



CALVARY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY AND PROCEDURES 2021-2024

For the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

Preamble

When the Disciples tried to keep the children away from Jesus, he was quick to respond, “Let the children come to me.” (Luke 18:16) Jesus taught that children were to be included and provided for within the community of faith. As Joy Melton expressed in her book, *Safe Sanctuaries*, “Today the church may be the only place where some children find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow, to thrive and to become faithful people. As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our children very seriously, always attending to their spiritual growth and nurturing.”¹ At Calvary United Methodist Church of Mohnton, subsequently referred to as Calvary UMC, we embrace our children and youth as active disciples in Jesus’ mission for our church family, community, and universal Church. Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults in our church.

Purpose

Our congregation’s purpose for establishing these Policies and Procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Members of Calvary UMC recognize the need to have formal, written policies and procedures to help (i) prevent the opportunity for the occurrence and/or appearance of abuse of children and youth and (ii) protect our paid and volunteer staff, subsequently referred to as Workers, from false accusations and/or suspicions. The following policies and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in Workers but instead are intended to protect our children, youth, vulnerable adults, Workers, employees and the entire church body. Workers are required to follow these policies and procedures.

Pledge

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

¹ Joy Thornburg Melton, *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church* (Nashville, TN: Discipleship Resources, 1998).

children, youth and vulnerable adults as well as of the workers with the children, youth and vulnerable adults. We promise to follow reasonable safety measures in the use of our property and equipment, and in the selection and recruitment of workers. We will educate our workers and volunteers on our church methods and policies, including all requirements under the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. 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 person 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).

Definitions

Child Abuse: as defined under Pennsylvania’s Child Protective Services Law includes but is not limited to any of the following:

- (i) Causing bodily injury,
- (ii) Causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury,
- (iii) Causing sexual abuse or exploitation,
- (iv) Causing serious physical neglect.
- (v) Creating a reasonable likelihood of bodily injury or sexual abuse or exploitation. (vi) Engaging in any of the following acts:

- Kicking, biting, throwing, burning, stabbing, or cutting a child in a manner that endangers the child.
- Unreasonably restraining or confining a child.
- Forcefully shaking, 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 meth lab.
- Knowingly leaving a child with a known sexual predator.
- Causing the death of a child through any act or failure to act.

Adult: a person age 18 or older.

Calvary UMC or We: Calvary United Methodist Church of Mohnton

Child/Children: any person/persons under the age of 18, and therefore includes those in junior and senior high, often referred to as ‘youth’.

Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult Activities: any activity or program in which children, youth, or vulnerable adults are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers.

Mandated Reporters: The following adults are required to make a report of suspected abuse to a child, youth or vulnerable adult, if the person has reasonable cause to suspect that an individual is a victim of abuse.

1. A clergyman or minister of the church,
2. 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 the child, youth or vulnerable adult.
3. An individual supervised or managed by a person listed above.

Protected Person: any child, youth, or vulnerable adult protected under these policies and procedures

Roamer: an individual with clearance, who is designated to move among program areas and function as a volunteer under the Two-adult rule.

Staff person: any person employed by Calvary UMC or programs using its facilities who are responsible for children, youth, or vulnerable adult activities. This person has regular and direct contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, must be 18 years or older and is counted in the Two-adult rule.

Two to one Rule: requires no fewer than two adults be within line of sight during any church sponsored program, event or ministry involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults. For specific, foreseeable circumstances where this is not feasible, the parents will be notified and signed consent will be obtained.

Volunteer: a person 18 years of age or older who assists with the care, supervision, guidance or control of children and vulnerable adults or who has regular and direct contact with children and vulnerable adults as part of a church activity and is counted in the 2-adult rule.

Vulnerable Adult: a person eighteen (18) years of age or older who, because of a mental or physical dysfunction, is unable to manage his/her own resources, carry out the activity of daily living, or protect himself/herself from abuse or neglect without assistance from others. These persons shall receive protection as defined under the areas concerning children where applicable.

Worker: any staff person or volunteer

Youth: any person/persons under the age of 18 or still enrolled in high school, realizing that the demarcation between children and youth is not totally clear.

Screening Standards for Calvary UMC Staff and Volunteers

Minimum Age:

The following standard for Workers are designed to separate Workers from the group they are serving by age or enough years to reinforce recognition of the Worker's role.

1. Every Worker responsible for supervision shall be at least 5 years older than the oldest Protected Person participant.

- a) To work with youth (grades 6th and above), the Worker must be a minimum of 21 years of age.
 - b) To work with children (infant - 5th grade), the Authority Figure/Worker must be a minimum of 18 years of age.
2. Any person who lends aid to a Worker as an assistant/helper and acts at the direction of the Worker, including volunteers, must be a minimum of 12 years of age and competent to assist in the activity. Youth volunteers are required to complete a babysitting training, such as one offered by the Red Cross, or volunteer training instituted by the church and submit verification of completion to the church office.

Six-Month Rule

All Workers who, as part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accept responsibility for a child or have direct contact with Protected Persons shall be required to demonstrate an active relationship with Calvary UMC for at least 6 months prior to serving in a supervisory role in children or youth activities. In the case of new staff hires, references deemed adequate by the Pastor will replace the six-month waiting period.

Policy Instruction

All Workers are required to attend policy instruction before working with Protected Persons. In the case that this is not possible, the Worker may only serve as an assistant with another trained adult under the stipulation that they attend the next training session or make special arrangements for an overview of the policy with the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator. All Workers are required annually to review this policy, to attend a policy instruction session and to sign a new Participation Covenant Agreement to be kept on file at the church office.

Any applicant or Worker who refuses to comply with any part of these Policies and Procedures will not be permitted to serve Calvary UMC's children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

Screening Procedures for Calvary UMC Staff and Volunteers

All Workers who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults shall be required to complete the following application process that shall include but is not limited to:

Staff persons: All staff persons, age 14 and older, shall be required to complete and provide:

- Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services
- Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check
- FBI Criminal History Report – this step requires fingerprints
- Signed Participation Covenant Agreement (Appendix 2)
- **ALL background checks must be repeated every three (3) years.**

Volunteers: All volunteers who, as part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accept responsibility for a Protected Person or have direct contact with Protected Persons shall be required to complete and provide:

- Application Form (Appendix 1)
- Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance through the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services
- Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check
- Signed Participation Covenant Agreement (Appendix 2)
- FBI Criminal History Report (this step requires fingerprints). If a volunteer has lived in the state of Pennsylvania consecutively for the last 10 years, a notarized affidavit is acceptable (Appendix 3). This Affidavit has been prepared by the Conference's legal counsel.
- Acceptance of Notice Requirement (Disclosure Statement Application). This document declares that the applicant has been informed of and will comply with Pennsylvania law that requires them to inform the church in writing of any arrest, conviction or child abuse report that would prohibit them from working with children.
- **ALL background checks must be repeated every five (5) years.**

The background checks will be initiated and seen only by the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator. Only concerns will be reported to the Pastor, who in turn will decide who the situation will be handled.

Other Groups Using Calvary UMC Facilities

Any outside organization, group(s) or individual(s) who use the facilities of Calvary UMC will be informed of the existence of Calvary UMC's Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures and will be given a copy of the Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures.

Any outside organization, group(s) or individual(s) who use the facilities of Calvary UMC, shall sign the Indemnification and Release Form (Appendix 4) stating that they understand and are in compliance with this policy as appropriate for the Organization's activity.

Any outside organization, group(s) or individual(s) who refuses to comply will not be permitted to use our facilities.

Federal and State Law

The requirements of any and all Federal laws or State laws affecting or relating to employment or child abuse must be complied with, and in any case where there is a conflict between such laws and the procedure outlined in this document, said laws shall prevail and the procedure outlined in the document shall be modified to the extent necessary to eliminate such conflict. This policy is subject to all Federal and/or State laws relating to employment and child abuse.

Documentation and Retention

The following documentation shall be kept in a secure location on church premise.

- Documentation as required under Screening Procedures contained in this policy.

- Incident documentation as required under Reporting Procedures contained in this policy.

An electronic spread sheet (along with a paper copy) will be maintained including names of all staff, volunteers and helpers who work with Protected Persons, dates of training, covenants and other pertinent documents as completed. This file will serve as a reminder/alert for follow-up and renewal requirements and dates.

Destruction of any of these documents requires written authorization of the Calvary UMC Staff Parish Relations Committee. A destruction report shall be prepared, signed, dated and retained.

All information obtained will be kept confidential, secured through the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator and the Pastor of Calvary UMC.

Supervising Procedures for Calvary UMC Staff and Volunteers

Two Adult Rule

A minimum of two (2) adult Workers, who are not related or married to one another, shall be present in any room or area where Protected Persons are participating for ALL church sponsored programming. All adult/child ratios must be followed as outlined in the Adult to Child Ratios section on page six (6).

Where it is impossible to staff two adults in every room, an additional adult must serve as a floater with visual and physical access to all areas. When necessary, visual recording equipment may act as a second volunteer

While mentoring and counseling are encouraged and supported, adults and authority figures should take every precaution to avoid being alone with a Protected Person in inaccessible areas. If a Protected Person requests to speak privately with an Adult, the Adult will ensure that he/she and the Protected Person are visible to others while talking, even though they may not be heard.

When a legal adult has mental challenges that place him/her in a vulnerable position, or is elderly or disabled who might not be able to escape potential abuse, the two-person rule shall apply.

The exception to this rule applies for Ministries of Youth. Before or after ministry events, a Worker may “pick up” or “drop off” a youth at their home provided written permission has been given by the parent.

Volunteer to Child Ratios for On-Campus Ministries/Activities

Preferred ratios to be used as guidelines:

Infants & Toddlers	1 volunteer to 4 infants
2 - 5 years of age	1 volunteer to 5 children
Grade 1 thru Grade 5	1 volunteer to 8 Children

Grade 6 thru Grade 12 1 volunteer to 10 Youth for Sunday School
Grade 7 thru Grade 12 1 volunteer to 8 Youth for Youth Group Events

Safe Environments

No Protected Person(s) will be left unsupervised while attending an activity/ministry at Calvary UMC. In the event that child care services are not provided by Calvary UMC (i.e. retreats, small groups, worship services, etc.), the parent or guardian shall be fully responsible for the supervision of the Protected Persons during the event. Said Protected Person(s) shall remain in the presence of the parent or guardian, and at no time be left alone and unsupervised.

Each room or space where children are being cared for will have a window in the door or the door will be left open. All activities should occur in open view. Should the children's activity be an outdoor program or occur in a setting which makes it difficult to comply with this Policy, the staff person in charge of the activity shall take appropriate measures to make sure that the setting suits the activity, and the children are properly supervised.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Policy

Infants, Toddlers, and Pre-Schoolers

Parents of infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers must sign their Protected Person in upon arrival and out when leaving. Children in our nurseries will be released only to a designated family member age 18 or older. Parents shall provide the church office with any special information regarding a possible child custody dispute where Workers shall pay particular attention to who picks up the child.

Children Grades K – 5th

Parents of all Protected Persons in grades kindergarten through fifth grade must sign their Protected Person in upon arrival and out when leaving.

Parents shall pick up their respective Protected Person no later than ten (10) minutes after the Ministry is over unless special arrangements have been made with the Workers concerned.

Discipline

All interaction regarding discipline needs to carefully consider a child's dignity and self-esteem. Gentleness, respect and understanding must guide all actions and words. Discipline shall be carried out through instruction, training and correction. Physical punishment will not be used.

The following steps are provided as guidelines:

1. Direct teacher intervention and verbal instruction.
2. Verbal correction and instruction given a second time.
3. Give child age-appropriate time out in the classroom.
4. Notify parents.
5. Notify Director of Christian Education if needed.

Off-Site Policies

Advance notice must be given to parents/guardians prior to the event. All activities that take place away from Calvary UMC shall have completed permission forms signed by the parents/guardians.

All participants will have completed a Calvary UMC Health History Form, and the supervising Workers will take copies of this form along on the event.

A ratio of at least one (1) adult for every five (5) youth is recommended. A minimum of one (1) adult for every ten (10) youth will be maintained.

Transportation:

Persons operating motor vehicles transporting Protected Persons must:

- Be at least 22 years old
- Have a valid Pennsylvania driver's license
- Provide proof of insurance

Vehicles used to transport children/youth must have a current Pennsylvania registration and inspection. They must have sufficient seat belt restraints for each passenger. When Workers drive their own vehicle on church sponsored events, the Worker's own auto insurance is the coverage. The conference and/or church insurance are not responsible.

When one vehicle is used for an event, the two-adult rule applies. When multiple vehicles are used for an event, a single Worker may drive if the vehicles travel together. It is strongly recommended that all vehicles travel in a "convoy" for the duration of the event.

Rooming:

Where overnight travel involves male and female group members, at least one (1) adult of each sex shall accompany the group.

At no time will an adult share a bed with a child or youth. (Exception - Family relationship) All adults sharing a room/dormitory/tent with Protected Persons must be the same sex as the children.

Cyber Safety

The internet 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 as with all forms of ministry there are some inherent risks involved with the use of electronic communications. However, following basic Safe Sanctuaries procedures can help to minimize those risks. There is no such thing as privacy in cyberspace. Accordingly, Workers shall comply with the following guidelines:

1. Obtain parental/guardian permission.

Workers shall receive advance parental permission for Protected Persons and personal permission for vulnerable adults in writing for:

- Posting photos of participants on any websites or sending the photos by e-mail or cell phone messages or making videos for any use.
 - E-mailing, Instant Messaging (IM'ing), calling, texting, or sending data to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult by computer, PDA, or cell phone (keep in mind "free" minutes and data plans vary tremendously even with the same carrier); and
 - The sharing of any full name or contact information of a child or youth.
2. Never post easily identifiable information online.
- If you communicate by e-mail, do not use "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.
 - Be cautious when transmitting easily identifiable information like event dates, times, locations, or participants.
 - 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. If someone must know the last name or the mailing address of the individual, have her or him call the church office.
3. Limit individual communications with Protected Persons.
- Conduct any communications in a professional manner.
 - Save all communications you have with children, youth, and vulnerable adults (i.e instant messages (IMs), chat room conversations, e-mails, etc.). An electronic "paper trail" can be important.
 - If you are uneasy about any topic addressed in an e-mail or an e-mail in general, send a blind carbon copy to a parent/guardian (if appropriate) or another trusted adult. Honor privacy, but not secrecy.
 - If abuse is divulged electronically, follow standard reporting procedures.

Reporting Suspected Abuse

All reports of **suspected** abuse for a Protected Person must be taken seriously. Workers having cause to believe that a violation of this policy has occurred or having cause to believe a Protected Person's physical, mental health or welfare has been adversely affected by abuse or neglect by any person shall immediately notify the authorities and the Pastor or Safe Sanctuary Coordinator.

Mandated Reporters

There are fourteen separate categories of individuals who are Mandated Reporters, including all Clergy and all employees/volunteers who, as part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accept responsibility for a Protected Person or have direct contact with Protected

Persons. **EXAMPLES:** Child Care Employees, Sunday School Teachers, Youth Fellowship Volunteers, and Camp Volunteers. **You must personally report the suspected abuse, and you can no longer rely on someone else (for example, the pastor) to make the report.**

Any person may, and should, report suspected abuse of a Protected Person, even if the person is not a Mandated Reporter. These individuals are called Permissive Reporters.

When must you report as a Mandated Reporter?

If you have reasonable cause to suspect a Protected Person is a victim of abuse, a report must be made, without exception. This includes situations where:

- a) you come into contact with a Protected Person that has been abused
- b) an individual makes a specific disclosure to you that an identifiable Protected Person is the victim of abuse
- c) an individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to you that he/she has committed abuse of a Protected Person.

Procedure for Reporting Suspected Abuse (See Appendix 5 for Checklist)

1. Contact the **Pennsylvania Childline and Abuse Registry at 1-800-932-0313** to make the required report. Initial reports can also be filed on the website at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis
2. After a report is made, the Worker shall notify the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator or the Pastor if he or she has not already done so. Otherwise, all information regarding the incident shall be held in strictest confidence.
3. The person reporting the suspected abuse must fill out form PA CY47 to be sent in to the Berks County Children and Youth Services within 48 hours of the oral report to Pennsylvania Childline and Abuse Registry.

Where an imminent threat of continued or additional abuse exists, any Worker with knowledge or information about such abuse shall immediately contact the Pastor or Safe Sanctuary Coordinator and take steps to ensure the safety of the Protected Person. In connection herewith, any needed emergency healthcare shall be provided such as (1) first aid, (2) emergency services, and/or (3) transport to a hospital emergency room. The alleged victim shall be immediately removed from contact with the suspected abuser. The Protected Person's safety and well-being are priority.

Any person who is the subject of the report will be required to refrain from all children, youth, or vulnerable adult activities until the incident report is resolved. In any removal of a person from any children, youth, or vulnerable adult activities, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted. There shall be no presumption of guilt until the incident is resolved.

If the conduct involves the Pastor or another clergy person, it must be reported to the Senior Pastor's Supervisor, the District Superintendent or the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference Bishop.

Even in the event that the allegation concerns activities or persons outside Calvary UMC, procedures shall be implemented. An example of this would be a child telling a teacher about abuse by a relative during the prior year.

Response Plan

A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse of a Protected Person is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse in an activity, the entire staff of that activity shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies.

1. Do not confront the accused abuser with anger and hostility. Treat him/her with dignity, but immediately remove him/her from further involvement with Protected Persons.
2. Immediately report the incident of alleged abuse to the Pennsylvania Childline and Abuse Registry and then Calvary UMC's Pastor or Safe Sanctuary Coordinator.
3. When the suspected source of the abuse is a staff person or volunteer, the pastor will notify the parents of the victim, and take any necessary steps to assure the Protected Person's safety until parents arrive. The safety of the victim must be the church's primary concern.
4. The Pastor will notify United Methodist Conference authorities, the church's insurance agent, and the church's attorney.
5. The Pastor will submit a written report, Report of Suspected Violation of Safe Sanctuary Policy and/or Child Abuse (Appendix 6), to the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.
6. The Director of Communications of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference or his/her designee, is the only person/s authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Pastor. Except as directed above, the reporting Worker should not share with any other person information regarding the alleged child abuse. Under no circumstances should a Worker make any public statements about the report, as this may give rise to a defamation claim.