

# Safe Sanctuaries Policy

*Approved {Date} by The Leadership Board*

**“TO MAKE DISCIPLES OF JESUS.”**

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## **A. Rationale and Statement of Support**

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5 NRSV) and He warned us not to put a stumbling stone before any who believe in Him (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith charges us to protect the most vulnerable among us.

Our vision is to join together as a family of Christians for the purpose of providing a nurturing environment that promotes the physical safety and the emotional and spiritual well-being of all of God's people. Jesus taught that, within the community of believers, there must be protection for each of us in our dependence upon God and each other. As followers of Christ, we resolve to protect all individuals in their vulnerability and also learn from each other as we all grow in faith.

As much as we do not like to think about abusive and hurtful things happening in the church, it is clear that it is our duty to guard and protect the children and other vulnerable individuals, including church staff and volunteers who participate in our ministries.

In April 1996, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of sexual abuse of youth and children in the church. In 2011, the Wisconsin Annual Conference adopted a resolution requiring each congregation to develop a written Safe Sanctuaries Policy. First United Methodist Church of Green Bay has adopted such a policy and continues to periodically revise and update it according to current understanding and best practices.

The congregation of the First United Methodist Church of Green Bay is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, vulnerable people, staff and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the Church. The following manual 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. This manual covers all church directed and church sponsored activities, regardless of the location of the activities.

## **B. Definitions**

- a. FUMC-GB - First United Methodist Church of Green Bay
- b. Child – any person in grade 5 or below.
- c. Youth – any person in grades 6-12. Any person who is 18 and still in high school should still be considered as a youth.
- d. Adult – any person who is 18 and has graduated or left high school.
- e. Staff – paid adult employees of the church who have been screened and hired by the church.
- f. Volunteers – unpaid adult or youth volunteers who help with church programming. Adult volunteers have been screened and trained by church staff. Volunteers may work with children and youth in supervisory roles.
- g. Church programming – any activity, event, ministry, or program which is approved, organized, promoted, or sponsored by the church.

## **C. Selection**

- a. A national criminal background check is required for staff and adult volunteers who work with children and youth. Background checks shall be valid for not more than one year from the date on which the check is completed for paid staff, and three years for adult volunteers.
- b. A driving record check shall be required annually for any staff or adult volunteer transporting youth or children.
- c. Staff and adult volunteers who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect shall not work with youth or children in church programming.
- d. All forms and reference reports used in selecting staff and adult volunteers shall be kept for at least two years. The FUMC-GB Personnel Manager will securely maintain all sensitive information such as background checks.

## **D. Rules for Activities and Events**

- a. Visibility:
  - i. As staff and volunteers supervise children, youth, and vulnerable individuals, they should attempt to make the space they are using as visible as possible to other staff and volunteers.
  - ii. Two adults (staff/volunteers) are expected to be present with children or youth for any church programming.
  - iii. If a private conference with a child, youth or vulnerable person is needed, another adult is to be present or in an adjacent area with any and all doors open throughout the meeting with the individual.
- b. One-on-One Contact: Staff and adult volunteers may not initiate unmonitored one-on-one contact with children or youth.
- c. Supervision: In circumstances when supervision of at least two adult staff or volunteers is not possible, children, youth and vulnerable individuals will never be left alone in an unsafe or unfamiliar environment.
- d. Appropriate Contact: Touching should never be painful or violent, nor should it be forced upon anyone. "Your body; your choice." Adults should not initiate hugs. Adults should always be the one to end the hug. Side hugs are best. Once children are in kindergarten, they should no longer be sitting on adult laps.
- e. Treat all children, youth and vulnerable people with care and kindness regardless of race, color, religious beliefs, gender, disability, political ideology, national origin, sexual orientation and gender identity.
- f. Photography: Without a specific permission slip allowing this, that is signed by the parent/guardian, youth or children shall not be identified by name in photos or videos. Camera use is prohibited in restrooms and dressing rooms. No tagging shall be allowed on social media.
- g. Communication: Parents/guardians shall be copied on all electronic communications sent to a youth.
- h. Incident Reporting:
  - i. Incidents such as fighting, stealing, drug use, or significant injury will be recorded on an incident report form by the staff present at the time.
  - ii. The staff overseeing the church program will respond to the incident report within one week by contacting and/or meeting with the parents/guardians and the staff involved.
  - iii. The resolution of the incident will be recorded on the incident report form and filed for a minimum of two years.
  - iv. Any steps recommended to prevent similar incidents in the future will be communicated to the relevant staff.
- i. Permission Slips: Written permission from a parent/guardian is required for youth or child participation in an off-site or overnight event. Staff will keep these files. The leader of the event will carry copies of the permission forms during the event.
- j. Off-Site Events:
  - i. All rules that apply to church building functions apply to off-site events.

- ii. Youth are not allowed to be drivers for church programming unless they have written permission from a parent/guardian.
  - iii. Without specific permission slips allowing this, that are signed by the parent/guardian of both driver and passenger, youth may not transport other youth or children.
- k. Overnight Guidelines:
- i. Adults may not sleep in the same rooms as youth, except
    1. a parent/guardian and their own youth/child when no other youth/children are in the same room
    2. a bunkhouse-style arrangement with more than four people per room.
  - ii. Adults will not share a bed with a person of either gender under age 18, except a parent/guardian and their own youth/child.
  - iii. Mixed gender bathing is not allowed.
  - iv. If the youth/children are of both genders, the accompanying adults must be of both genders.
- l. Discipline
- i. If children or youth are behaving inappropriately, staff or adult volunteers will use techniques of guidance, redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement to change their behavior.
  - ii. Staff and volunteers may not engage in the following conduct:
    1. Strike, spank, shake, slap, or otherwise physically discipline anyone
    2. Humiliate, degrade, or threaten others
    3. Touch anyone inappropriately
    4. Shame, withhold kindness, or speak or act with cruelty
    5. Withhold food, water, or other basic cares as punishment
    6. Use profanity, tell inappropriate jokes

**E. Best Practice Guidelines**

- a. Two-Adult Expectation:
- i. Two adults are expected to be present with children or youth for any church programming.
  - ii. At least one should be a staff member or adult volunteer.
  - iii. The two adult expectation applies to transport to events.
  - iv. Whenever possible, First UMC of Green Bay will strive to have at least two adults present for all activities involving children, youth. If this is not possible, volunteers and/or program staff will serve as rovers during programming. Rovers walk through areas where ministry is happening peering in on each classroom and providing assistance if needed. A ratio of two caregivers to ten children, with the ratio of 1:5 when any more than ten children will be in place, whenever possible.

- b. Supervision
  - i. Staff and volunteers will try, with all reasonable effort, to have at least two adult staff or volunteers with the children, youth and at risk individuals at all activities, whether on-site or off-site.
  - ii. In circumstances when the presence of at least two adult staff or volunteers is not possible, children, youth and at risk individuals will never be left alone in an unsafe or unfamiliar environment. At least one (1) other person will be with the children, youth and/or at risk persons at all times. Staff will assign designated meeting locations and times to check in and perform a head count. Any time the group enters or exits a vehicle, the staff or volunteer will make sure everyone is present. The entire group will not leave the area until everyone is there. Children and youth of all ages must be supervised while participating in church activities.
  - iii. Staff will not be present to supervise children and youth more than ten minutes prior to the commencement or following of the church activity. Therefore, it is essential that parent/guardian/caregivers not bring or permit their child(ren) to be present without direct parent/guardian/caregiver supervision more than ten (10) minutes prior to or following an activity.
- c. Space and Visibility
  - i. As volunteers supervise children, youth, and at risk individuals, they should attempt to make the space they are using as visible as possible to other staff and volunteers.
  - ii. Whenever possible, leave doors open when working with children, youth or at risk individuals.
  - iii. Never cover the windows of an area or the door to block the view.
  - iv. Appropriate confidentiality as well as appropriate safety procedures must be maintained to protect the child, youth or vulnerable person and the adult that is doing the supervising.
- d. Communication: Maintain visibility and parental awareness in communication. Parents/guardians should be copied on communications sent to youth.
- e. Discipline: If children or youth are behaving inappropriately, staff or adult volunteers will use techniques of guidance, redirection, positive reinforcement, and encouragement to change their behavior.

## **F. Professional Development**

- a. The FUMC-GB Personnel Manager shall coordinate the implementation of annual professional development related to the Safe sanctuary policy.
- b. Staff and adult volunteers shall participate in an annual Safe Sanctuaries professional development (PD) at the beginning of each school year.
- c. Staff and volunteers who miss the annual PD will read the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and discuss with the FUMC-GB Personnel Manager.
- d. Following PD, all staff and adult volunteers will sign a document agreeing to abide by the Safe Sanctuaries policy. The FUMC-GB Personnel Manager will maintain these documents.
- e. Staff will receive basic skill training in first aid and CPR, and be aware of the location of first aid kits in the church building.
- f. The Safe Sanctuaries Policy will be posted on the church website, and printed copies will be available from the church office.

## **G. Abuse Reporting**

- a. Should alleged abuse occur, the individual who observed or experienced it, or to whom it is reported, are required to report the incident immediately to the personnel manager. If the personnel manager is not available, the reporting adult should contact another staff member of the church, i.e. the pastor, associate pastor, etc.
- b. The personnel manager may report the incident to relevant civil authorities.
- c. When an incident involves maltreatment, neglect, or abuse, it must be reported to the local authorities. This is true whether the incident is witnessed directly, self-reported to staff or volunteer, or suspected.
- d. Under Wisconsin state law, clergy are required to report abuse or neglect.
- e. The personnel manager, or lead pastor, and the adult with direct knowledge of the alleged abuse shall immediately attempt to obtain all necessary information about the incident and fill out an incident report form.
- f. The personnel manager shall contact the parent/guardian as soon as possible to report the alleged abuse and schedule a face-to-face meeting.
- g. The personnel manager may contact the District Superintendent and the church's insurance representative.
- h. The pastor, or his/her designee, is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the pastor.
- i. If the pastor is the object of allegations, the personnel manager and the chair of the Leadership Board shall meet with the District Superintendent to determine next steps.
- j. Any person who is alleged to have been engaged in abuse is required to refrain from all activities with children or youth until the incident is resolved. Removal of a person from activities should be handled immediately and, if possible, discreetly, recognizing that the investigation may still be ongoing.



## **H. Visitation and Observation**

- a. Persons connected with the church are welcome to visit and observe church programming.
- b. Unknown persons should be approached by staff or assistants to ascertain their needs.
  - i. If the unknown persons have a valid reason to be present, the staff or adult volunteer will escort them to the proper place for visiting or observing.
  - ii. If the unknown persons do not have a valid reason to be present, staff will ask them to leave the church property or programming immediately and will make sure the persons have left.