

**Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church**  
**Safe Sanctuaries Policy**  
**For the Protection of Children, Youth, & Vulnerable Adults**

Heeding Christ's call to all people to love and serve one another (John 13:15,34), to serve those most vulnerable in his name, even the "least of these" (Matthew 25:40), and to welcome children and youths in Christ's name (Matthew 18:5), the Mt. Pleasant UMC of the Susquehanna Conference of the United Methodist Church has developed Safe Sanctuaries Policies with accompanying procedures to reduce the risks of abuse to children, youths and vulnerable adults in our ministries and events. The Safe Sanctuaries Policies come out of the guiding covenant of the Susquehanna Conference, "...acknowledging that it is by God's grace that we live together in covenant agreement," and focus on the following covenant agreements:

- We covenant together as a Conference to diligently seek God's will as we endeavor to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world; and,
- We covenant to do no harm by words or actions.

The Mt. Pleasant UMC Safe Sanctuaries Policies seek to provide a safe and secure spiritual environment for children, youths and vulnerable adults, to comply at all times with the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law, and to practice cyber-safety in computer, internet, cell phone and other evolving cyber technologies to reduce the risk of abuse in our ministries to and events for children, youths and vulnerable adults. United Methodists are a connectional people. As we work to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ (Matthew 28:19), we use the ever-changing cyber technologies available to us to teach about God's love and to strengthen our connections as the Body of Christ in the world.

It is the purpose of this policy to first of all protect the children, youth and vulnerable adults that come to us; the second is to protect our staff, both paid and volunteer, from potential allegations of abuse.

Here is a comprehensive plan that will include all the areas of the issue: Screening, Supervision, Reporting Procedures and Response Plan.

**Definitions:**

What is child abuse? "Child Abuse" is defined under Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law, 23 Pa.C.S.A § 6303(b.1), as the act of intentionally, knowingly or recklessly doing any of the following:

- Causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.

- Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury to a child through any act or failure to act or a series of such acts or failures to act.
- Causing sexual abuse or exploitation of a child through any act or failure to act.
- Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act.
- Creating a likelihood of sexual abuse or exploitation.
- Causing serious physical neglect of a child.
- Engaging in any of the following recent acts: Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child; unreasonably restraining or confining a child, based on consideration of the method, location or the duration of the restraint or confinement; forcefully shaking a child under one year of age; forcefully slapping or otherwise striking a child under one year of age; interfering with the breathing of a child; causing a child to be present at a location while a violation of 18 Pa.C.S. § 7508.2 (relating to operation of methamphetamine laboratory) is occurring, provided that the violation is being investigated by law enforcement; leaving a child unsupervised with an individual, other than the child's parent, who may be a sexual offender or sexually violent predator.
- Causing the death of the child through any act or failure to act.

In Safe Sanctuaries, Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youths, 2008, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, Joy Thornburg Melton defines and describes five types of abuse:

1. **Physical Abuse** is “abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon (knife, belt, strap, etc.), burning, shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing bones, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries to a child's body.” (Melton, 2008, pages 29- 30)
2. **Emotional Abuse** is “abuse in which a person exposes a child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the child of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care. Children exposed to emotional abuse may have experienced being locked in a closet, being deprived of any sign of parental affection, being constantly told they are bad or stupid, or being allowed or forced to abuse alcohol or drugs. Emotional abuse is often very difficult to prove and devastating to the victim.” (Melton, 2008, page 30)
3. **Neglect** is “abuse in which a person endangers a child's health, safety, or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the child's self-worth.” (Melton, 2008, page 30)
4. **Sexual Abuse** is “abuse in which sexual contact between a child and an adult (or another older and more powerful youth) occurs. The child is never truly capable of consenting to or resisting such contact and/or such sexual acts. Often, the child is physically and psychologically dependent upon the perpetrator of the abuse. Examples of sexual abuse may include

fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation of and exposure to child pornography or prostitution.” (Melton, 2008, page 30)

5. **Ritual Abuse** is “abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child’s welfare. The abuser may appeal to some higher authority or power to justify the abuse. The abuse may include cruel treatment of animals or repeated threats of harm to the child, other persons, and animals. Reports of ritual abuse are often extremely horrifying and may seem too grim to be true. Children making such reports must not be ignored.” (Melton, 2008, page 30)

For this policy, the following other definitions apply:

- “Adult” means a person 18 years of age or older.
- “Child” means any person under the age of 18.
- “Vulnerable adult” means an individual over the age of 18 who requires direct adult supervision as a result of mental, emotional or physical limitations.
- “Children’s activities” means any activity, ministry or program in which children are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers.
- “Church” means the Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church.
- “Staff person” means any person employed by the Mt. Pleasant United Methodist Church who is responsible for children’s activities or has contact with children.
- “Volunteer” means a person 18 years of age or older who conducts children’s activities and is in charge of children while their parents are absent.
- “Safe” means an environment where all persons are protected from physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse.
- “Adult Roamer” is a volunteer or staff member who has an open view of all activities from an interior hallway or connecting room by means of a window, a door with an uncovered window or an open door.
- “Mandated Reporter” – a person who is required by the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law to make a report of suspected child abuse, including but not limited to the following persons who are 18 years of age or older: an employee of a child-care service who has direct contact with children in the course of employment; an individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual’s role as an integral part of a scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child; and a clergyperson, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization.

### **Screening Procedures**

All adults, volunteers or paid staff persons, who have direct contact with youth, children and vulnerable adults, shall be subject to the following:

- a) Completed STANDARD CONTACT INFORMATION: Name, address, phone numbers, email address, date of birth, driver's license # & expiration date, vehicle insurance company.
- b) Completed PENNSYLVANIA STATE POLICE CRIMINAL HISTORY REPORT. Go to <https://epatch.state.pa.us>
- c) Completed PENNSYLVANIA CHILD ABUSE HISTORY CLEARANCE. Go to <http://www.dhs.state.pa.us>
- d) Completed FBI CRIMINAL HISTORY REPORT (Fingerprint-based background check): Go to [www.identogo.com/locations/pennsylvania](http://www.identogo.com/locations/pennsylvania). The FBI Criminal History Report is not required for incumbent or prospective volunteers who have resided in Pennsylvania continuously for a period of 10 years prior to becoming a volunteer and who sign an Affidavit affirming that they have not committed certain crimes that otherwise would prohibit them from being a volunteer responsible for the welfare of a child or having direct contact with children. This Affidavit has been prepared by the Conference's legal counsel and will be provided by Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator.
- e) All three clearances must be obtained EVERY 60 months.
- f) Drivers License checks.
- g) Demonstration of an active relationship with our church for at least 6 months (Six Month Hospitality Rule) before being allowed to be in supervisory or volunteer role in children's activities.
- h) Copies of all forms shall be kept as church records in a locked file. The applicant shall retain the originals of the 3 clearance documents. The applicant will show the originals to the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator who will make copies, initial them and store them. It is the responsibility of the coordinator of any children or youth activities to submit a list of names that will be volunteering at the planned activity to the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator. If a volunteer ends their involvement with children, these clearance forms must be retained for 5 years.
- i) When an outside group is utilizing the church for an event, that group/organization is encouraged to have their own policy.
- j) It should be understood that the 3 clearances are mandated under PCPSL (Pennsylvania's Child Protective Law). Safe Sanctuaries Policies are mandated by United Methodist Church.

### **Supervision and Training**

- Training is a requirement for all staff persons and volunteers working with children & vulnerable adults in church activities. The minimum training would be an annual orientation that includes information regarding this policy. All employees and volunteers working with children & vulnerable adults are required to take official Susquehanna Conference Safe Sanctuaries training every 5 years. Online training can be found at [www.smart-trak.com/susquehanna/](http://www.smart-trak.com/susquehanna/). In-class 3 hour training is available periodically within our Lewisburg or surrounding districts. See [www.susumc.org](http://www.susumc.org) under Safe Sanctuaries for dates.
- Minimum supervisory standards will include the "two-non-related adult-rule" or 2 related adults not living in same household rule. No matter the size of the group,

there will always be two non-related adults present or 2 related adults not living in same household, who are in compliance with this policy. In co-ed groups, both male & female adults are recommended.

\*Nursery age children through 2 years old- 1:4 (1 adult to every 4 children) Ratio of 1:3 for off-site and overnight events.

\*Children 3-4 years old- 1:6 (1 adult to every 6 children) Ratio of 1:3 for off-site and overnight events.

\*Children 5-12 years old- 1:8 (1 adult to every 8 children) Ratio of 1:5 for off-site and overnight events.

\*Youth 13-17 years old- 1:10 (1 adult to every 10 youth) Ratio of 1:8 for off-site and overnight events.

\*Special needs & vulnerable adults- 1:2 (1 adult to every 2 persons) For both on-site & off-site.

- No volunteer shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 18 years of age and 5 years older than the children and youth with whom he/she is working.
- Each room or space where children, youth and vulnerable adults are being cared for shall have a window in the door or the door shall be left open. All activities should occur in open view. Should the activity be an outdoor program or occur in a setting which makes it difficult to comply with this policy, the person in charge of the activity shall take appropriate measures to make sure that the setting is safe and suits the activity and that the children, youth and vulnerable adults are properly supervised.
- Forms & Records: Registration materials for activities in which children are outside of the supervision of their parents/guardians shall include the participant's name, address, birthday, parents/legal guardians information including authorization for participation in the activity, authorization for emergency medical treatment, telephone number, emergency contact information, listing of prescription drugs to be taken during the activity, health insurance information and permission option for pictures to be taken & posted anonymously on the church website or on church bulletin boards. These forms can be maintained & secured in a folder by the staff person or volunteer coordinating the event. Also, they should be taken to off-site events.
- All prescriptions and other medications for participants shall be given to a designated supervisor prior to overnight events for disbursement in accordance with medication instructions given by participant's parents/legal guardians, and will be enclosed in its original container (including all prescription medications & over the counter). EpiPens and inhalers may be carried by participants with the understanding that they will be secured and out of sight unless needed. Adult leaders should be familiar with how to use an EpiPen and inhalers in case of an emergency.
- It is recommended that adult supervisors have at least 1 adult certified in First Aid and CPR and that all know who that certified person is.

- For large events where direct adult supervision of all participants is not feasible, enact a buddy system and check in/check out system.
- Sleeping arrangements. There will be separate sleeping areas & bathroom facilities if possible for males and females. Two non-related adults throughout the nighttime sleeping hours will conduct random and regular rounds in all sleeping areas.

### **Driving**

Drivers for off-site group events must be a minimum of 25 years of age or older. Each vehicle should have a first aid kit and 1 seatbelt per occupant that is used at all times while the car is moving.

Obey the speed limit and all other motor vehicle laws and regulations. Each car should have directions to the event, phone numbers of each driver and a plan for seeking assistance should an emergency arise.

When driving in a caravan, if one car stops, every car must stop.

Violations found on driving clearances that may keep volunteers from driving children, youth and vulnerable adults may include but are not limited to:

- \*Violations and/or at fault accidents
- \*Vehicle related license suspensions/reinstatements
- \*DUI
- \*Reckless driving convictions
- \*Felony driving convictions

### **Cyber Safety**

The Internet, apps, social media and portable devices allow people to stay in contact with each other more easily than at any other time in the history of civilization. Some incredible ministry can take place using modern technology but there are some inherent risks involved with the use of electronic communication. Following basic Safe Sanctuaries procedures can help to minimize those risks. There is no such thing as privacy in cyberspace. **Consider anything and everything on the Internet as public information.** Here are some recommendations.

#### **Receive parental/legal guardian permission.**

In addition to general permission to participate in a church ministry or event, it is advisable to receive advance parental/legal guardian permission for children, youth and vulnerable adults in writing for:

1. Posting photos of participants on any websites or sending them email or by cell phone messages or making videos for any use.
2. Communicating or transmitting data electronically with children, youth or vulnerable adults sharing any full name or contact information.

**Never post easily identifiable information online.**

1. Do not “broadcast” e-mails. Use the “Bcc” option (blind carbon copy) so that each recipient sees only his or her address when a message is received.
2. Be cautious when transmitting easily identifiable information such as event dates, times, locations or participants.
3. Limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests. When placing a child, youth or vulnerable adult on an electronic prayer list, consider using only first names and only if you think a name is necessary.

**Safety measures for sharing photos electronically.**

1. Consider using stock or purchased photos.
2. Obtain all necessary legal permission to use photos or other content such as poems, songs, etc.
3. When posting photos, refrain from using names and never use last names or identifiable information.
4. Check photos for vulnerable/compromising situations and to make sure they uphold your mission. Check to make sure nametags are not distinguishable.
5. Use low-resolution photos whenever possible and slightly blur/pixelated photos.
6. Block “save photos as” options on websites. (Ask a web savvy person for assistance.)
7. Limit access to photos by employing the use of a password.

**Safety measures for using social networking sites. (Myspace, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram & others)**

1. Do not use your personal social media presence for ministry. Use a group social media site that is monitored by senior leadership, for example a Facebook site for the specific group.
2. Include a code of conduct/terms and conditions for the site that expressly states expectations for posts and a clear expression of how violations, offensive and objectionable material will be addressed.
3. Restrict who can be your friend. It is prudent to use judgment in accepting requests from children, youth and vulnerable adults.
4. Be familiar with and comply with social media provider policies, restrictions, terms and conditions. For example, according to Facebook’s own terms, children under 13 years of age may not sign up for a Facebook account.
5. Do not post anything to your social networking site or blogs that you would not want attached to your resume or printed in the church newsletter or bulletin.
6. Remove or do not post inappropriate comments, photos, etc.

7. Encourage children, youth and vulnerable adults to follow these same guidelines.
8. Refrain from giving out passwords.

## **Reporting and Responding**

### MANDATED REPORTERS.

- A. WHO ARE MANDATED REPORTERS? All Clergy and all employees/volunteers who, as part of a regular scheduled program, activity or service, accept responsibility for a child or have direct contact with children. EXAMPLES: Child Care Employees, Sunday School Teachers, Youth Fellowship Volunteers, and Camp Volunteers.
- B. WHEN MUST YOU REPORT AS A MANDATED REPORTER? If you have reasonable cause to suspect a child is a victim of child abuse, a report must be made, without exception. This includes situations where (i) you come into contact with a child that has been abused, (ii) an individual makes a specific disclosure to you that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse or (iii) an individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to you that he/she has committed child abuse.
- C. TO WHOM IS THE REPORT MADE? Immediately call Childline at 800-932-0313 to make the required report and tell your immediate supervisor, Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator & Pastor within the church organization **who can help you make the report**. You must personally make the report, and you can no longer rely on someone else (for example, a supervisor) to make the report. In addition, a written report on CY-47 Form must be made to the county Children and Youth Agency within 48 hours of your oral report to Childline.
- D. WHAT IF I AM NOT A MANDATED REPORTER AND SUSPECT CHILD ABUSE HAS OCCURRED? Any person may, and should, report suspected child abuse, even if the person is not a Mandated Reporter. These individuals are called Permissive Reporters.
- E. WHEN IN DOUBT ALWAYS REPORT, REPORT, REPORT!

In the event that an employee or volunteer suspects that a child or vulnerable adult is the victim of abuse, the employee or volunteer should reassure the child or vulnerable adult that their safety and well-being is of paramount concern, following which the suspected abuse should be immediately reported to the appropriate legal authorities, as described above. The child or vulnerable adult should be calmly moved to another safe place onsite in view of at least two other non-related adults. Someone safe and familiar should stay with the child or vulnerable adult at all times. The employee or volunteer who suspects



that a child or vulnerable adult is the victim of abuse should inform the child or vulnerable adult victim in an age appropriate manner that a report will be made, or has been made, to the appropriate legal authorities. Should the child or vulnerable adult be in need of medical attention, appropriate medical professionals or 911 should be contacted for assistance. Depending on the nature of the suspected child abuse, it may also be necessary to contact law enforcement officials, in addition to Childline.

Persons, who are suspected to have engaged in abuse, if on site at a ministry or event, will be immediately removed from the ministry or event setting until designated Conference personnel give further direction. The parents/legal guardians of any alleged victim of child abuse or vulnerable adult abuse should be immediately notified, although it is not appropriate to contact the parents/legal guardians immediately if they are the alleged perpetrators of the child abuse or vulnerable adult abuse. In such circumstances, guidance should be sought from appropriate Conference personnel on who should contact the parents/legal guardians and when this should occur.

Any employee or volunteer having reasonable cause to suspect that a child or vulnerable adult is a victim of abuse should immediately report the suspected abuse to Childline & to appropriate law enforcement authorities or other legal authorities following consultation with his/her supervisor (pastor or Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator) & then complete a Report of Suspected Child Abuse within 48 hours. Once the suspected abuse has been reported by an employee or volunteer, the person making the report should immediately notify his/her supervisor, who shall then be responsible for ensuring that the following individuals are notified: the Dean of the Cabinet; the Conference Director of Communications; the Conference Legal Counsel; the Conference Insurance Representative; and the Conference Director of Connectional Ministries.

**Confidentiality.** Allegations of suspected child abuse or suspected vulnerable adult abuse are strictly confidential and should be discussed only on a need-to-know basis. Once the allegations of suspected abuse have been reported to the appropriate legal authorities, the person making the report should not discuss the matter with other persons except authorized Conference personnel or legal authorities investigating the allegations.

**Response Team.** As directed by the Office of the Bishop, the Conference Response Team may be called upon to assist in any incident of suspected child abuse or suspected vulnerable adult abuse.

**Media.** The Conference Director of Communications or his/her designee is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All media requests for information or statements that are received by employees or volunteers shall be directed to the Director of Communications. Employees and volunteers are to be trained in how to handle media requests by referring them to the Director of Communications. If a representative of the media – newspaper, TV station, Radio station, magazine – calls or approaches an employee or volunteer and seeks comments or asks questions about an incident of suspected child abuse or suspected vulnerable adult abuse, the employee or volunteer should not provide any comments or answer any questions about the incident.

Instead, the employee or volunteer should get the media representative's name, business title, phone number and e-mail address and respectfully tell him/her that the Director of Communications will contact him/her as soon as possible.

The following response to the media representative should be used: "The Susquehanna Conference's Director of Communications can best respond to your inquiry regarding this matter. If you give me your name, business title, phone number and e-mail address, I will ask the Director of Communications to contact you as soon as possible."

**Contact information, all as of 11/18/2017:**

**Childline** 1-800-932-0313

**Form CY-47 Report of Suspected Child Abuse** can be found at [www.susumc.org](http://www.susumc.org) under Safe Sanctuaries

**Law Enforcement & Medical Assistance** 9-1-1

**Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator:** Carol Hauck @ 570-286-9255, cell 570-809-3474

**Pastor: Pat Bollinger** @ 570-286-2948, cell 410-808-4371, church office 570-286-7036

**Dean of Cabinet & District Superintendent of Lewisburg District, Rev. Larry L. Leland, Jr.** @ 570-523-9592

**Conference Director of Communications: Shawn M. Gilgore:** office 717-766-7441. ext. 3607

**Conference Legal Counsel:** have Dean of Cabinet contact that person

**Conference Insurance: Edward Eshleman** @ 1-800-627-3732

**Director of Connectional Ministries:** Rev. Mike Bealla @ 717-766-7441

**CRIMINAL PENALTIES AND CIVIL LIABILITY FOR NONCOMPLIANCE WITH STATUTORY REQUIREMENTS:**

- A. Failure to comply with PCPSL (Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law) requirements is Subject to significant criminal penalties and civil liabilities. Timely and continuing compliance with all PCPSL requirements is absolutely imperative.

Revised 9/15

11/16/15 Approved by Anne Horton

Director Camp & Retreat Ministry

Safe Sanctuaries Task Force

12/3/15 Approved by Mt. Pleasant UMC

Administrative Council

11/18/2017, 10/18 Updated