

## **Wesleyan Chapel United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy**

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### **I. Safe Sanctuaries Policy**

In April 1996, The General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of sexual abuse of youth and children in the church. In 2004, the Annual Conference also adopted a resolution requiring each congregation to develop a Child Abuse Prevention Policy. These resolutions are grounded in scripture.

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child...welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, and 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 most vulnerable among us.

God calls us to make our church a safe place, protecting our children and other vulnerable individuals from sexual, ritual and other forms of abuse. God calls us to create a community of faith where children and youth grow safe and strong.

### **II. Commitment Statement**

The staff and members of Wesleyan Chapel United Methodist Church (Wesleyan Chapel UMC) are committed to doing all they can to provide a safe and secure environment for nursery, preschoolers, children, youth, and all persons entrusted to our care. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of our children, youth, employees, volunteers, and our entire church family. By establishing this policy and procedures, we demonstrate our commitment to provide a safe environment for our children and youth as they grow in their relationship with God.

### **III. Procedures**

#### 1. Recruiting and Screening Practices

An essential component of preventing abuse is careful screening. We realize that abuse may occur in the church and believe that all staff and volunteers who work with children should be screened. Wesleyan Chapel UMC will use the following screening process:

1. All staff and volunteers will be required to submit a completed application form.
2. An interview will be conducted with all applicants.
3. A criminal history check will be done on all staff and volunteers. The report will be obtained with the initial application. Wesleyan Chapel UMC reserves the right to conduct additional criminal history checks at any time.
4. A minimum of three (3) reference checks will be made on all new applicants.
5. All applicants will be asked to sign a covenant statement which states in the event the applicant is recruited to work with children or youth, he or she agrees to follow the church's policies and procedures for the prevention of child abuse.
6. Applicants will not be discriminated against on the basis of race, color, sex, age, ethnic origin, or disability.
7. Applicants who are responsible for driving children and youth may be required to provide a copy of their driver's license and proof of insurance.
8. Applicants who drive church owned vehicles must be at least 21 years of age and members of Wesleyan Chapel UMC. Each such applicant must complete the Wesleyan Chapel UMC Driver Application form, provide a copy of his or her driver's license and proof of insurance.

## 2. The Two Adult Rule

Whenever possible, two or more unrelated adults will be present during any children/youth activities. If a second adult is not available during children/youth activities, it is recommended that the door remain open and a designated adult act as a "roaming adult," checking generally areas where children or youth are gathered.

If one adult must leave the classroom/activity to take a child to the restroom, the adult shall wait outside the restroom door and the door will remain open. In the case of young children who need assistance, a second adult will also be present.

## 3. The 18-Age Limit Rule

Volunteers and staff who work in supervising roles should be at least eighteen years of age. High school or middle school students may assist the adult leaders. No elementary children will be allowed in the nursery or preschool areas unless they are the children of the volunteer or worker or under the direct supervision of an adult leader.

## 4. Five Year Older Rule

All volunteers and staff who work in supervising roles with children should be at least five years older than the group in which they are to work. If they are not five years older, a volunteer or staff member who is five years older must serve as the supervising adult.

## 5. One Year Rule

In order to be eligible to work with children and youth, volunteers should have attended Wesleyan Chapel UMC for one (1) year or another United Methodist Church for one (1) year and have a letter of recommendation from their previous pastor. Regular attendance is recommended.

## 6. Training

- All new staff members and new volunteers will receive Safe Sanctuary training before working with children and youth. All staff and volunteers will receive Safe Sanctuary training annually.
- CPR and First Aid training opportunities will be made available. All volunteers and staff are encouraged to become certified.
- First Aid Kits will be located near classrooms.

## 7. Windows for Monitoring

The nursery room will have a window in the door or in the wall for adults and parents to monitor the children. This window will remain free of obstruction at all times. In the youth and older children's rooms where no accessible windows are available, the door will be left open.

## 8. Parent(s) and/or Legal Guardian(s) Communication & Permission

Children and Youth Ministry leaders will give parents and/or legal guardians advance notice and information regarding off-site or overnight events. For off-site and overnight events, parents must give written permission for their child's participation. Permission forms will be filed in the church office, and copies will be kept by the staff member or volunteer person responsible for that ministry. All permission forms must include medical information.

## 9. Supervision of Children

No child will be left unsupervised. Preschool children will be monitored in the restrooms at all times. The adult will wait outside and the door will remain open. If the child needs assistance, two adults will be present.

#### 10. Transportation

All staff and volunteers who are responsible for driving children and youth must be 21 years of age or older, complete a driver's application form, and have a valid driver's license and proof of insurance. No child will be left unattended in a vehicle.

All youth who drive themselves to a youth outing/event must notify the supervising adult of their arrival and departure.

#### 11. Overnight Stays

In overnight stays, whenever possible, adults will not be housed in rooms with youth unless it is a parent/child relationship. If the setting is such that adults must be housed in rooms with youth, then only screened adults will be housed in these rooms.

#### 12. Use of Facilities by Third Parties

This policy will apply to any and all third party groups that use Wesleyan Chapel UMC as their meeting place. All such groups shall receive a copy of the policy, and an authorized representative of the third party group must sign a statement acknowledging that the group has received a copy of the policy and will abide by the policy.

#### 13. Disciplinary Methods

Corporal punishment is not to be used at any time. If a child/youth is in need of correction during an event, the following methods may be used:

- Verbal correction which addresses the specific issue, while not berating the child/youth
- Time-out – one (1) minute per age, always within sight of an adult
- Calling the parent(s)/guardian(s) to come sit with the child/youth or to pickup the child/youth depending on the nature of the behavior
- If a child/youth poses a danger to him/herself or others, two adults will take the appropriate measures to keep the child/youth from harming self and/or others.

#### 14. Insurance Coverage

Wesleyan Chapel UMC will maintain liability coverage. The specifics of the coverage are to be decided upon by the Board of Trustees.

#### 15. Photographing Children

Parents will be required to give permission for their child or youth to be photographed or videotaped for publication by Wesleyan Chapel UMC other than intra-church communications.

#### 16. Accident/Injury

When an accident involving a child or youth occurs resulting in an injury, the supervising adult should notify the parents at once, complete the Accident Report Form and report the accident to the Pastor, Director of Christian Education or their designee as soon after the accident as possible. The Accident Report Form will be filed in the church office and must include the name of the person who completed the report.

#### **IV. Reporting & Response to Abuse**

Reports of any type of abuse should never be taken lightly or disregarded. Such reports should be treated as confidential and reported immediately as described below.

- Any allegation of abuse of a minor shall be reported to the Pastor(s) and/or the Director of Christian Education. The Pastor will contact staff members and chairpersons of the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), the Trustees, Church Council, Education Committee and the "Safe Sanctuary Response Team" (SSRT) to inform them of the allegation(s) as soon as practical.
  - If the allegation involves the Pastor, the incident shall be reported to the Director of Christian Education and/or the Chairperson of the SPRC. The SPRC Chairperson will notify staff members and the chairpersons of the aforementioned committees.
  - The alleged incident will be reported to the Department of Social Services in accordance with North Carolina General Statute 7B-301 (see copy attached) or as otherwise required by law.
  - The Pastor will be responsible for reporting the alleged incident to the District Superintendent. If the allegation involves the Pastor, the SPRC Chairperson will be the responsible party for reporting the incident to the District Superintendent.
  - The SSRT, as nominated by the Committee on Lay Leadership and elected by Charge Conference, will provide support to all parties involved in the alleged incident, as well as the church members. The SSRT and the Pastor will determine if a brief statement should be made to the congregation. If the allegation involves the Pastor, the SSRT and the SPRC Chairperson will determine if a brief statement should be made to the congregation.
  - The Pastor or designated spokesperson, as determined by the SSRT, will respond to any media inquiries.
  - To the extent that any allegation of abuse of a minor child or youth presents immediate harm to the minor, the staff or volunteers shall take reasonable actions under the circumstances to protect the minor.
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