

Revised: July 2014

Safe Sanctuary

A Child Abuse Prevention Policy

Introduction

Background Statement

Whereas, 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. And 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” (P162C).

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and sexual misconduct have occurred in 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 church a safe place, to protect children, youth and other vulnerable persons from sexual and physical abuse. Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we as the official body of Calvary United Methodist Church, adopt this policy to protect children and youth in our church from abuse and/or harassment.

Purpose

The congregation of Calvary United Methodist Church (CUMC) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. CUMC implements this Safe Sanctuary policy to protect children, youth and volunteers from all forms of abuse and/or harassment and demonstrate our unwavering commitment to physical safety, mental well-being, and spiritual growth.

Statement of Covenant

As a Christian community of faith, Calvary United Methodist Church pledges to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our

children and youth as well as those who work with them. We will:

- Follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers;
- Implement prudent operational procedures in our ministries;
- Educate individuals working with children and youth regarding this policy and its requirements;
- Have clearly defined procedures for reporting and responding to an incident of suspected abuse.

Conclusion

In all ministries with children and youth, the congregation of Calvary United Methodist Church 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).

Charge Conference
Calvary United Methodist Church
October 27, 2013

Regarding Those Who Work with Youth and Children

Calvary United Methodist Church reserves the right to deny or revoke any individual's application to work with children/youth as either a volunteer or a paid employee.

Circumstances under which an application will be denied/revoked include, but are not limited to:

- Applicant has a child abuse conviction or impingement (sexual, physical or emotional);
- Conviction or impingement for violent offenses including, but not limited to, murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, etc.;
- Refusing to complete and sign the Volunteer Application or Character and Conduct Questionnaire;
- Refusing to provide consent for a background check;
- Refusing to provide information necessary for reference checks;
- Violations of the Safe Sanctuary policy.

Requirement for Church Volunteers and Employees

1. The church has the right and obligation to screen all volunteers and paid employees who work with youth and children in the church's ministries and sponsored events.
2. All employees and Adult Volunteers will complete a "Character and Conduct Questionnaire" upon application and every two years thereafter so long as they remain involved in ministries that involve children or youth. The initial questionnaire must include a signature and date.
3. Employees and volunteers are required to attend Safe Sanctuary training before beginning work as volunteer or church staff and subsequent training as required by the Safe Sanctuary Committee or Church Council. The Safe Sanctuary Policy and related procedures will be shared at this training. Upon completion of the training employees and volunteers will be expected to agree in writing to abide by the procedures and practices contained in the policy.
4. Employees and adult volunteers who work with children will submit to a criminal background check. The background check will be paid for by CUMC and conducted according to guidelines established by the Safe Sanctuary Committee. Those who work with children or youth will be required to have completed a satisfactory background screening.
5. Employees and volunteers may be asked to undergo subsequent background checks at the direction of the Safe Sanctuary Committee in order to continue to work with children or youth at a cost to be paid by the church.
6. Youth ages 13 to 17 years of age who wish to become a volunteer are to provide at least two written references from adults who have seen the applicant interact with other children. This might be a church worker, coach, teacher, scout leader, etc. At least one of these two references needs to be unrelated to the applicant.
7. Volunteers must show participation in a ministry of the Calvary Church for a minimum of six months prior to beginning a volunteer assignment:
8. All personally identifiable information obtained by the church for the purpose of screening employees and volunteers will be handled with care and discretion. It will be seen by only those who need to see it in order to implement church policies and it will be stored in a secure and locked location on the church property until such time as it may be destroyed.

General Procedures

1. No child or youth will be alone with an adult during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry. This will be referred to as the “Two Adult Rule.” Examples include:
 - a. Sunday school classes for children/youth are always led by at least two adults.
 - b. A Bible study group for youth is always taught by at least two adults.
 - c. A youth fellowship group is always staffed with at least two adults.
2. Employees and volunteers who supervise children/youth will be at least five years older than those they are serving.
3. No one under the age of 18 will be given primary responsibility for the care or supervision of children/youth.
4. For any private conversations with children/youth, the door of the room used will remain open for the entire time. Ideally, such conversations should be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance.
5. Signed parental/guardian consent will be required for children and youth who wish to participate in any church sponsored event held off site.
6. Employees and volunteers will be provided with instructions on disaster preparedness, safety procedures and basic first aid.
7. Church volunteers and employees will be provided with training and instruction of church policies and state laws with regard to child abuse and procedures for reporting a suspected incidence of abuse.
8. All drivers transporting children or youth for a church sponsored activity or related events must be at least 21 years of age and possess a current, valid driver’s license, provide proof of insurance, and agree to the proper use of seatbelts for all passengers.
9. The following are unacceptable and will not be tolerated in any ministry (this list is not inclusive):
 - a. Tobacco
 - b. Illegal drugs
 - c. Alcohol
 - d. Foul or offensive language
 - e. Firearms or other weapons
 - f. Inappropriate dress
10. This policy will be disseminated to all employees and volunteers and made available to all members. It will be shared and discussed at the initial and subsequent Safe Sanctuary training sessions for new employees and volunteers posted on the CUMC website.

11. All outside groups using the church will be made aware of the church's Safe Sanctuary Policy and certify in writing that they have read it and will abide by it. Where the policy provides for specific church-related forms the group will either use them or certify that they have their own which meet or exceed the church's requirements.
12. From time to time, CUMC uses pictures on its website and in community publication to promote church events and ministries. If parents or guardians inform CUMC that they do not want pictures of their children used in this way, the church will respect their wishes.
13. Employees and volunteers working with children/youth shall immediately report any suspected abuse in accordance with the procedures listed below.
14. Calvary Church shall establish and maintain a Safe Sanctuary Committee that will consist of the Senior Pastor, the Director of Children's Ministries, the Director of Youth Ministries and two additional persons elected by the Charge Conference. The Safe Sanctuary Committee has responsibility for the following:
 - a. Periodically review and update the Safe Sanctuary Policy and related procedures in order to minimize the risk of child and youth abuse in all forms.
 - b. Implement an oversee application screening process for all adults who work with children and youth in church sponsored activities
 - c. Establish training process on Safe Sanctuary Policy and procedures.
 - d. Review application forms to ensure volunteers are in appropriate compliance with the policy.
 - e. Along with the Senior Pastor, represent the church in handling any reports of suspected abuse.
 - f. Provide for secure storage or destruction of all sensitive personally identifiable information collected with regards to the church Safe Sanctuary Policy.
15. The Safe Sanctuary Committee is responsible for implementing this policy and ensuring that all allegations are investigated and resolved promptly. With regard to church employees, the Senior Pastor and the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee will be responsible for this function.

Definitions

Adult- Any person 18 years of age or older

Child – Any individual under the age of 12.

Emotional Abuse – Actions that include verbal assaults, ignoring and indifference or constant family conflict.

Employee – Any individual who is hired and paid compensation for services rendered on behalf of Calvary United Methodist Church.

Physical Abuse – Any action that is non-accidental physical trauma or injury inflicted by a parent or caretaker on a child may be termed physical abuse. It also includes a parent's or a caretaker's failure to protect a child from another person who may perpetrate physical abuse on a child.

Physical Neglect – Action or inaction that fails to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child's health or safety. This may include, but is not limited to abandonment, lack of supervision, life endangering physical hygiene, lack of adequate nutrition that places the child below the normal growth curve, lack of shelter, lack of medical or dental treatment that results in health threatening conditions and the inability to meet basic clothing needs of a child.

Sexual Abuse – Any action that includes penetration or external touching of a child's intimate parts, oral sex with a child, indecent exposure or any other sexual act performed in a child's presence for sexual gratification, sexual use of a child for prostitution and the manufacturing of child pornography. Child sexual abuse is also the willful failure of the parent or the child's caretaker to make a reasonable effort to stop child sexual abuse by another person.

Sexual Misconduct – An abuse of power through sexual conduct or activity, not limited to sexual intercourse, in which a person violates the free choice, or abuses the vulnerability of an other person with whom the person comes into contact because of that person's position or responsibility within the church.

Sexual Harassment – A form of sexual misconduct. Defined as any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical, which is perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive.

Two Person Rule – No adult is to be left alone with one or more children or youth in any church sponsored program or activity. This includes time on church premises before and after scheduled activities. There should always be two or more adults present and ideally at least two unrelated adults whenever children and youth are involved in a church related activity.

Volunteer – Any person assigned a position of responsibility for children or youth activities sponsored by the Calvary United Methodist Church. These individuals do not receive compensation for their efforts. (This would not include parents or adults who may provide transportation for children or youth to and from the church.)

Youth – Any individual between the ages of 12 and 17.

Procedures Regarding the Reporting of Suspected Abuse

Once an incident of abuse occurs or an allegation is made, it is crucial that it be dealt with speedily and in a clearly outlined manner. Keep in mind that while all allegations must be taken seriously, they are still allegations until proven otherwise. In that spirit, information related to the incident should be kept strictly confidential until a resolution is achieved. Records will be made available to all agencies and persons/parties with a right to know.

When there is a suspected incident of abuse or harassment, church members are to inform the Senior Pastor or the appropriate Chairperson immediately. For a suspected incident related to a church employee, the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee shall be informed. For a suspected incident related to a church volunteer or individual other than a church employee, the Chair of the Safe Sanctuary Committee is to be informed. If allegations are made against the Senior Pastor, the District Superintendent of the Central Maryland District (Baltimore Washington Conference) shall be notified.

Persons who are the objects of the report will be required to refrain from participation in all church related activities that involve children or youth until the incident report is resolved. In any suspension of a person from said activities, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.

The Church will make every effort to provide ongoing ministry and support for all persons involved. The bonds of Christian love call us to pray and work for healing for all persons.

Steps:

1. As appropriate, the child should be comforted and assured that they are not at fault. Warmth and concern shown initially may facilitate the healing process.
2. The person who observes alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported shall report the incident immediately to the person in charge of the activity and complete the form "Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse."
3. The person in charge will report the incident confidentially to the Senior Pastor or to the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.
4. The Senior Pastor will immediately comply with current state of Maryland law in regards to reporting the incident to law enforcement authorities and/or Child Protective Services.

5. The Senior Pastor will then immediately inform the employee, volunteer or other individual of the accusation against him/her and advise the person that they are to immediately suspend all contact with children and youth and that he/she is to have no contact with the accuser and his/her family. Furthermore, if the accused is an employee, they will be suspended immediately pending the outcome of the investigation. If the accused is a member of the church, a volunteer, or a guest, the Senior Pastor is to request that he/she not return to the church building pending the outcome of these procedures.
6. The Senior Pastor will keep a record of actions taken and assure that the procedures in this Safe Sanctuary policy and the laws of the state of Maryland have been followed.
7. The Senior Pastor will decide who will convey information related to the incident with the parents/guardian. Parents and guardians should be kept apprised of any investigation or further steps taken with regard to the reported allegation.
8. It is not the responsibility of CUMC, its members or employees to carry on an investigation of the reported abuse. The investigation, if warranted, is to be carried out by Carroll County Sheriff's Office, Carroll County Department of Social Services, the church's insurance company and/or Baltimore Washington Conference officials.
9. The Senior Pastor will call an emergency meeting of the Safe Sanctuary Committee or Staff Parish Relations Committee to inform the appropriate administrative body within the church and see to the proper implementation of these procedures.
10. The Senior Pastor will inform the District Superintendent and the church's Insurance Agency of the incident.
11. Media inquiries and other requests for information from CUMC related to the reported incident are to be handled only by the Senior Pastor, the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee or a person officially designated by the same.

Calvary United Methodist Church
Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse:

2. Victim's Name: _____

Victim's Age/Date of Birth: _____

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

4. Victim's statement (give your detailed summary here): _____

5. Name of person accused of abuse: _____

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

6. Witnesses, if any, to the alleged abuse (provide names and contact information):

7. Incident reported to Pastor:

Date/Time: _____

Summary: _____

Signature of Pastor: _____

Code of Maryland Regulations: Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

Section 07.02.07 requires reporting child abuse or neglect in the following manner:

An individual shall immediately report suspected child abuse or neglect to the local Department of Social Services, or report the suspected incident to a local law enforcement agency.

Health practitioners, educators, human service workers, and police officers are required to report, both orally and in writing, any suspected child abuse or neglect, with an oral report being made immediately and the written report being made within 48 hours of the contact which disclosed the suspected abuse or neglect.

A report shall include:

- The name and home address of the child and the parent or other individual responsible for the care of the child;
- The present location of the child;
- The age of the child;
- The names and ages of other children in the home;
- The nature and extent of injuries or sexual abuse or neglect of the child, including any information known to the individual making the report of previous possible physical or sexual abuse or neglect;
- The information available to the individual reporting:
 - which might aid in establishing the cause of the injury or neglect;
 - about the identity of the individual or individuals responsible for abuse or neglect; and
- If reporting abuse or neglect of a child involving mental injury, a description of the substantial impairment of the child's mental or psychological ability to function that was observed and identified, and why it is believed to be attributable to an act of maltreatment or omission of proper care and attention.

Reports of abuse shall be made to the local departments of social services or the appropriate law enforcement agency. Reports of neglect shall be made to local departments of social services.

An employee of a local department of social services who receives a report of suspected child abuse or neglect, shall report the information to the protective services unit within the local department at once so as to initiate prompt handling of the report of suspected child abuse or neglect.

CARROLL COUNTY

Department of Social Services Phone Number: 410-386-3434
Sheriff's Office Phone Number: 410-386.2900

(Note: Reporting is to be made in the county in which the incident occurred)