

Center Grove United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuaries Guidelines

10 May 2010

Approved:

Pastor

Administrative Council Chair

Lay Leader

Children's Coordinator

Trustees Chair

Children and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy
“Safe Sanctuaries” for Center Grove United Methodist Church
Midland, North Carolina

Introduction:

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996, and the Western North Carolina Annual Conference, in June 2004, adopted resolutions aimed at reducing the risk of abuse of children and youth in the church. This would include sexual, emotional, physical, and ritual abuse. This also includes neglect. The adopted resolutions include 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 a 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 conference can cite specific incident 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, emotion, 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 -2000; pages 180-81. Copyright @ 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.)

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist Congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of abuse of children and youth in our church.

Purpose:

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Children and Youth Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of 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 for all of our children and youth, as well as all of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measure in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and event; 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 requirement of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

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 and youth will be "...surrounded by steadfast love, ... established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" (From Congregational Pledge 2, Baptismal Covenant II, in The United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44)

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CENTER GROVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
MIDLAND, NORTH CAROLINA
Safe Sanctuaries for Children and Youth
Basic Essential Operating Guidelines

1. **Recruiting, Screening, hiring, and Training of Youth and Children’s Staff and Volunteer Workers:** Beginning 1 June 2010, criminal background checks (criminal –felony/misdemeanor, sexual offender registry) will be performed on all staff and volunteers with a role in working with children and youth (hereafter referred to as children collectively). Exclusion criteria include those with felony convictions and those with misdemeanor convictions involving children. An appointed designee on the Staff Parish Committee will be responsible for conducting the checks and reporting to the Pastor. Alternately, the volunteer may be asked to provide a background check. Criminal background checks will be repeated on key staff as necessary. Reference is made to <http://www.wnccumc.org/yth/pdf/SafeSanctuaryBackgroundCks.pdf> for additional information regarding background checks and recommended agencies. Results of screenings will be maintained indefinitely.
2. **Chaperone:** The challenge of a small membership church is that of providing adequate volunteers qualified to staff necessary positions. Only trained/screened adults are allowed to be sole chaperone of children. Adults working with children must be an associate member for a minimum period of six months. When possible, two persons should be assigned to chaperone children. In the absence of having two persons assigned, consideration may be given to having a volunteer who “roves” at varied times.
3. **Age Limits:** Staff and volunteers should be at least 5 years older than the oldest child being supervised. No one under the age of 18 should be given supervisory capacity of children
4. **Visibility in Rooms:** Every room that is used for activities and teaching of children should have door open and window uncovered.
5. **Child Pick-up:** Only a parent or legal guardian may take custody of a child from church children’s workers. Identity should be confirmed by child and a verification of an ID if the children’s worker does not know the individual.
6. **Open Door Counseling:** Pastoral counseling is expected to be confidential in nature, but is for the protection of both parties that such sessions be held in an appropriate area. The pastor’s study should have the door remain open with emphasis on maintaining confidentiality.
7. **First Aid and CPR:** At least one adult present at every church activity involving children should be trained in basic first aid and CPR.
8. **Age and Activity Appropriate Equipment:** The safety and appropriateness of equipment used in the nursery, church, children’s rooms, and play ground will be examined as needed.
9. **Liability Insurance Coverage:** Coverage will be maintained.
10. **Designated Spokesperson:** The District Superintendent will be the designated spokesperson in case of an incident or allegation of abuse or inappropriate conduct.

11. **Transportation:** No youth may transport other youth to any off-ground church activity. All church members using their vehicles to transport children must maintain adequate liability insurance on their vehicle and submit to DMV checks. DMV checks must be performed on any person operating a church van/bus or rented van/bus.
12. **Dangerous Situations:** Any church member has the authority to stop, or caused to be ceased, any activity or situation that may be deemed unsafe, pending a final review by the Church Council or Trustees as appropriate.
13. **Medical Emergencies:** All medical emergencies will be handled as appropriate. 911 will be contacted in cases as necessary and then emergency contacts will be made to parents/guardians.
14. **Fire:** In the event of fire, the building will be evacuated. Each group leader is responsible for evacuation of their group. The doors should be left open upon leaving the area. The assembly area is in the parking lot in front of fellowship hall. 911 should be contacted.
15. **Severe Weather:** In the event of tornado or other severe weather, each group leader is responsible for movement of their group to the basement under the sanctuary.

Center Grove United Methodist Church

Youth and Children Volunteer/Staff Application

Date: _____ Position Applied For: _____

Name: _____ Alias: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Location of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Previous Address (if not at current address for 7 years): _____

Employer: _____

Job Title: _____

Home Phone: _____ Work Phone: _____

Length of time at Center Grove UMC: _____

List any criminal (felony, misdemeanor) convictions:

Date *Nature* *Disposition*

If you will be operating a vehicle to transport youth, list all traffic convictions within the past 5 years.

Date *Nature* *Disposition*

My signature attests that the above information is correct to the best of my knowledge, and I furthermore grant permission for criminal records checks and motor vehicle records checks(if indicated) to be performed.

Signed: _____ Date: _____