



**Policies of First United Methodist Church
Oakhurst, NJ**

Approved by the Administrative Council
May 10, 2021

**OAKHURST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH ("Church")
SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

"What is a Safe Sanctuaries Policy for Children and Youth and How Does it Affect Me?"

The short answers are:

- Safe Sanctuaries for children and youth is a policy describing commitments and procedures that will help us reduce the risk of child abuse in our Church.
- It affects all of us in the Church body, as we support a safe and welcoming place for children and youth. Specifically, it defines pro-active requirements for church staff and volunteers working with ministries in these areas.

Besides meeting our Bishop's mandate that every church in the Greater New Jersey Conference have a customized safe sanctuaries policy, this policy reflects our congregation's commitment to preserving this Church as a holy place of safety and protection, for all who enter, and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

The focus of this Safe Sanctuaries policy (Policy) is to create a welcoming environment for our children and youth; an environment in which they can participate in worship, learn Bible truths, witness to their faith, and be treated with dignity and respect. This Policy has been approved by the Administrative Council. Copies of the Policy are available in the church lobby, as well as on the website of First United Methodist Church, Oakhurst <http://oakhurst.umchurches.org>.



Introductory Statement

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* – 2016, Resolution 3084, “Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church”)

Jesus made the importance of children clear when he said “Let the little children come to me and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.”

Because the tragedy of abuse of children and youth is a reality in our world, and because we recognize our responsibility to ensure a safe and protected environment for our children, the First United Methodist Church, Oakhurst, NJ has developed this policy and procedures to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth.

Statement of Covenant

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

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 of our children and youth as well as all of the staff and volunteers interacting with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of staff and volunteers; we will implement prudent operational procedures on all programs and events; we will educate all of our staff and volunteers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of N.J. law.

Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrate 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).

Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth

An adult is a person of 18 years of age or older. Adult volunteers shall be at least 5 years older than the oldest youth they will be supervising.

Any adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) shall be ineligible to work with youth in any Church-sponsored activity.

Adult volunteers will promise to not harm or abuse children/youth in their care and will immediately report to their supervisor (youth leader, Sunday School Superintendent, Pastor...) any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Reporting will be done in writing by the supervisor using the reporting forms included with the Safe Sanctuaries policy packet.

Doors without windows will remain open and windows shall be un-shaded in all classrooms and child/youth meeting areas.

The status of all adult volunteers will be reviewed periodically by the pastor and lay leader. If participation is deemed to be more than occasional (one-time, one event or occasional help), a background check will be required.

Attendance, including supervisors and volunteers should be taken at every function for children or youth.

All paid staff and adult regular volunteers with children or youth will attend the training and educational events available through Annual Conference to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.

The 2-Adult Rule (2 adults to be present at all times for all child/youth activities) will be followed with these exceptions:

- The “2-Adult Rule” will be observed in Sunday School whenever possible. When the 2-Adult Rule cannot be observed, an assigned adult supervisor (floater) will be available and will monitor the Church building.
 - By job description, the assigned adult supervisor will be the Director of Christian Education/Youth Ministries (when appropriate) or Sunday School Superintendent shall:
 1. Circulate among classrooms in session, including the Nursery.
 2. Recruit people to be substitute floaters in the event the Director/Superintendent is not available.
- For Youth Group meetings and scheduled youth events, a minimum of two adults will be present, with additional adults at the discretion of the youth director.
 - A non-participatory adult (an occasional volunteer), one who satisfies 2-adult rule without leadership participation, shall circulate. A background check is not necessary unless the person is a regular volunteer.

Nursery

Adult volunteers will be recruited as needed. Parents of the children in the nursery will provide an information sheet for each child, including parents' cell phone #, child's date of birth, and allergy information. Parents will sign children in and out of the nursery.

Restroom Policy

Youth will use the restroom adjacent to or closest to the room in which their group is meeting.

Drivers

Volunteers wishing to drive youth to off-site locations must be over 21 years of age and have a background check on file that includes a check of their driving record. The group leader may decline any volunteer offer at the leader's full discretion.

Confirmation

- There shall be a second adult in the classroom.
- Mentors may meet with confirmands in public places, or in a private place (open door policy) where a second adult is present or easily accessible. In all cases, the youth must be dropped off and picked up by a parent, guardian, or other parent-designated person.

Reporting Procedure

The District Superintendent will receive a report of all suspected incidents of abuse or misconduct.

The Report Form for Injuries and/or the Report Form for Suspected Incidents of Abuse or Misconduct shall be used whenever you witness said abuse/incident or whenever a child/vulnerable adult tells you they have experienced such injury/abuse. Examples of such situations may include (but are not limited to): shaking, kicking, choking, spoken or unspoken violence or cruelty, neglect, sexual contact.

REQUIREMENTS FOR PAID STAFF, REGULAR and OCCASIONAL VOLUNTEERS

A background check and fingerprinting is required prior to the start date for:

- All paid staff.
- All regular volunteers.

Paid staff includes:

- Pastor
- Secretary
- Director of Christian Ed./Youth Ministries
- Sexton
- Wesley Nursery School staff
- Music Director
- Nursery Attendant, if applicable

Regular Volunteers include:

- Sunday School Superintendent
- Sunday School Teachers
- Youth Choir Director
- Nursery Attendants
- Confirmation Mentors
- Vacation Bible School Adult Leaders
- Youth Group Adult Leaders
- Vulnerable Adult Program Leaders (if applicable)

Occasional volunteers are individuals volunteering one-time, at one event, or who provide occasional help. They do not have to be fingerprinted or go through a background check but they must submit a Volunteer Application form before volunteering. Occasional volunteers will not be left alone with youth or children.

Background checks will be processed by the agency available through the Annual Conference. A representative of the Staff/Parish Relations Committee, the pastor, and the lay leader, will review background checks. Any conversations with the references provided by staff or volunteers will be documented in writing (see attached form for Written Record of Contact with a Reference).

The pastor will keep the background checks in a confidential file in his/her office.

Oakhurst United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Vulnerable Adults Policy

What is a Safe Sanctuaries Policy for Vulnerable Adults and How Does it Affect Me?

- Safe Sanctuaries policy regarding Vulnerable Adults described commitments and procedures that will help reduce the risk of abuse of Vulnerable Adults in our Church.
- It affects all of us in the church body, as we support a safe and welcoming place for groups of Vulnerable Adults. Specifically, it defines requirements for church staff and volunteers working with ministries in this organized area.

The focus of this Policy is to create a welcoming environment for groups of Vulnerable Adults; an environment in which they can participate in worship, learn Bible truths, witness to their faith, and be treated with dignity and respect. This policy has been approved by the Administrative Council. Copies of the policy are available in the church office, as well as on the website of the church, <http://oakhurst.umchurches.org>.

Introductory Statement

Because the tragedy of abuse of Vulnerable Adults is a reality in our world, and because we recognize the spiritual goal of providing a safe and protect environment, the First United Methodist Church, Oakhurst, NJ has developed this policy and procedures to demonstrate our commitment to the safety and spiritual growth of Vulnerable Adults in our group activities.

Statement of Covenant

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the reporting of observations of abuse to Vulnerable Adults during organized activities of such individuals.

As caring Christians, we also are committed to protect and advocate for vulnerable adults participating in the life of the church. The church, at all levels of its organization, is entrusted with the responsibility of providing an emotionally and physically safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for activities of Vulnerable Adults, in which they are protected from abuse. Finally, we recognize the grace that God gives in upholding Christian community; and we will look for grace-filled ways of dealing with both the victim and the accused.

Conclusion - Scope and Focus

The scope and focus of this Policy is on organized groups of Vulnerable Adults in the Church at Church functions.

Definitions

Abuse means the willful infliction of physical pain or injury or mental anguish, unreasonable confinement, or the willful deprivation of services which are necessary to maintain a person's mental and physical health by a Caregiver or other person.

Caregiver means a person who has assumed the responsibility for the care of a vulnerable adult as a result of family relationship, or who has assumed responsibility for the care of a vulnerable adult voluntarily, by contract, or by order of a court of competent jurisdiction, whether or not they reside together.

Exploitation means the act or process of illegally or improperly using a person or his resources for another person's profit or advantage.

Neglect means an act or failure to act by a vulnerable adult or his caretaker which results in the inadequate provision of care or services necessary to maintain the physical and mental health of the vulnerable adult, and which places the vulnerable adult in a situation which can result in serious injury or which is life-threatening.

Staff Person – Any person employed by the Church who is responsible for overseeing organized activities of Vulnerable Adults.

Volunteer – A person, eighteen (18) years of age or older, who assists in conducting organized activities of Vulnerable Adults under the supervision of a paid Staff Person.

Vulnerable Adult means a person, 18 years of age or older who resides in a community setting and who, because of a physical or mental illness, disability or deficiency, lacks sufficient understanding or capacity to make, communicate, or carry out decisions concerning his/her well-being and is the subject of abuse, neglect or exploitation. A person shall not be deemed to be the subject of abuse, neglect or exploitation or in need of protective services for the sole reason that the person is being furnished nonmedical remedial treatment by spiritual means through prayer alone or in accordance with a recognized religious method of healing, in lieu of medical treatment, and in accordance with the tenets and practices of the person's established religious tradition.

Procedures for Ministry with Vulnerable Adults

An adult is a person of 18 years of age or older. Any adult who has been convicted of abuse related to Vulnerable Adults shall be ineligible to work with Vulnerable Adults in any church sponsored activity.

All adult volunteers will promise to not abuse, neglect or exploit Vulnerable Adults as part of their involvement at Church sponsored events of Vulnerable Adults, if there are any such events, and will immediately report to the pastor or staff person in charge of such group, any activity which is abusive or exploitive by a Caregiver or other individual,

Reporting will be done in writing by the supervisor using the forms included on this policy.

Guideline for Volunteers and Staff Persons working with organized groups of Vulnerable Adults at Church-sponsored Events

- No Staff Person or Volunteer may engage in any form of neglect, abuse or exploitation of Vulnerable Adults.
- Persons leading any formal group of Vulnerable Adults must be 18 years of age or older.
- Volunteers and Staff will undergo appropriate background checks as stated in the Child and Youth Safe Sanctuaries policy.
- Where there are Church activities involving organized groups of Vulnerable Adults, Staff Persons and Volunteers should avoid being alone with a Vulnerable Adult without being visible to others in the immediate surroundings.
- Attendance, including of supervisors and volunteers there should be taken at every church function of an organized group of Vulnerable Adults.

Reporting Procedures

New Jersey statutes do not require our church to report neglect, abuse or exploitation of Vulnerable Adults, N.J.S.A. 52:27D-407. However, any person who has reasonable cause to believe that a Vulnerable Adult is the subject of abuse, neglect or exploitation may report the information to the Monmouth County Adult Protective Services provider.

It is recommended that all Incidents of the above should be reported by Staff Persons and Volunteers to the pastor. Prompt notification may also be communicated to the District Superintendent.

Response Procedures

A quick, compassionate and unified response to a reported incident of neglect/abuse/exploitation of a Vulnerable Person is expected to be conducted by the County. Church personnel should not undertake an investigation of the incident themselves. However, in all cases of reported neglect, abuse or exploitation of Vulnerable Adults at a Church-sponsored or related activity, all Staff Persons and Volunteers involved with the activity shall cooperate with all official investigating agencies.

The Pastor and/or her/his designee are the only person(s) authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Conference's Director of Communications.

If the allegation concerns activities or persons outside any relationship to a Church-related event or activity, it is the responsibility of the Staff Person in charge of the Church activity to make the initial contact with the County.

If the allegation is against a Staff Person or Volunteer, or if the alleged event occurred in the course of an organized Church activity for Vulnerable Adults, the Staff Person in charge of the activity shall immediately report the incident to the Pastor who shall then determine the appropriate action(s) to be taken.

**VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM
FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

The information obtained on this form is for internal use by this local church only.

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City, state, zip _____

Cell or Home telephone _____ Business telephone _____

Driver's License # _____

List (names) of other houses of worship you have attended regularly during the past five years:

Please provide name and telephone or email of a pastor or religious leader; an employer and a personal reference who may be contacted:

Pastor or religious leader:

Employer:

Personal:

I understand that under the Safe Sanctuary policy of First United Methodist Church, Oakhurst, if I am, or become, a regular volunteer in a ministry area involving children, youth or vulnerable adults, I consent to a background check at the expense of the church, which will be held in a confidential file. I understand that I must supply my Social Security Number for this purpose.

I hereby release and agree to hold harmless from liability any person or organization that provides information and this release may be sent to any reference. I also agree to hold harmless the First United Methodist Church, Oakhurst, and the officers, employees and volunteers thereof from any use of this application or information. I waive any right that I may have to inspect references provided on my behalf. I certify that the information I have provided is true and correct; if it is found that the answers given are untrue, I understand it may be cause for dismissal.

Signature _____

Date _____

**WRITTEN RECORD OF CONTACT WITH A REFERENCE
OF AN APPLICANT FOR WORK WITH CHILDREN/VULNERABLE ADULT**

(Please complete one form for each reference contacted)

1. Name of Applicant _____

2. Reference contacted (if a house of worship or organization, identify both the church or organization and person contacted)

3. Date(s) and time(s) of contact(s) _____

4. Person contacting the reference _____

5. Method of contact (e.g., telephone, personal conversation, letter (attached))

6. Summary of conversation (summarize the reference's remarks concerning the applicant's fitness and suitability for work with children, youth or at-risk adults.

Signature

Position: _____

Date: _____

REPORT FORM FOR INJURIES

Today's Date _____ Report prepared by: _____

Injured's name	Age	
Address		
City	State	Phone

Parent/guardian of injured
Date/time/parent/guardian contacted:

Location of accident	
Date of accident	Time of accident
Staff person in charge at time of accident	
Brief description of accident	
Others involved in accident	
Other adult or youth witnesses to accident	

Action taken
Medical attention required
Treating medical personnel and/or facility
Follow up required

Insurance-related action:

REPORT FORM FOR SUSPECTED INCIDENTS OF ABUSE OR MISCONDUCT

Staff person completing report	
Victim's name	Age
Parent/guardian of victim (where appropriate)	
Location of incident	
Date	Time
Brief description of incident	
Date/time/location of initial conversation with victim	
Notes of conversation	

Name of person accused of abuse or misconduct
Date/time/location of initial conversation with accused (if staff member)
Notes of conversation

Date/time/location of initial conversation with parent(s)/guardian(s) (where appropriate)
Person spoken to
Notes of conversation

Date/time of call to DYFS:

Person Contacted:

Notes:

OUTSIDE GROUPS USING OUR FACILITY

Outside groups (“Groups”) that use our Church facility for any purpose must be informed of and agree to the Safe Sanctuary Church Child and Youth Policy as well as the separate Vulnerable Adult Policy on a yearly basis at the time their Facility Use Agreement is renewed.

A fully authorized representative of each Group must be informed of the above two Safe Sanctuaries Policies, and must agree that the Group will abide by our Policies.

The confirmatory Acknowledgement will be filed with the Facility Use Agreement. Each Group will be given a copy of these two Policies.

During times youth are present, discretion is to be used in scheduling other meetings or events.

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A fully authorized representative of each Group must be informed of the above two Safe Sanctuaries Policies, and must agree that the Group will abide by our Policies.

The confirmatory Acknowledgement will be filed with the Facility Use Agreement. Each Group will be given a copy of these two Policies.

During times youth are present, discretion is to be used in scheduling other meetings or events.

I have read the “Procedures” and “Guideline” sections of the Safe Sanctuaries Child and Youth and the Vulnerable Adult Policies on behalf of the Applicant Group. The Group agrees to observe and abide by the Safe Sanctuaries policies of the First United Methodist Church, Oakhurst.

Name of Group: _____

_____ Date _____

Signature of Authorized Representative of Group