

# CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

## Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes 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” states that “...children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation, and abuse.”

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can site specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches.

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”—1966, copyright 1996 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission. [pp. 384-386.]

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

## Purpose

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

## Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth, as well as all of those who work with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures and the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement

prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries concerning any incidents that may occur.

### **Conclusion**

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be "...surrounded by steadfast love, ...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" (Baptismal Covenant II, "*United Methodist Hymnal*", p. 44)

**Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church**  
**2600 Pisgah Church Road**  
**Greensboro, North Carolina 27455**

**Safe Sanctuary Procedures**

- I. A copy of “Safe Sanctuaries for Children and Youth” is to be placed in the church office in order to be available to all interested parties. We will educate all childcare and youth workers that if they suspect any abuse, they are to report it to:
  - A. If a child (as defined below) is believed to be involved:
    1. Director of Christian Education – who passes it on to the Senior Pastor and/or Chair of Staff-Parish Relations Committee;
    2. Senior Pastor; and/or
    3. Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.
  - B. If a youth (as defined below) is believed to be involved:
    1. Director of Youth Ministries - who passes it on to the Senior Pastor and/or Chair of Staff-Parish Relations Committee;
    2. Senior Pastor; and/or
    3. Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.
  - C. If a staff person is suspected of abuse, report is to be made to Senior Pastor and/or Chair of Staff-Parish Relations Committee.
  - D. Social Services must be notified (as appropriate) by the staff member designated using the procedure outlined in “Safe Sanctuaries for Children and Youth.” The process begins by filling out “Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse,” as found in “What Is Abuse and How Can We Recognize It?”
- II. **PROTECTING OUR CHILDREN, YOUTH, ADULTS AND STAFF**  
 Definition: Children: Birth – Fifth Grade; Youth: Sixth Grade – High School
  - A. **Hiring of any paid staff – part-time or full-time**
    1. All persons who are seeking employment at Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church must:
      - a) Meet requirements and agree to Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church policy “**Childcare Worker Position Description.**”
      - b) Fill out form “**Employee Application**”.
      - c) Have a **criminal records check** at the Church’s expense through agencies and/or organizations, as specified by the Chair of Staff-

Parish. This check will be renewed every 4 years or earlier as determined in the sole discretion of the Church.,

d) **Provide 3 references which will be called by a designated staff person.**

2. Forms (b, c, d) for each employee are to be kept in the person's personnel file in a secure place.
3. Forms (b and c) are to be filled out for all current staff within 30 days of approval of this policy.
4. All of these forms become the property of Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church and are to be maintained as long as needed.

**B. Current volunteers and recruiting of volunteers who work with children and youth.** A copy of our "**Safe Sanctuary Policy**" is to be given by our Director of Operations and Administration to the leader of each outside group who meets in our church. It will be the expectation that each outside group be covered by their own insurance policy and follow Mount Pisgah Church's Safe Sanctuary Policy in addition to being under the guidance and control of their charter organization. (Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church's Weekday Ministries has their own procedure for Safe Sanctuary)

1. All current and future staff and volunteers working with children or youth (birth to age 18) are to:
  - a) Meet requirements and agree to Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church's policy "**Childcare Volunteer Position Description**".
  - b) Agree to and sign "**Participation Covenant Statement**".
  - c) Fill out form "**Volunteer Application**".
  - d) Have a **criminal records check** through agencies and/or organizations, as specified by the Chair of Staff-Parish at church's expense. This check will be renewed every 4 years or earlier as determined in the sole discretion of the Church.
  - e) These four forms are to be kept in a secure place. All of these forms become the property of Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church and are to be maintained as long as needed. The criminal record check will include the State of North Carolina. Persons living in North Carolina less than two years are also to be checked in the state moved from or a nationwide check or as otherwise determined in the discretion of the Church.

**C. Anyone who volunteers to drive any motor vehicle** transporting any child or youth of Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church must have a driver's license check through the North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles. This applies for church-owned **or privately owned vehicles**. This driver's license check through the North Carolina Department of Motor Vehicles is to be at the church's

expense. The returned report is to be kept in a secure place. Persons approved to drive for the Church or Church event are required to immediately notify the Senior Pastor if they are charged or convicted of a DWI or any other moving violation. This driver's license check will be renewed every 4 years or earlier as determined in the sole discretion of the Church.

- D. **Any time an accident occurs while a person** is participating in a Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church activity, an "Accident Report Form" is to be filled out immediately but no later than 24 hours after the accident and filed with Building Supervisor.. The church insurance company is to be immediately informed and necessary steps are to be followed to meet the requirements of the insurance company. (An accident is when anyone is injured in any physical way that results in any medical treatment or property damage occurs. If a vehicle is involved in an accident resulting in any property damage, the police report (if one exists) is to be filed with the Building Supervisor.)
  - E. All staff are to counsel in offices or rooms which have a peephole or transparent glass within the door with counselor or counselee in view of people walking past that doorway. If the office or room does not have a door with a transparent window, the door to the office must be ajar or open.
  - F. The Senior Pastor is to be or is to designate someone to be the official Church spokesperson to respond to any media inquiries.
- III Our "Safe Sanctuary" policy is to be on file in the church office. Copies are to be provided to any party who requests one. **The guidelines are to be posted at various locations around the church.**

#### IV. MT. PISGAH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARIES CHILD

## AND YOUTH PROTECTION PLAN

In order for us to continue to enjoy and provide a safe and secure environment for the children, youth and caregivers of our Church, MPUMC follows the following “Child and Youth Protection Plan”, otherwise known as “Safe Sanctuaries.”

Please, read the guidelines and complete the “Volunteer Application,” enclosed, if you are currently working with our children or youth or anticipate working with them within the next six months. A person wishing to volunteer to work with our children and youth must be active in MPUMC at least one month prior to filling out a “Volunteer Application” form.

Persons are asked to complete the “Volunteer Application” form if they assist in any event where children or youth are a significant focus of the activity or ministry. The only exception will be in case of emergency as mentioned in guidelines 3 and 6.

Events or trips offered by MPUMC for its children and youth will be announced through appropriate church outlets. A signed permission form must be submitted to the appropriate staff person for each child participating in a church trip.

### A. Child Supervision Procedures

1. Fifth Graders and younger must be with a parent, teacher, or other authorized adult at all times. This includes worship times.
2. Sixth Graders and older can be released without a parent.
3. For *Wednesday Night Fellowship* and all other non-worship activities, **all children Fifth Grade and under should remain with their parents in the same room except when in class or choir. Parents are free to see and/or interact with their children at all times.**
4. Sunday School classes whose members have children in Sunday School are encouraged to meet from 9:45-10:40 am so children can be picked up on time.
5. If a child is not picked up on Sunday Mornings by 10:50 am they will be escorted to Children’s Church in the Sanctuary.
6. All children, age 0 – Fifth Grade must be checked in using our Child Check In system on Sunday mornings. Parents must use their check in receipt to pick up children at the end of their class or worship service.

## V. GUIDELINES

**[These guidelines summarize our policy in such a way that they may be posted at various locations in our church.]**

**Guideline 1:** All prospective workers, whether paid or volunteer, who work with our children and/or our youth in any area of ministry shall undergo an appropriate criminal background check. All prospective and current staff shall have 3 reference submitted and checked. Note: Any and all information gathered by the Church will be kept confidential with restricted access. All references supplied for staff will be checked and documented. Pastors and/or the Program Directors will (to the extent practical) maintain the confidentiality of reference information received.

**Guideline 2:** All volunteer and paid workers will receive information or attend training sessions regarding the care of and safety measures for working with our children and youth which may include First Aid or CPR.

**Guideline 3:** When possible, substitutes who work with children and youth must be on an approved list as maintained by the Program Directors and the Director of Operations and Administration. When it becomes necessary to use someone who has not had a criminal records check; that person is not to be left alone with a child.

**Guideline 4:** Any person who has been convicted of any crime involving a child or youth will not be permitted to work with children or youth.

**Guideline 5:** The pastors and/or Program Directors may interview as necessary to determine information relevant to the background of an applicant for volunteering or employment.

**Guideline 6:** A minimum of two (2) adults will supervise children's and/or youth church authorized activities. At least one (1) of the adults in a room with children or youth must be a minimum of 22 years of age when working with the Whobody Youth Group, and at least 18 years of age when working with the Children's Ministry. At least (1) one of the adults must have a completed criminal background check form on file. Married couples may teach or work together when there is a third adult in the room and/or when guideline 7 is in place and they are working in a room with a peep hole/window or with the door ajar. When students arrive before both teachers are present, parents should remain with children, and the door is to be left open, and rooms which need them are to have safety gates and/or Dutch doors. No children or youth will be left alone in a room with only an adult or leader who does not have a criminal background check on file.

**Guideline 7:** Random visits to classrooms will be made at any time by the pastors, Program Directors, or other persons designated by the pastors or Program Directors.

**Guideline 8:** When one worker is helping a younger child use the bathroom, the bathroom doors shall be propped open.

**Guideline 9:** Children causing disturbances or extremely upset children may be moved to another room by one person as long as the door remains open and the room is in proximity of occupied classroom (with the other adult leader).

**Guideline 10:** Children shall not be taken from the Church grounds on a church-sanctioned activity without the permission of their parents or guardians. The “Parent/Guardian Consent Form” can be filled out and remain valid for a 12-month period.

**Guideline 11:** No worker (volunteer or paid) shall spend time alone or behind closed doors or an isolated area with a child/youth without the permission of their parents/ guardians.

**Guideline 12:** Anyone picking up children from classrooms must have appropriate identification as deemed necessary by the Program Directors or the responsible parties in the classrooms.

**Guideline 13:** Anyone observing inappropriate conduct by adults relating directly or indirectly to children or youth shall immediately report this behavior to the Director of Christian Education, Director of Youth Ministries, one of the pastors and/or the Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.

**Guideline 14:** For safety reasons, parents or guardians are expected to remain on the Church campus while their children are in the care of the Church except when the event is organized in such a way that it would be impractical for the parents to be here, i.e. Storytime, VBS, etc., when the church-sponsored event is being held off-campus, or as otherwise determined by the leaders of that particular Church event.

At all times, a parent, guardian, or ministry leader is to escort a child to and from the appropriate meeting room or classroom. If a parent or guardian fails to pick up a child in the classroom, the adult worker may escort the child to the parent/guardian.

**Guideline 15:** Church entrance doors will be locked at all times except when scheduled meetings/worship services are in session. Members and visitors are encouraged to use entrance doors that have coded keypads at all other times.

**Guideline 16:** All church members are encouraged to increase their awareness of visitors and walk any visitor to their destination in our facility whenever possible. Any suspicious persons or activities should be reported immediately to the nearest staff person and/or 911 as appropriate.

**Guideline 17:** Children under the age of 8 and 40 pounds must be secured in a car seat or booster seat when traveling other in any vehicle other than the church bus as defined by the State of North Carolina.

**Guideline 18:** The Safe Sanctuary Policy of Mount Pisgah Church shall be reviewed, evaluated and updated every 4 years or as recommended by staff and church leadership.



Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church, Greensboro, NC Youth Activities  
**“Safe Sanctuaries” Procedures**

(This policy reflects the church’s “Safe Sanctuaries” Procedures policy  
 but is restated to share with youth and parents.)

The following procedures govern issues of staffing, housing, medical safety, security, conduct, supervision, and travel at Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church, Greensboro, NC Youth Events:

**Leadership/Counselors:**

- A. Adult leaders/counselors will be required to complete a volunteer application form.
- B. Adult volunteer leaders/counselors staff will be required to complete a medical / insurance application / information form. These forms will be on hand and accessible during the event in case of accident, illness, or other emergency.
- C. All youth, under the age of eighteen (18), will be required to have written permission from a parent or guardian to participate in activities away from the church property.
- D. Adult volunteer leaders/counselors staff will be required to complete a consent form for background checks relating to criminal and/or DMV records.
- E. There will be a training session for all leaders once a year or as needed, at which time the “Safe Sanctuary” policy and procedures will be covered. Failure to comply with the “Safe Sanctuary” procedures may result in that person being sent home at their own expense, and not being allowed to continue to serve as an adult leader/counselor.

**Housing:**

- A. Youth are to be housed with supervision, with two adults rooming near enough to provide adequate supervision.
- B. No youth and adult shall share a bed. In some instances, we use motel-style accommodations with two double beds per room. The youth will share one bed; the adult(s) (of the same sex) the other bed.
- C. Co-ed rooming is not permitted
- D. **Where possible**, middle high youth and senior high youth will be housed separately.
- E. All event participants and staff will adhere to the established curfew and covenant.

**Medical:**

- A. Each youth and adult attendee, including all staff and volunteers, must submit a completed medical / insurance form for the year. Minor’s forms must have parent’s or guardian’s original signature.
- B. Group leaders should have a photocopy of each attendee’s medical form in a file during travel to and from the event.
- C. Medical forms will be kept on site for the duration of the event.
- D. First aid supplies will be available on site.
- E. Counselors will be informed at registration and in counselors’ meetings where First Aid equipment can be found and if there are allergies or medical conditions of which they should be made aware.
- F. A written report will be completed and submitted to the Director of Operations and Administration in the case of any accident, medical emergency, or injury. Forms are available from the building supervisor. Some facilities or venues for Church event may also require that their own accident form be completed.

**Security:**

- A. All adult leaders assisting with or leading a youth activity should help ensure the safety and security of participating youth.
- B. Permission slips for each trip are required with an original signature from a parent or guardian.
- C. If a youth is 18 years old and in High School, forms must be co-signed by both parent/guardian and the youth.
- D. In the event of an incident, a detailed written report will be completed and submitted to the Director of Operations and Administration for the Church.

**Conduct:**

- A. Anything considered illegal in North Carolina or the state in which the event takes place is strictly prohibited for participants at a Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church youth activity. This includes but is not limited to issues related to tobacco use, drug use, alcohol consumption, possession of firearms, weapons or fireworks. Use of such may result in person being sent home, at their own expense, and not participating in future activities.
- B. Visitation between males and females in hotel rooms or residence halls is prohibited unless directly supervised in a group setting by the responsible adult, who is assisting with or leading the youth activity, for devotional or group discussion purposes.
- C. Participants are to treat others as they would want to be treated to encourage positive nurturing relationships with the whole group without the use of profane language; without practical jokes that may be physically harmful; without any *two* youth, or one youth and one adult, separating themselves from the group in isolated locations; without inappropriate demonstrations of affection and physical contact.
- D. For **ALL** adult counselors and leaders, a good rule of thumb for appropriate demonstrations of affection or physical contact would be to never be alone with a youth; never initiate a hug; keep hugs brief; always be the one to end a hug; hug from the side; never impose your touches on the youth in your group. All should refrain from any word or deed which might be interpreted as sexual advances.
- E. Clothing for all is expected to be modest and appropriate for a Christian event. Bathing suits for females must be modest one-piece or tankini styles. Two-piece bathing suits are prohibited.
- F. Youth and adult participants and all leaders, will be expected to observe all policies, guidelines, and covenant of the event. This also includes a host facility's rules and regulations.
- G. Local and host facility curfews will be enforced.
- H. All adult leaders are to always use wise judgment when participating in a church youth activity or event.

**Supervision:**

- A. Adult counselors are responsible for their youth at **ALL TIMES**.
- B. Parents of the youth attending an event should be given (prior to the activity) written details about the activity, including a phone number to reach their child in an emergency.
- C. All adult counselors must be 22 or older. Male youth will require a male adult counselor. Female youth will require a female adult counselor.
- D. We require a minimum three-person rule at all times, preferably two unrelated adults when there is a youth present and one being a different gender. All counseling sessions and small groups will include at least three persons and must be held in locations that are not isolated, including alone in a vehicle. Should an adult find himself or herself alone with a youth, the adult should make

certain that he/she is in a location where he/she can be seen, not in an isolated location. The door should be left open and physical contact must be avoided.

- E. Leaders under age 22 will be supervised by an adult during the event.

**Travel:**

- A. Travel arrangements to/from events will be made by the church. Youth driving themselves must ride alone unless permission is given from the parents or guardians involved to the youth director or counselor.
- B. All adult drivers will be screened through the NC DMV. A North Carolina driver's license will be required.
- C. Adult leaders must have parental permission forms on file for each youth who travels with the church group. These forms should include emergency contact numbers for the youth's parents or legal guardians.
- D. No youth should travel alone in a vehicle with only one adult for a church activity unless it's the youth's parent/guardian.
- E. Youth may not leave the site of the youth activity without explicit permission from the church group leader or designated adult leader.
- F. ALL vehicles should remain parked throughout the duration of the activity except for transporting youth and buying supplies.
- G. If a youth travels to an off-site overnight event, the youth must surrender their keys to the Youth Counselor or Director of Youth Ministry until the conclusion of the event.

**Reporting in Cases of Abuse:**

- A. Any suspected or reported case of neglect or abuse that occurs during a Mt. Pisgah United Methodist Church Youth Event should be reported **IMMEDIATELY to:**
  - A. Director of Youth Ministries - who passes it on to the Senior Pastor and/or Chair of Staff-Parish Relations Committee;
  - B. Senior Pastor; and/or
  - C. Chair of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee.
- B. The Director of Youth Ministries, in conjunction with the adult counselors, must immediately complete and submit to one or more of the individuals identified above an incident report for any suspected or reported case of abuse or neglect involving a youth. (Report forms to be supplied.)

