



---

## Safe Sanctuary Policy

---

***INTRODUCTION:** Jonesboro United Methodist Church (JUMC) is concerned about the safety of all children, youth, and adults. This church is committed to being a “Safe Sanctuary” for each of God’s children. As part of the Body of Christ, we seek to ensure caring, Christ-like role models for all ministries directly and indirectly associated with our church. Ministries under the auspices of and/or endorsed by JUMC will comply with or exceed United Methodist standards and recommendations for best practices for safety and programming guidelines. Procedures have been developed for each ministry area that uphold this policy and reflect these practices. Policies and procedures will be reviewed at least annually by the Safe Sanctuary Committee.*

---

### 1. Statement of Covenant, Policy and Purpose

- 1.1. **Statement of Covenant:** 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, youth, workers, and adults.
- 1.2. **Policy:** We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all our workers regarding the use of appropriate policies and procedures; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect that conforms to the requirements of all applicable laws; and we will be prepared to manage and respond to the allegations of abuse to those directly involved, as well as to the congregation and media inquiries.
- 1.3. **Policy Purpose:** Our congregation’s purpose for establishing this policy is to ensure that JUMC extends safe Christian hospitality, nurture, and community to the children, youth, and adults in our midst so that they can grow in spiritual maturity in an environment that offers security from sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect to the fullest extent possible. In all of our ministries, this congregation is committed 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 life eternal’ (‘Baptismal Covenant II,’ United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44).

### 2. Scope

This Safe Sanctuary Policy applies to all current and potential JUMC employees and volunteers who will be working in church-sponsored ministries that are being conducted under the auspices of and/or endorsed by JUMC. (See Section 5 for definitions of terms.)

### 3. Minimum Procedural Requirements of this Policy

#### 3.1. Screening Procedure for Potential Employees and Applicable Complementary and Voluntary Workers.

- 3.1.1 Establish written screening processes and implement to approve the employment of and/or use of services provided by individuals who will be in regular contact with children and youth under the ministration of this church. A national sex offender



background check and state criminal background checks are to be conducted on potential employees and applicable volunteers.

- 3.1.2. Clearly define procedures for screening potential employees and voluntary workers that are in compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws;
  - 3.1.3. Describe the minimum criteria for acceptance and rejection of applicants and voluntary workers; and
  - 3.1.4. Define the processes for protecting the privacy of confidential information obtained through implementation of national background checks and other screening processes.
- 3.2. **Child Safety Procedures.** Reasonable safety measures and prudent procedures of operation for all church-sponsored activities involving children and youth will be established and implemented. These procedures will include, at a minimum, detailed guidance on steps to take to ensure the safety of children and youth within any JUMC property, as well as while participating in church-sponsored field trips and outings. A *Safe Sanctuary Training Plan* has been established to ensure that all employees and volunteers, as well as youth and children as is appropriate, are educated regarding the established procedures.
- 3.3 **Crisis Response Plan.** The *Crisis Response Plan* will be carried out by the Safe Sanctuary Crisis Response Team to manage any suspected sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect incident of a child or youth involved in activities within the scope of this policy. This Plan will: (a) succinctly state this congregation's absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth in our midst; and (b) clearly define JUMC's step-by-step procedures, which comply with requirements of all relevant local, state, and federal laws, for reporting, investigating, documenting, and maintaining confidentiality while responding to a suspected incident of abuse. This Plan will be reviewed and approved by the JUMC Council.
- 3.4 **Review.** Procedures will be annually reviewed and approved by the Safe Sanctuary Committee. Input will be requested from all ministry teams.

## 4. Responsibilities

- 4.1. **Staff-Parish Relations Committee** is a primary reviewer of this policy and its approval is required prior to submission of the policy to Council. The Chairperson, or his/her delegate, is responsible for ensuring that the screening procedures described in Section 3.1 are implemented. The Chairperson him/herself reviews results of all national background checks conducted for both paid and unpaid workers within the scope of this policy. The Chairperson or delegate ensures that the remaining screening results (e.g., application forms, interviews, reference checks, etc.) fully satisfy or exceed standards of the United Methodist Church and this congregation.
- 4.2. **The Board of Trustees** is a primary reviewer of this policy and its approval is required prior to submission of the policy to Council. The Chairperson, or his/her Trustees member delegate, is responsible for reviewing this policy and its attendant procedures with the insurance company and for assuring that, in the event of litigation pertaining to an incident of sexual child/youth abuse, insurance coverage is sufficient to protect the people and assets of JUMC. The Trustees will revise the Building Use Application Form and Guidelines to incorporate changes required by this policy. Also, the Trustees will assure that outside groups using the facilities of JUMC, currently and in the future, complete the form and are given a copy of this policy and, where necessary, that adequate waivers have been duly processed. All relevant paperwork will be secured in church office files.



- 4.3. **Youth Minister and Education Team** are responsible for implementing the *Procedures for Ensuring Child and Youth Safety*. At a minimum, these procedures will include processes for: (a) screening and recruiting volunteers who will be working with children and youth involved in church-sponsored events; and (b) describing safety measures sufficient to prevent, to the greatest extent possible, the sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect of children and youth participating in these ministries. The youth minister and this team also ensure that pertinent individuals are educated about this policy and relevant processes.
- 4.4. **The Safe Sanctuary Committee** is comprised but not limited to a representative of the Trustees and the SPRC, a member of JUMC clergy, the youth minister, education team chairperson, and a parent. This committee is responsible for approving procedures within the scope of this policy annually and for ensuring that up-to-date procedures are secured in church office files.
- 4.5. **The Safe Sanctuary Crisis Response Team** is comprised of the Pastor, Chairpersons of JUMC's Board of Trustees and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and outside consultants as needed. On a case-by-case basis, the relevant age-level director/coordinator will be a temporary member of the team in managing an incident. This group is responsible for assuring that the *Crisis Response Plan* is implemented to manage any alleged sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect incident of a child or youth involved in activities within the scope of this policy. In the unfortunate event of an abuse or neglect incident, this Team will disseminate appropriate information to staff, the congregation, and media (only if inquires are made).
- 4.6. **All members of this congregation**, but especially individuals who are directly or indirectly associated with the children and youth ministries of JUMC, are responsible for reporting a suspected incident of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse or neglect to a member of the Safe Sanctuary Crisis Response Team immediately.

## 5. Definitions

- 5.1. **Church-sponsored Activities.** Any activity within a ministry conducted under the auspices of and/or endorsed by JUMC that primarily involves children or youth aged birth to 17 years old.
- 5.2. **Outside Groups.** Any group whose activity primarily involving children or youth 17 years old and younger that does not fall under the responsibility of a JUMC age-level director and/or coordinator. Each outside group, including those currently using JUMC facilities, will be known to the church by completion of the Trustees' revised Building Use Application Form, which will be secured in the church office files.

## 6. Administration

- 6.1. **Authors:** The Safe Sanctuary Committee appointed by JUMC Council in November 2006.
- 6.2. **Authorization:** This policy is authorized by JUMC Council, Trustees and Staff-Parish Relations Committee by approval of each group and signature of its chairperson below. This authorization will remain in effect even though incumbents will change.

Bob Martin  
Chairperson, Board of Trustees

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

Donna Atkins  
Chairperson, Staff-Parish Relations Committee

\_\_\_\_\_  
date



Deborah O. Taylor 9/24/07  
Chairperson, Jonesboro United Methodist Church Council date

6.3. **Effective Date of Policy** (date all approvals obtained): September 24, 2007

## 7. Appendices

- 7.1. Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2004, pp. 201-203.
- 7.2. Resolution 6, adopted by the NC Annual UMC Conference, June 2005.
- 7.3. 'Baptismal Covenant II,' United Methodist Hymnal, 1989, p. 44.



## Appendix 7.1.

**Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2004, pp. 201-203.**

### **RESOLUTION 65. Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church (adopted in 1996 and readopted in 2004)**

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."

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 it 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.

"Ritual abuse" refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be.

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. In response to this church wide challenge, the following steps should be taken to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse:

#### **A. Local churches should:**

1. Develop and implement an ongoing education plan for the congregation and its leaders on the reality of child abuse, risk factors leading to child abuse, and strategies for prevention;
2. Adopt screening procedures (use of application forms, interviews, reference checks, background clearance, and so forth) for workers (paid and unpaid) directly or indirectly involved in the care of children and youth;



3. Develop and implement safety procedures for church activities such as having two or more non-related adults present in classroom or activity; leaving doors open and installing half-doors or windows in doors or halls; providing hall monitors; instituting sign-in and sign-out procedures for children ages ten or younger; and so forth;
4. Advise children and young persons of an agency or a person outside as well as within the local church whom they can contact for advice and help if they have suffered abuse;
5. Carry liability insurance that includes sexual abuse coverage;
6. Assist the development of awareness and self-protection skills for children and youth through special curriculum and activities; and
7. Be familiar with annual conference and other church policies regarding clergy sexual misconduct.

**B. Annual conferences should:**

1. Develop safety and risk-reducing policies and procedures for conference-sponsored events, such as camps, retreats, youth gatherings, childcare at conference events, mission trips, and so forth; and
2. Develop guidelines and training processes for use by church leaders who carry responsibility for prevention of child abuse in local churches. Both sets of policies shall be developed by a task force appointed by the cabinet in cooperation with appropriate conference agencies. These policies shall be approved by the annual conference and assigned to a conference agency for implementation. It is suggested that the policies be circulated in conference publications and shared with lay professionals and clergy at district or conference seminars.

**C. The General Board of Discipleship and the General Board of Global Ministries should:**

1. Cooperatively develop and/or identify and promote the following resources;
  - a) Sample policies, procedures, forms, and so forth for reducing the risk of sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth in local churches, both in relation to their own sponsored programs and to any outreach ministries or other programs for children or youth that use church space;
  - b) Child abuse prevention curriculum for use in local churches;
  - c) Training opportunities and other educational resources on child sexual abuse and exploitation and on ritual abuse; and
  - d) Resources on healing for those who have experienced childhood sexual trauma.

***From The Book of Resolutions, Copyright © 2004, The United Methodist Publishing House, used by permission, which was given 23 January 2006.***



## Appendix 7.2.

### Resolution 6. NC Annual United Methodist Conference, June 2005. Safe Sanctuary Policy for Children and Youth

***Action Taken:*** *The Conference passed this resolution. It was then withdrawn as a resolution and introduced as a motion which was passed after the removal of the word "whereas".*

Whereas: One of the foremost duties of the church is to extend safe Christian hospitality, nurture, and community to the children and youth (age 18 and under) in our midst, in which they can feel secure and unthreatened from physical and emotional abuse; and

Whereas: Jesus said of this responsibility, "Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me...If any of you put a stumbling block before 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 18:5-6); and

Whereas: Children and youth represent our hope and trust in the future of the Christian community while at the same time being active and invaluable full participants in the present life of the church; and

Whereas: Churches have tragically not always lived up to this sacred obligation, inasmuch as child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse occur in churches across the broad spectrum of society: large and small churches, rural and urban churches, and churches of all socio-economic and racial backgrounds; and

Whereas: United Methodist Annual Conferences can cite examples of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches and churches have among their membership adult survivors of early abuse trauma; and

Whereas: Such instances are devastating to all involved - children, families, local churches, and their leadership - exacting emotional, legal, and financial tolls that accompany such allegations; and

Whereas: The 1996 General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution (***Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 1996, pp. 384-386***) designed to reduce the risk of any type of abuse of children and youth in the church, including neglect and physical, emotional, sexual, or ritual abuse, prompting most Annual Conferences since this time to adopt for themselves policy and procedures to reduce the risk of child abuse in the church; and

Whereas: The North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church is committed to conducting ministry so that children, youth, and adults may be safe to grow spiritually, demonstrating the love of Jesus in our midst so that each person 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);



Therefore, be it resolved that the North Carolina Annual Conference:

- a. Direct Conference and District program agencies which work with programs for children and youth, in covenant with the United Methodist Church, to adopt the following policy, in order that the abuse of children and youth in all conference- and district-related settings may be prevented to the fullest extent possible:

As a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the Gospel in a manner that assures the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth and the adults who work with them. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the recruitment and selection of staff. We will implement prudent procedures of operation for all programs and events. We will educate those who work with children and youth in conference and district settings as to the use of all appropriate policies and procedures. We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting suspected incidents of abuse that conform to the requirements of state law.

- b. Direct each and every local church to adopt and implement for themselves a safe sanctuary policy and procedures as outlined in the 1996 General Conference Resolution for use in their present and future ministry with children and youth. Training events will be offered throughout the Conference using the resource book *Safe Sanctuaries for Youth Ministry* by Joy Melton (Discipleship Resources) to assist local churches in this. The local church shall send at least two (or more) of the following: clergy, staff or lay leadership with direct responsibility for children/youth ministry, trustees, staff-parish relations committee members, nurture/education chairpersons, Sunday School superintendents, lay leaders, etc.
  - c. Create a Conference **Safe Sanctuaries Committee**, to be selected by the Conference Committee on Nominations, for the purpose of providing oversight for the Conference safe sanctuary policy and procedures and to oversee and resource the implementation of a safe sanctuary policy and procedures within each local church of the North Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Funding will come from the Children's Ministry line item of the Conference budget.
-



## Appendix 7.3.

**'Baptismal Covenant II,' United Methodist Hymnal, 1989, p. 44.**

### **Congregational Pledge 2**

*When using the service of the Baptism of Children of the former Methodist Church, this congregational act is used, the people standing:*

*Pastor:*

Members of the household of faith,  
I commend to your love and care *this child*,  
Whom we this day recognize as *a member* of the family of God.  
Will you endeavor so to live  
that *this child* may grow in the knowledge and love of God,  
through our Savior Jesus Christ?

*People:*

**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.**