Litigation files and associated documents/correspondence

Copies will be produced only as required by law, insurance, or as deemed appropriate by the Senior Pastor and the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Documents necessary for employment at FUMC will be secured by the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, and documents necessary for employment at FUMC Weekday School will be secured by the Director of Weekday School. Background checks for prospective applicants who are not hired will be destroyed within 60 days by the staff member who performs the background check. All information acquired during the recruiting of volunteers and employees shall be treated in a confidential manner. Paid staff records will be destroyed after a 20-year period. For volunteer church workers, records will be purged no sooner than 24 months after the volunteer's last active participation in a Children or Youth Program (including music ministry.)

The Safe Sanctuaries Committee will meet annually to review records of volunteers, and Senior Pastor and SPRC will meet periodically to review paid staff records and to purge outdated documents. It is particularly important to have a routine method to properly dispose of anything discovered in the employment or volunteer application process that is not public record. Such files must be maintained under the strictest confidence and locked in a cabinet to assure that they are not seen by unauthorized parties.

Because liability insurance policies are largely written on an occurrence basis, these policies and other related insurance records and any claims files will be kept indefinitely.

Definitions

- Unrelated adults: Persons over the age of 21 who are not related, including but not limited to spouses, parent/child, siblings, cousins, aunt/uncle, niece/nephew.
- Adult (to work with youth): Anyone who is at least 23 years old.
- Sexual abuse: The exploitation or use of anyone under 18 years of age through any contact or interaction in which the minor is used for the satisfaction of the older person. This includes touching and non-touching behaviors.
- Touching Behaviors: Behaviors including but not limited to kissing on the mouth, fondling, intercourse, forcible rape, genital, or anal penetration, and oral sex.
- Non-touching Behaviors: Behaviors including but not limited to verbal comments of a sexual nature, display of pornography, obscene telephone calls, exhibitionism, and allowing or coercing minors to witness sexual activity.
- Volunteer: Any adult who has direct or indirect contact with any minor, including high school students who have direct or indirect contact with any minor that has not yet entered high school.
- Minor: Includes any child or youth under the age of 18.
- Leaders: Any adult responsible for an activity or event.
- Workers: Any employee or volunteer assigned to an activity or event.
- Disabled adults of any age are protected in North Carolina under State law (N. C. General Statute 108A-102), which mandates that “any person having reasonable cause to believe that a disabled adult is in need shall report such information.” Disabled/vulnerable adults are defined as people over the age of 18 who are mentally or physically challenged, either temporarily or long-term who are unable to fully care for themselves.

The following definitions were taken from North Carolina General Statute, Chapter 108A, Article 6, the NC Adult Protective Services Statute:

- Exploitation: The illegal or improper use of a disabled adult or his resources for another’s profit or advantage.
- Neglect: Refers to a disabled adult who is either living alone and not able to provide for himself the services which are necessary to maintain his mental or physical health or is not receiving services from his caretaker.
- Child Abuse: Includes the physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a minor, and may also ~~may~~ include neglect or exploitation.
- Physical Abuse: Inflicting, or permitting to be inflicted, or creating a substantial risk of injury, other than by accident. North Carolina law does not specifically define injury, in order to prohibit as many forms of physical abuse as possible.
- Behavior Modification: Using, or allowing to be used, cruel or grossly inappropriate procedures, or cruel or grossly inappropriate devices ~~in order~~ to modify a child's behavior. Some lawsuits have been brought under this section that claim that behavior modification therapy designed to prevent or "cure" a child of homosexuality is child abuse.
- Sexual Abuse: Rape, unlawful sale, surrender, or purchase of a minor, incest, preparation of obscene photographs, disseminating obscene material to the juvenile, sexual exploitation of the juvenile, promoting prostitution, and taking "indecent liberties" with the juvenile.
- Emotional Abuse: To create or allow to be created serious emotional damage to a juvenile. Some evidence of this type of abuse is severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal, and aggressive behavior towards him or herself or others.

Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse*

Date report is completed: _____

Name of church worker observing or receiving disclosure and making the report of child abuse: _____

Victim name: _____

Victim Age: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Date/place of initial conversation with or report from victim: _____

Victim's Statement: _____

Name of person accused of abuse: _____

Relationship of the accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other): _____

Date Reported to Director of Children's/Youth/Preschool Ministries: _____

Date Reported to Senior Pastor: _____

Additional Information: _____

Call/meeting with victim's parent/guardian: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary of conversation: _____

Date/time call to Child Protective Services: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary of Conversation: _____

Date/time call to law enforcement: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary of conversation: _____

Signature of Adult Completing Form

Signature of Youth Reporting Incident, *if applicable*

*Adapted from *Safe Sanctuaries, reducing the risk of Child Abuse in the Church* by Joy Thornburg Melton, 1998. Discipleship Resources, reprinted 2004. Before taking any action or completing this report, it is required that any person completing this form be familiar with the laws of the state of North Carolina regarding the reporting of incidence of child abuse.

Volunteer/Employee Covenant

First United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, vulnerable adults, volunteers, and employees who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of worship, safe and secure for all who enter and as a place where everyone can experience God's love through fellowship and growth in Christ.

1. Persons who have been convicted of child neglect or abuse (sexual, physical, and/or emotional) shall not volunteer or be employed to work with children or youth in any First United Methodist Church sponsored activity or in any activity to which First United Methodist Church is providing volunteers, employees, or participants.
2. Adult volunteers involved with children, youth, or vulnerable adults of our church in a *lead capacity* must have been a member or active participant of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
3. All adult volunteers and employees working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall observe the "Two Adult Rule" (as defined in the Safe Sanctuaries manual) at all times so that no adult is ever alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
4. Adult volunteers and employees working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep themselves informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse and neglect.
5. All adult volunteers and employees shall immediately report to the Director of Children's Ministries, Director of Youth Ministries, and/or Director of Weekday School any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer the following:

1. As a volunteer and/or employee at First United Methodist, Wilson, do you agree to observe and abide by all policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth? yes no
2. Do you understand and agree to observe the "Two Adult Rule" at all times? yes no
3. If you are a volunteer, do you understand and agree to observe the six-month membership (or active participation) rule? na yes no
4. Have you been trained in First United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuaries program and agree to abide by its dictates, expectations, and requirements? yes no
 - a. If no, do you agree to read the Safe Sanctuaries policy and take the training at the earliest availability? yes no
5. Do you agree to report to the Director of Children's Ministries, Director of Youth Ministries, and/or Director of Weekday School any observance, awareness, or suspicion of abusive or inappropriate behavior as defined in your training? yes no
6. As a volunteer and/or employee of First United Methodist Church, do you agree to inform a minister of this congregation if you have ever been convicted of child abuse? yes no

Please list any ministry areas in the church you may be interested in serving.

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

Printed Name _____

Signature _____ Date Completed Training _____

Background Check Authorization

Area of Ministry/Service: _____

Print Name: _____
(First) (Middle) (Last)

Former Name(s) Used: _____
(Maiden)

Current Address: _____
(Street) (City) (State/Zip)

Current County of Residence: _____

Previous Address: _____
(Street) (City) (State/Zip)

Social Security Number: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Email Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____
(Home) (Cell)

Driver's License Number/State: _____

The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge. I hereby authorize First United Methodist Church and its designated agents and representatives to make an investigation of my background, criminal records, and where applicable, my motor vehicle records, for the purpose of confirming the information contained on my job application or volunteer form.

I understand this authorization extends to the obtaining of information which may be material to my qualifications for employment or as a volunteer.

I release First United Methodist Church and its designated agents and representatives from any and all liabilities, claim or lawsuits with regards to the information obtained from any and all of the above reference sources used.

Signature _____ Date _____