



SAMPLE – Child, Youth and Adult Safety 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 state that “children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse.”

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual 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) 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 in their 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.

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. (*The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church.*)

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we at Wesley UMC reaffirm our commitment to the safety of our children, youth, and adults and adopt this policy.



Purpose

Wesley United Methodist Church's purpose for establishing this child, youth, and adult safety policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, and adults. This policy coordinates and supersedes the previous policies used by Wesley.

As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we are committed to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and adults, as well as all of the workers with the children and youth. By this policy and its accompanying procedures, we implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events.

- a) **Training:** We will conduct training on this policy and its procedures to assure that adults involved in child and youth activities are aware of these standards and will abide by them.
- b) **Screening:** All adults and minors above the age of 14 years who have a direct involvement with activities covered by this policy and its procedures will be screened by the Conference in accordance with Conference policy. All persons who are subject to this policy will be rescreened every three (3) years. Any person who was screened but, for whatever reason, has been absent from the Wesley community for more than one (1) year and thereafter returns, will be rescreened.
- c) **Supervision:** All activities covered by this policy and its procedures will be supervised by the appropriate number of screened adults.

Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children, youth, and adults, Wesley 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 11," *United Methodist Hymnal*, p.44).

Approved by the Church Council on this _____ day of _____, 20__.

Senior Pastor

Chair, Church Council



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