

Safe Sanctuaries Policy For The Protection Of Children, Youth & Vulnerable Adults

I. Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of sexual abuse of youth and children 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, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse” (§ 162C).

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 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.

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.

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

A. Purpose

Our congregation’s purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuaries Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults, to protect both our paid and volunteer staff from potential false allegations of abuse and to limit the extent of legal liability of Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church

B. 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 the workers with children and youth. 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 with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); 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 if an incident occurs.

C. Policies

The following policies are the MINIMUM necessary precautions for protecting children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and Edgerton Memorial United Methodist of Selma will make every effort to update these procedures by closely monitoring policy updates and recommendations made by The United Methodist Church.

II. Definitions

- A. “**Adult**” means a person over 18 years of age or older.
- B. “**Child**” means any person under the age of 18.
- C. “**Child abuse**” as defined under federal law is “at a minimum: any recent act or failure to act on the part of a parent or caretaker which results in death, serious physical or emotional harm, sexual abuse or exploitation; An act or failure to act which presents an imminent risk of serious harm.” Definition quoted from The Federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) (42 U.S.C.A §5106g).
- D. “**Church staff member**” means any person employed by Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church.
- E. “**Crisis Team**” is composed of the Church Council Chairperson, Education Committee Chairperson, the Pastor, and the Chairpersons of Children and Youth Ministries. If the crisis directly involves a church employee, the Staff Parish Chairperson would also be a member of the crisis team.
- F. “**Volunteer**” an adult who has completed the volunteer application process and has been approved for service.
- G. “**Vulnerable adults**” for the purposes of this policy will be adults whose mental, physical, or emotional condition makes them susceptible to abuse.
- H. “**Youth**” refers to a child between the ages of 12 and 18.

III. Volunteer Guidelines For Working With Children And Youth

A. Screening Process

- 1.) All volunteers working with children and youth (ages 0-18 years) should be regular attendees who have been attending Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church for at least six months unless approved by the Pastor, Director of Children and Youth Ministries, or the Chair of Education.
- 1.) All volunteers working with children and youth will complete a screening process

including:

- a. Completion of a Volunteer Profile Form that includes:
 - i. Standard Contact Information
 - ii. Voluntary disclosure of past criminal history and allegations of criminal history
 - iii. Completion of a background check consent form with signature.
 - b. Before a person becomes a volunteer, the church staff or volunteer in a supervising role must:
 - i. Perform a background check on the potential volunteer.
- 2.) Edgerton Memorial United Methodist reserves the option to repeat background checks of persons who have had five or more years of service or who have had a break in service of one or more years.
 - 3.) Any completed background check that reveals a misdemeanor or a felony conviction, the Crisis Team will review individual cases before making a decision about whether or not the person will be allowed to work with children and youth.
 - 4.) All forms will be kept in a locked file on the church premises.

B. Ministry Supervision

- 2.) Ideally, there will be two unrelated adults in every classroom or ministry setting. Due to limited volunteer resources, it is often difficult to meet that ideal. In order to protect our children and our volunteers, when only one screened volunteer is with children or youth, another adult should be checking periodically on each ministry supervised by only one adult.
- 3.) The adult volunteer in each ministry must be at least 5 years older than the oldest youth.
- 4.) No person under 22 shall be considered as one of the 2 adults, unless approved by the Pastor, Director of Children and Youth Ministries, or the Chair of Education.
- 5.) Each room will have a window or the door will be left open at all times.
- 6.) Youth aged 12 and up may help with children's ministry with the agreement of the screened adult volunteer in charge of that ministry area.
- 7.) Children under 12 will be allowed to help as long as a parent/guardian serves with them or has the approval of the ministry supervisor.

C. Participant Registration

- 1.) Children's Sunday School teachers will record the names and attendance of every child who participates.

- 2.) Parents of infants and children in the nursery must be responsible for dropping off children and picking up children.
- 3.) Registration materials for activities in which children and youth are outside direct supervision of their parents/guardians shall require signed written permission forms that include pertinent health information in order to participate.
- 4.) If the participants are old enough to understand, they shall sign a covenant of participation listing rules for all trips, overnights, etc.

D. Transportation

- 1.) All drivers of children and youth must have a valid driver's license and current automobile insurance.
- 2.) The number of persons per car should not exceed the number of seatbelts.
- 3.) The church van may be used if the driver has been approved through the volunteer screening process and has submitted a copy of his or her driver's license to the church office.
- 4.) When transportation is involved within a youth ministry program, no student may ride with another youth unless the driver is the youth's sibling or unless the student has a note of permission from his or her parents.

IV. Reporting Suspicion Of Abuse

Note: All North Carolina citizens are mandated by law to report suspected child abuse and neglect to the Department of Social Services in the county where the child lives. With that in mind, the following details the steps Edgerton Memorial United Methodist covenants to take if or when an allegation of abuse of a child or youth is made.

- A.** If a child or youth approaches a volunteer with a testimony of abuse, the volunteer should listen carefully and calmly, reassuring the child that he/she is not at fault and was right in telling you about the problem. Do not promise the child you will not tell anyone.
- B.** The volunteer should immediately contact the person in charge of the children's activity, the Chairperson of Children and Youth Ministries and/or the Pastor. Together fill out a Suspicion of Child Abuse Report Form.
- C.** If appropriate to the situation, the parents should be notified.
- D.** After the report is filled out, the person in charge of the children's activity, the Chairperson of Children and Youth Ministries or the Pastor will call the county's Department of Social Services or contact the Child Protective Services Supervisor

directly.

- E. If the Pastor has not been contacted, he/she should be contacted at this time.
- F. The Pastor will then notify the church's insurance company.
- G. Maintain confidentiality of the investigation as much as possible. Emphasize confidentiality of the victim and any accused.

V. **Responding To An Allegation Of Abuse**

- A. Adequate records will be maintained.
 - 1.) All church volunteer documents will be kept confidentially locked and may be accessed in the event of an allegation of abuse accusing a church staff member or volunteer.
 - 2.) All documents concerning the allegation of abuse should be kept confidential but accessible for use in the investigation.
- B. The church will:
 - 1.) Suspend any accused from duties involving children and youth until the investigation has been completed—if the allegation is found to be factual, the person should be dismissed from all responsibilities with children and youth.
 - 2.) Cooperate fully with law enforcement officials and Child Protective Services
 - 3.) Inform the victim and the victim's family of the steps that are being taken, and continue to keep them advised of the status of the investigations.
 - 4.) Appoint only the Senior Pastor or an alternative person appointed by the Crisis Team to represent the church to the media. The congregation will be kept informed of the investigation as much as possible within the bounds of confidentiality.
 - 5.) Provide prayer support and pastoral care to the victim, the victim's family as well as to the accused and the accused's family.

VI. **Conclusion**

Protecting children and youth through following the policies within this document is an important part of providing a safe place for children and youth to grow in their knowledge and relationship with Christ. In all of our ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each 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*, page 44).

SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY APPENDIX OF FORMS

The following pages contain the forms needed to carry out the policies outlined previously in this document.

Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church POSITION DESCRIPTION FOR VOLUNTEERS WORKING WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH MINISTRIES

General Qualifications Required

1. All volunteers with children and youth ministries shall be of good character and be of the Christian faith.
2. All children and youth ministry volunteers shall:
 - a. Be physically, mentally, and emotionally healthy
 - b. Have a basic understanding of children and/or youth and their needs.
 - c. Be willing to grow in their knowledge of children and youth through periodic training and events.
3. All volunteers with children and youth must be at least twenty-two years of age.

Duties of Volunteers of Children and Youth Ministry

1. Provide physical, emotional, spiritual, and intellectual support to children and youth as appropriate for the circumstances.
2. Provide appropriate guidance to each child or youth in the volunteer's ministries and activities.
3. Develop a relationship of trust and continuity with the children/youth and their parents.
4. Provide support and assistance to parents of youth through positive communication.
5. Participate in opportunities for spiritual growth through appropriate programs and worship experiences.

Performance Expectations of a Children and Youth Ministry Volunteer

1. Be punctual. Notify the Chairperson of Children and Youth Ministries in advance if you must be more than fifteen minutes late.
2. Be reliable in your attendance. Notify the Chairperson of Children and Youth Ministries in advance if you must be absent.
3. Attend periodic training and education events provided by the church.
4. Lead by example—be kind and loving to children, youth, and adults.
5. Do not engage in physical punishment/discipline of any children or youth.
6. Cooperate with the church staff, volunteers, and parents.
7. Abide by and apply the children and youth ministry policies of Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church at all times.

I have read and understand the position description for children and youth ministry volunteers at Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church. My signature indicates my agreement and covenant to abide by the requirements set forth.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Printed Name: _____

**Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church
Children And Youth Volunteer Profile**

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime phone: _____ Evening phone: _____

Occupation: _____ Employer: _____

How long have you been involved with Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church? _____

If you have been at Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church for less than 3 years, please list your previous church home and phone number, if any: _____

May we contact your previous church home? _____

List what areas of EMUMC's ministries you have been involved with: _____

Previous volunteer experience: _____

Special interests, hobbies, and skills: _____

In what areas of children and youth ministries are you interested in volunteering? Check all that apply.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Sunday School Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Pantry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Activities | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Worship Services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Vacation Bible School | <input type="checkbox"/> UMYF Special Event |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Church Worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Chaperone |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Choir/Hand Bells | <input type="checkbox"/> UMYF Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Children's Special | <input type="checkbox"/> Youth Sunday School Teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Events/Outings | <input type="checkbox"/> Nursery Worker |

I have read and understand the policies set forth by Edgerton Methodist's Safe Sanctuaries Protection Policy for Children and Youth and agree to abide by them. I understand that in submitting this application, I am covenanting with Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church, that, if accepted as a volunteer, I will work to the best of my ability to nurture the children and youth of this church body to be disciples of Jesus Christ.

Signature of Applicant: _____ Date: _____

AUTHORIZATION AND REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

I, _____, hereby authorize Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church of Selma, North Carolina to request the Selma, NC police/sheriff's department or another company to release information regarding any record of charges or convictions contained in its files, or in any criminal file maintained on me, whether said file is a local, state, or national file, and including but not limited to state and federal law. I do release said police/sheriff's department, or other company, from all liability that may result from any such disclosure made in response to this request.

Signature of Applicant: _____

Date: _____

Print full name: _____

Print all other names used by applicants (if any): _____

Date of Birth: _____ Place of birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Driver's License Number: _____ State issuing license: _____

License Expiration Date: _____

List each address at which you have resided in the last five years.

Address: _____

Dates resided there: _____

Address: _____

Dates resided there: _____

Address: _____

Dates resided there: _____

Thank you for consenting to this background check. Your cooperation helps Edgerton Memorial United Methodist keep our children and youth safe.

Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church Injury Report Form

Child/Youth's Name: _____ Age: _____

Name of Person Completing Report: _____ Date: _____

Location of injury/illness: _____

Describe fully how the injury or illness occurred: _____

Describe fully type and extent of injury/illness: _____

Describe fully treatment of injury/illness in order applied: _____

Who provided treatment? _____

Was a parent/guardian notified? No: _____ Yes: _____

Who: _____ Time: _____ Date: _____

Further Care

- Parent took home
- Parent took to doctor
- Parent took to hospital

- Ambulance
- Relative took home (who) _____
- Other _____

Signature of Person Completing Report

Signature of Person in Charge of the Ministry

**Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church
Suspicion of Child/Youth Abuse Report Form**

Date: _____ Time: _____

Child or Youth's Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: _____

1.) Nature of suspected abuse (please be as specific as possible): _____

2.) How information became known to reporting party: _____

3.) Parent/Guardian who brought the child or youth: _____

4.) Other unusual behaviors: _____

5.) Other known history of child abuse: _____

6.) Name of reporting person: _____

7.) Paid church staff person to whom report was made: _____

Edgerton Memorial United Methodist Church
401 W Anderson St – Selma, NC 27576
Suspected Incident Checklist

1. Call to Victim’s parent/guardian (if appropriate to the situation)

Date/Time: _____
Spoke with: _____
Summary of Conversation: _____

2. Call to Johnston County Department of Social Services

Date/Time: _____
Spoke with: _____
Summary of Conversation: _____

3. Call to District Superintendent (if applicable)

Date/Time: _____
Spoke with: _____
Summary of Conversation: _____

4. Call to Church Insurance Carrier

Date/Time: _____
Spoke with: _____
Summary of Conversation: _____

5. Call to Church Legal Counsel

Date/Time: _____

Name of Recorder (please print): _____

Signature of Recorder: _____