

SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY
First United Methodist Church
Lancaster, PA

A Policy to Reduce the Risk of Abuse in the Church and to
Keep our Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults Safe
Adopted by Charge Conference on December 5, 2011

PREAMBLE

God has called us to make the ministries of First United Methodist Church, Lancaster, PA (“First Church”) safe, protecting our children, youth and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation. God has also called us to create communities of faith where children, youth and vulnerable adults can be safe and grow strong in their Christian faith.

Jesus taught “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me,” (Mark 9:37 NRSV) and “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 NRSV)

The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state “...children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse.”

At each child’s baptism, we affirm our responsibility to their safety by our congregational response, pledging:

“With God’s help, we will so order our lives after the example of Christ that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (The Book of Worship, Baptismal Covenant, Congregational Pledge II)

Building on these foundations, we recognize that our faith calls us to offer hospitality and protection to all children, youth and vulnerable adults, as well as those who are committed to ministering to them as volunteers and employees. Often, abuse occurs in places where children and youth feel safe – homes, schools, camps, and even churches.

First Church adopted a policy to address these concerns on June 10, 1996. The Policy was entitled the “Sexual Harassment, Abuse, and Misconduct Policy.” In 2008, the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of The United Methodist Church (“Conference”) established a policy that can help to 1) prevent such abuse from happening in the Conference’s churches; 2) make the Conference’s churches places where children can feel safer in disclosing abuse; and 3) protect the loyal volunteers and employees that minister to the Conference’s children, youth and vulnerable adults. The Conference has required that every church in the Conference adopt a Safe Sanctuaries policy that conforms to the standards set forth in the Conference policy.

This Safe Sanctuaries Policy has been adopted by First Church on the date above to conform to the requirements of the Conference and to incorporate those provisions of First Church's Sexual Harassment, Abuse, and Misconduct Policy as appropriate.

DEFINITIONS:

Administrator – the person who is charged with ensuring that the provisions of this Policy are met. At the time of adoption of this Policy, the Administrator is the Minister of Spiritual Growth.

Child – a person 3 years old to 6th grade. (Note that there are times that the term “child” is used herein to refer to all persons under the age of 18 such as when a law is referenced.)

Imminent Risk – (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 Pa. C.S. Chapter 63) – which is defined at the time of adoption of this Policy as an act or recent act or series of such which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual exploitation of an infant, toddler, child or youth.

Infant – a person from birth to 12 months.

Known Persons – a person who has been accused in the legal system and/or convicted and/or incarcerated for a sexual offense. The inference is that the church is fully aware of the circumstances/degree of the offense and the punishment; and that the person has agreed completely to follow First Church's procedures.

Mental Abuse – (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 PA C.S. Chapter 63) – which is defined at the time of adoption of this Policy as an act or failure to act that results in a psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment that: renders a Protected Person chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic, or in reasonable fear that the protected person's life or safety is threatened; or seriously interferes with the protected person's ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental and social tasks.

Physical Abuse – (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 PA C.S. Chapter 63) – which is defined at the time of adoption of this Policy as a recent act (within the past two years) or failure to act, which causes a non-accidental serious physical injury that causes the protected person severe pain or significantly impairs the protected person's functioning, either temporarily or permanently.

Protected Persons – infants, toddlers, children, youth, and vulnerable adults

Serious Physical Neglect - (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 PA C.S. Chapter 63) – which is defined at the time of adoption of this Policy as a prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life which include but are not limited to adequate medical care (which is defined as medical care which if not provided endangers a protected person's life or development or impairs the protected person's functioning), food, shelter, clothing, dental care, personal care, protection from physical injury and supervision.

Sexual Abuse - (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 PA C.S. Chapter 63) – which is defined at the time of adoption of this Policy as an act or failure to act that results in the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of a protected person to engage in

or assist any other person to engage in a sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of any explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting or filming, of any sexually explicit conduct to rape, sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, molestation, incest, indecent exposure, prostitution, statutory sexual assault or other form of sexual exploitation of protected person.

Supervision – to oversee or direct a ministry or activity. This is in contrast to workers who only work with protected persons but who do not have a supervisory role.

Toddler – a person 12 to 36 months old.

Vulnerable Adult – A person eighteen (18) years of age or older who, because of a mental or physical dysfunction, is unable to manage his/her own resources, carry out the activity of daily living, or protect himself/herself from abuse or neglect without assistance from others.

Worker– any person who works with groups of protected persons, either as a volunteer or as an employee, in any regular capacity such as pastor, Sunday school teacher, youth group leader, choir director, regular driver, regular food servers, and general helpers on a schedule that repeats such as weekly, monthly, quarterly; or who participates on-site or as transportation for an overnight or longer program.

Youth Worker – a Worker who is 13 to 17 years of age. A Youth Worker must serve with an adult Worker. A Youth Worker must complete a written Volunteer Application but need not have the background checks required of other Workers. Upon attaining majority, a Youth Worker shall become a Worker and the background checks will be required as they are for any other Worker.

SCREENING AND SELECTION OF WORKERS:

Careful screening is an effective way to help protect protected persons. It can be time consuming and expensive, but is an essential step in selecting the most reliable, committed and experienced workers for every program that involves protected persons.

Screening Standards:

Workers at the time this policy goes into effect shall complete the following steps by December 31, 2008 if they have not yet done so.

Following the effective date of this Policy, all applicants for worker status shall complete the following prior to start service.

- 1) Written Application – All prospective workers shall complete a written application that shall include at least the following information:
 - a. Name
 - b. Address
 - c. Phone Number
 - d. Work/Volunteer History
 - e. Experience and skills related to the position

- f. Three (3) personal, non-related references. (At least two (2) references must return the form to the Administrator.)
- 2) All workers shall read this Policy before beginning their ministry. Each worker shall sign a verification form to verify that he or she has read the Policy and will abide by its rules. The staff person responsible for the specific ministry shall give the verification to the Administrator for filing in a locked cabinet.
 - 3) All volunteer Workers shall have been members of or actively attending First Church for a minimum of six (6) months.
 - 4) Background Checks – The following background checks shall be obtained for all prospective Workers who are not Youth Workers:
 - a. Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Report – A report of criminal history information obtained from the Pennsylvania State Police or a statement from the Pennsylvania State Police that the State Police central repository contains no information related to that person. The report or statement shall have been obtained within a one-year period preceding initial application. A new State Police Criminal History Report shall be obtained every three (3) years. The original document shall be kept in file, or a copy shall be made of the original and be kept in the file with a notation that the original was shown by the applicant.
 - b. Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance – A certification obtained from the Department of Public Welfare (“Childline report”) as to whether the applicant is named in the central register as the perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse, indicated report of child abuse, founded report or indicated report for school employee. The certification shall have been obtained within a one-year period preceding initial application. A new Childline report shall be obtained every (3) years. The original document shall be kept in file, or a copy shall be made of the original and be kept in file with a notation that the original was shown by the applicant.
 - c. FBI Report – Where the applicant is not a resident of Pennsylvania, or where the applicant has been the resident of another state at any time during the past five years, a report of federal criminal history record information shall be obtained within the preceding one-year period from the Federal Bureau of Investigation. A new FBI report shall be obtained every three (3) years for persons who become or remain non-residents of Pennsylvania. The original document shall be kept in the file, or a copy shall be made of the original and be kept in file with a notation that the original was shown by the applicant.
 - d. Based on the results of the background checks obtained from sections (a), (b), and (c), the following, as found in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 Pa. C.S. Chapter 63, the rules set forth below shall be followed. (Note that there may be

reasons other than those set forth below for denying employment or volunteer service. This is not an all-inclusive list of reasons to deny employment or volunteer service):

- i. No person that is named in the central register as the perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse committed within the previous five (5) years may be hired or otherwise used as a worker.
- ii. No person may be hired or used as a worker when such person's criminal history record information indicates the person has been convicted of one or more of the following offenses under Title 18 (related to crimes and offenses) or an equivalent crime under Federal law or the law of another state:
 1. Chapter 25 Relating to criminal homicide
 2. Section 2702 Relating to aggravated assault
 3. Section 2709 Relating to harassment and stalking
 4. Section 2901 Relating to kidnapping
 5. Section 2902 Relating to unlawful restraint
 6. Section 3121 Relating to rape
 7. Section 3122.1 Relating to statutory sexual assault
 8. Section 3123 Relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse
 9. Section 3124.1 Relating to sexual assault
 10. Section 3125 Relating to sexual aggravated indecent assault
 11. Section 3126 Relating to indecent assault
 12. Section 3127 Relating to indecent exposure
 13. Section 4302 Relating to incest
 14. Section 4303 Relating to concealing death of a child
 15. Section 4304 Relating to endangering welfare of children
 16. Section 4305 Relating to dealing in infant children
 17. A felony offense under Section 5902(b) Relating to prostitution and related offenses
 18. Section 5903(c) or (d) Relating to obscene and other sexual materials and performances
 19. Section 6301 Relating to corruption of minors
 20. Section 6312 Relating to sexual abuse of children
 21. The attempt, solicitation or conspiracy to commit any of the offenses listed above
- iii. No person may be hired or otherwise used as a worker if his/her criminal history record information indicates the individual has been convicted of a

- felony offense under the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act (P.L. 233, No. 64), committed within the previous five (5) years.
- e. Applicants may be provisionally hired or used as paid workers for a single period not to exceed 30 days or, for applicants who presently reside or have resided in the past 5 years outside of Pennsylvania, 90 days, if all of the following conditions are met:
 - i. The applicant has applied for the required background checks and the applicant provides a copy of the properly completed request forms.
 - ii. The administrator has no knowledge or information pertaining to the applicant, which would disqualify the applicant from employment or from being a paid worker pursuant to the grounds for denying employment or volunteer service listed above.
 - iii. The applicant swears or affirms in writing that he or she is not disqualified from employment or as a worker pursuant to the grounds for denying employment or worker status listed above.
 - iv. If the information obtained in the background checks reveals that the applicant is disqualified from employment or worker status, the applicant shall be immediately dismissed.
 - v. The applicant will not be permitted to work alone with protected persons, and the applicant will work in the immediate vicinity of an employee or volunteer who has completed the screening process.
 - vi. If requested, the applicant may be asked to interview with a staff member and that interview shall have been considered successful in the sole discretion of the staff member.
 - f. Applicants who cannot obtain background checks due to administrative reasons may be used as volunteer workers if all of the following conditions are met:
 - i. The applicant has properly applied for the required background checks.
 - ii. The administrator has no knowledge or information pertaining to the applicant, which would disqualify the applicant from becoming a worker pursuant to the grounds for denying employment or becoming a worker listed above.
 - iii. The applicant swears or affirms in writing that he or she is not disqualified from employment or becoming a worker pursuant to the grounds for denying employment or becoming a worker listed above.
 - iv. The applicant will not be permitted to work alone with protected persons, and the applicant will work in the immediate vicinity of an employee or volunteer who has completed the screening process.

- v. If requested, the applicant may be asked to interview with a staff member and that interview shall have been considered successful in the sole discretion of the staff member.
 - vi. The applicant has been a member of or actively attending First Church for at least one year.
- 5) References – at least two Reference Checks shall be made on all new applicants for employment or volunteer service. In the event that references do not respond, the applicant shall provide more references as needed until the administrator or his or her designee has an opportunity to talk to 2 references.
 - 6) Relationship with Church – All prospective workers with protected persons shall demonstrate an active relationship with First United Methodist Church Lancaster for at least six (6) months before being allowed to be a worker. In the case of new staff hires, there is no need for a one year waiting period where references have been deemed adequate by the administrator.
 - 7) Workers who will be driving protected persons to a church sponsored off-site event shall provide proof of valid driver’s license and insurance on application form.
 - 8) Records – All written records shall be confidential and shall be kept in a locked file cabinet. All files shall be maintained for three (3) years after service ends.

TRAINING:

All workers shall participate in orientation training and in annual reviews.

The orientation shall include an explanation of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy including:

- 1) The need for Safe Sanctuaries Policy and procedures
- 2) Supervision requirements
- 3) Appropriate discipline practices
- 4) Recognizing signs of child abuse
- 5) Reporting procedures

The initial training shall occur prior to the worker’s having direct supervision of protected persons.

The annual review shall include a review of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy, procedures, and current information on how to identify and report protected persons’ abuse. The annual review may be a self-conducted reading of materials followed by a written self-test or it may be other forms of training in a classroom setting or by using videotaped materials.

SUPERVISION AND OTHER RULES OF CONDUCT:

Supervision procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse or exploitation of protected persons, and to protect workers from unfounded accusations.

Supervision Standards:

Programs and ministries that are licensed or accredited by a licensing or accreditation body shall follow the requirements established by that body for the supervision of protected persons.

Programs and ministries that are not licensed or accredited shall use the following standards for the supervision of protected persons.

- 1) The two adult rule – Regardless of the size of the group, there will always be at least two adults present. This may include the presence of an adult ‘roamer’ who moves in and out of rooms/ministry activities. In addition, more workers may be needed as set forth below.

The Senior Pastor or Administrator may make exceptions. For example, Confirmation Mentors may meet with their Confirmands one-on-one during the Confirmation process.

Note: When planning events, the numbers of protected persons involved will be reviewed and additional workers will be added for appropriate numbers of protected persons.

Proper ratios of workers to youth/children/toddlers and infants are:

During Sunday School:

- a. 7th -12th grade (Youth): 2 Workers for 1 to 30 Youth
- b. 3 years - 6th grade (Children): 2 Workers for 1 to 16 Children
- c. 12-36 months (Toddlers): 2 Workers for 1 to 8 Toddlers
- d. 0 - 12 months (Infants): 2 Workers for 1 to 6 Infants

Note: At the start of Sunday School each year, numbers of students in each room will be reviewed and additional Workers will be added as needed.

During an in-church activity other than during Sunday School :

- a. 2 Workers for 1 to 20 Youth
- b. 2 Workers for 1 to 16 Children
- c. 2 Workers for 1 to 8 Toddlers
- d. 2 Workers for 1 to 6 Infants

During an off-site activity:

- a. 2 Workers for 1 to 14 Youth
- b. 2 Workers for 1 to 8 Children
- c. 1 Worker in every sleeping room

- 2) No protected person will be left unsupervised while participating in a ministry activity/event.
- 3) All ministry activities should occur in open view. Each room or space where ministry activities/events occur must be open to public view. For example: enclosed spaces such as classrooms shall have a viewing window, a glass panel in the door, a ½ door configuration or an open door.

- 4) No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 18 years of age or older and is at least 5 years older than the persons being supervised. Workers ages 14-17 (herein defined as "Youth Workers") shall serve with an adult.
- 5) Ministry events involving transportation shall require a written consent form signed by the parent or guardian of the child/youth/vulnerable adult.
- 6) Workers shall speak and conduct themselves in a Godly manner while serving in ministry and when in the presence of impressionable protected persons. Examples include:
 - a. Only appropriate touching
 - b. Wholesome, supportive, and appropriate language will be used at all times
 - c. Male drivers may drive a vehicle with male and female passengers, but not with only female passengers
 - d. Female drivers may drive a vehicle with male and female passengers, but not with only male passengers.
 - e. One driver should not drive only one child or youth without written parental permission.
- 7) Workers must follow and enforce sign-in and sign-out procedures in the Infant through two-year-old nurseries.
- 8) Workers must be present before and after the activity for a reasonable period of time and until protected persons are reunited with parent, guardian, or other adult charged with such responsibility.
- 9) Workers must inform parents, teachers, leaders, or church staff of inappropriate behavior of the vulnerable adult, Youth, Child or Toddler.
- 10) Disciplinary procedures should be carried out with other adults and Youth/Children/Toddlers present.
- 11) During an activity, Toddlers/Children must use the bathroom within the classroom, if there is one. If bathroom assistance is required, the door shall be left slightly ajar. Children who use a restroom outside the class room must be accompanied by a Worker who may wait for the child in the hall outside the bathroom.
- 12) On the rare occasion when two adults are not available for a class, a substitute worker will be sought, a roamer will be sought, or classes combined.

WELCOMING KNOWN PERSONS ACCUSED OR CONVICTED OF A CRIME OF SEXUAL ABUSE TO FIRST CHURCH:

- 1) Known Persons are welcome to attend worship or other events at First Church (either/both on and off-site). Those who wish to attend First Church functions must contact the Senior Pastor or other staff person well in advance of first attendance so that these procedures can be followed.
- 2) Known Persons must be escorted at all times when attending worship or other events. It is the Known Persons' responsibility to procure said escorts. However, First Church may be called upon for assistance in finding these persons. Escorts must have background checks as more thoroughly explained above at First Church expense.
- 3) Escorts may not be family members of the Known Person whom they are escorting.

- 4) Senior Pastor is responsible for informing congregation about the presence of Known Persons. The Pastor may choose to communicate through letter or newsletter article.
- 5) First Church will work with and accommodate court or Parole Officer recommendations in each situation.
- 6) Known Persons shall receive notice of these procedures and agree to abide with them in writing.
- 7) Known Persons shall restrict conversations with persons who are eighteen years of age or younger or vulnerable people.
- 8) Known Persons may not serve in any positions of leadership or teaching unless Senior Pastor provides written consent.
- 9) Known Persons may be required to limit attendance to worship or other specific events.

CHURCH RESPONSIBILITY:

- 1) Maintain visibility into all classrooms as more fully set forth above.
- 2) Lock unsupervised areas.
- 3) Limit general access to the building.
- 4) Provide lighting in parking lot and on sidewalks around the building.
- 5) Provide lighting in all stairwells.
- 6) Secure a signed screening questionnaire from all Workers.

PARENT AND PARENT APPOINTED DESIGNEE RESPONSIBILITY:

Throughout this paragraph, when the term, "Parent" is used, it includes a parent's designated appointee.

- 1) Parents must drop off and pick up protected persons in such a way so that they are not left unsupervised and Workers do not need to arrive very early or leave very late.
- 2) Parents must drop off and pick-up Children in second grade or younger at the classroom or activity door.
- 3) Parents are responsible for Toddlers, Children, and Youth who leave the worship space for any reason, including to use the restroom or to go to the Storytime room.
- 4) Parents must adhere to the sign-in and sign-out procedure in Infant and Two-year-old nurseries.
- 5) Parents must require that Toddlers, Children, and Youth remain in supervised areas.

REPORTING:

Reporting of an allegation of protected person abuse is required whenever there is "reasonable cause to suspect" that abuse has occurred (PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 Pa. C.S. Chapter 63). Reasonable cause to suspect abuse can occur (1) when any staff or a volunteer personally witnesses an incident of abuse, (2) when an allegation of an event of abuse is made to staff or volunteer by a third party, and/or (3) when a protected person discloses abuse to staff or a volunteer. It is crucial that reporting be immediate and the allegations dealt with as soon in time as possible to the incident or disclosure.

An allegation of abuse must be reported as soon as possible to the Administrator or any minister/clergy. The Administrator or clergy to whom the report is made shall ensure that the child welfare authorities are contacted.

Reports of suspected child abuse are made to the Pennsylvania Child Abuse Hotline (24-Hour service) at 1-800-932-0313 or to the Childline & Youth agency of the county in which the alleged abuse occurred.

The Administrator shall ensure that a plan of safety is put in place for the protected person. The protected person would be placed with a “safe” relative. Confidentiality will be maintained

The Administrator shall ensure that a written statement is taken from the person who observed or was informed of the suspected abuse.

The Administrator shall inform the District Superintendent if the alleged perpetrator is a staff person or volunteer of First Church.

In the event that a member of the clergy becomes aware of suspected child abuse as a result of confidential communication which is protected under 42 PA C.S. § 5943 (relating to confidential communications to clergy), the conference legal counsel should be consulted.

RESPONSES FOR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE:

Any allegation of abuse requires a process to address responding to the victim, the alleged perpetrator, and the press. The response must be quick, compassionate and unified. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse there shall be cooperation with all official investigating agencies.

Response to victims of abuse:

In the instance of any allegation of abuse, there shall be a reaching out to the victim and the victim’s family. Pastoral resources shall be extended, and the conference I-Care Team can be contacted to assist in providing this service. The care and safety of the victim shall be considered the first priority. Response to the victim and the victim’s family shall be done in a positive and supportive manner.

The parents or guardians of the victim shall be notified and steps shall be taken to address the safety and well-being of the protected person until the parent(s) arrive. **NOTE:** If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, the direction of the child welfare authorities shall be followed concerning notification of others.

Response to all alleged perpetrators of abuse:

The alleged perpetrator shall immediately, yet with dignity and respect for their sacred worth, be removed from further involvement with protected persons and advised that there has been an allegation of abuse.

Details of the allegations of the abuse shall not be discussed with the alleged perpetrator at the time of removal. In any removal of a staff member or volunteer from any activity/ministry, care shall be taken to handle the removal in a discreet manner, recognizing that there will be an investigation by either state or church authorities, or both.

When it has been alleged that a member of the church staff or a volunteer, has committed an act of abuse, the staff member or volunteer shall be required to refrain from all ministry activities/events with protected persons until the incident has been fully resolved by the appropriate state authorities and/or in accordance with the Book of Discipline.

Response to the Media:

The District Superintendent, the Conference Director of Communications and pastor shall decide on a single spokesperson for contact with the public/media. All media requests for statements shall be directed to that spokesperson.

Compliance:

Compliance with this policy shall be a matter of record at each annual Charge Conference.