

Safe Sanctuaries Policies of

Fields Chapel United Methodist Church

If you have any questions or concerns about the Safe Sanctuary Polies for The Chapel, please contact the church office or Rev. Anne Rex.

Fields Chapel United Methodist Church
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The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse 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 as 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 children. The social principles of the United Methodist Church states: "...children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation, and abuse."

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 (From *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church* – 1996 Copyright © 1996 by the United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission. [pp.384-386])

Purpose

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

Statement of Covenant

As a Christian Community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to engage in the ministry of the Gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth as well as workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of paid and volunteer workers; implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; educate our workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults regarding the use of appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and discipline); implement a clearly defined procedure for reporting suspected incidents of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Conclusion

This congregation is committed to demonstrating 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).

**Fields Chapel United Methodist Church
Canton, Georgia
Safe Sanctuary Policy**

Approved by Staff Parish Relations Committee: September 29, 2012

Approved by Administrative Council: September 29, 2012

Submitted to Charge Conference: October 23, 2012

Fields Chapel UMC believes that the spiritual, emotional and physical well being of our children, youth and vulnerable adults is imperative. We must do all that we can to nurture and protect our children, youth and vulnerable adults. This policy is intended to provide a guide for that protection, as well as the protection of our adult workers and the church. This policy is enacted to insure that the parents, members, volunteers and staff of Fields Chapel UMC have a clear understanding of what the policies and procedures are regarding the safety of our children, youth and vulnerable adults. The leadership of Fields Chapel UMC requests the cooperation of the all in our church, as they must abide by the guidelines of this policy.

Policy Standards and General Christian Moral Standard

Staff and volunteers who work in any area of children and youth ministries or with vulnerable adults at Fields Chapel, including but not limited to, Sunday School, Wednesday Evening Programming, Vacation Bible School, Parents Morning Out, are required to adhere to these policies and standards as moral Christians.

Supervision of Children and Youth Workers

The church staff and volunteers who supervise children and youth workers and workers with vulnerable adults are charged with enforcing this policy. Any violation of these policies or persistent failure to follow this policy can result in immediate dismissal, disciplinary action or reassignment to another area of work at the discretion of the Administrative Council and/or Staff Parish Relations Committee. Anyone who suspects this policy is not being enforced should bring it to the attention of the person who is deemed "person in charge" of the specific program or event. This person must take immediate action on this violation. All reports must be brought before the Senior Pastor and/or their designee within 24 hours.

Supervision of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy

The Senior Pastor will appoint the person or committee (staff or volunteer) with the responsibility of the oversight of the Safe Sanctuary Policy. These policies govern all activities held by the church that involve children and youth under the age of 18, any adult with a mental age under 18 or any vulnerable adult.

These policies must be reviewed annually and re-approved by the

Administrative Council and be presented at charge conference. These policies may be altered at any time with the approval of the Administrative and Staff Parish Relations Committee.

Classification of Workers

Fields Chapel UMC classifies its workers as follows:

Our workers are all paid staff and volunteers (designated from here on as **worker**) in roles with a responsibility for, interaction with and access to youth, children and vulnerable adults. A worker must be a minimum of 18 years of age.

Guidelines for Volunteers

All volunteer **workers** must be at least 18 years of age. Youth under the age of 18 may assist with the Children's Ministries, under the leadership of a **worker**, but adherence to the Two Worker Rule is **mandatory**.

All volunteer **workers** must be at least five years older than the children or youth with whom they will be working.

Any person wishing to work with the youth, children or vulnerable adults must have been a member of the church or have been a steady visitor for a minimum of six months before being allowed to volunteer. This policy can be waived only by the Senior Pastor, on a case by case basis, when needed.

Background Checks

Any **worker** working with the youth, children or vulnerable adults of Fields Chapel UMC must undergo a national criminal background check. Workers will not be allowed to chaperone an event off of church grounds until the background check has been completed and the report has been cleared by the Senior Pastor or his/her designee. A **worker** awaiting results may participate with on site activities as long as they are supervised by another **worker**. A new background check should be done at least every other year. The background check shall be reviewed by the Safe Sanctuary Committee and determination of **workers** volunteer status will be decided at that time. The committee has absolute discretion to deny someone if anything found in the background check causes any concern for the health, safety or welfare of our children.

First Aid and CPR Training

Since the safety of our children and youth is a top priority, every **worker** will have the opportunity to be trained in both First Aid and CPR. All paid staff shall be trained in First Aid and CPR and any paid nursery workers shall be certified in infant CPR. There should be at least one person CPR and First Aid certified at all children's and youth activities. Any **worker** supervising off site activities must be trained. . CPR certification is good for two years

Annual Orientation

All **workers** must be trained on Safe Sanctuary policies. The church will hold training classes at least once a year and it is the **worker's** responsibility to sign up for the class. All new **workers** must attend classes at the Safe Sanctuary orientation. The church will provide an orientation and refresher course that will provide information on child, youth and elder abuse and explain any changes made to the Safe Sanctuary Policy. This may or may not be held in conjunction with First Aid and CPR training. All **workers** must take a refresher course every two years.

Two Worker Rule

There must be two **workers** in the room when there is a child, youth or vulnerable adult present. This rule is for the protection of the students as well as the adults.

Floater

This rule allows for only one **worker** to be in a classroom when you have another **worker** floating the hall regularly. When using this rule, the classroom door must remain open at all times. This should only be done if two **workers** are not available.

Married Couples

If a married couple are the **workers** with the same group of children or youth, they are considered as one **worker** and another **worker** or floater is required. Married couples do NOT meet the two person rule.

Signing Children In and Out of Nursery/Classrooms/Activities

Each nursery/classroom/activity for children will have a sign in and out sheet. A parent, or a sibling age 16 or older, must sign their child in and out. If a parent will not be picking up the child, they must indicate who has permission to pick up their child. Proper ID will be required to pick up children. If an adult arrives with children other than theirs, they will be required to sign child/ren in and out.

Classroom Windows

All classrooms will have at least one window in the door. The window must **not** be covered at any time with decorations, etc.

Open Door Counseling

Any one-on-one counseling session with a child or youth will be done with the door open. If at all possible, it should be done

Transportation

Transportation to and from activities held at the church is not the church's responsibility. Church approved volunteers may provide transportation

to and from activities held away from the church. If there is only one vehicle, there must be two adults **workers** present. When there is an offsite trip, there must be at least one adult **worker** of each gender represented. Youth will not be allowed to drive other youth or children or themselves. Church approved volunteers must have a valid driver's license and an insurance card on file in the Church office.

Sleeping Arrangements

On church sponsored overnight trips, where motel- type rooms are used, all youth and children should be assigned their own same-sex rooms and adult **workers** will be assigned their own same-sex rooms. The adult rooms should be in between the youth/children rooms if at all possible. The adults should check on the youth/children at random times throughout the night.

Parent and Family Education and Communication

The approval of this policy will be communicated to the church at large with special emphasis on communicating to all parents of our children and youth. Copies of the policy will be available for all parents and other interested parties. The policy will also appear on the church's web site. A copy of the policy will be given to all new members. Any revisions to the policy must be communicated to the congregation as soon as possible.

From time to time educational events will be made available to parents and other interested parties. These events will provide information on the Safe Sanctuary Policy, child abuse and any other information that will enhance parenting skills.

Parents will be provided with advance notice of all regular scheduled and special youth and children's activities. Written permission will be required for participation in activities that are not on church grounds.

Websites, Photos and E-mail

E-mail communication is becoming more and more important. E-mail from adults sent to youth and children should be limited to information related to youth and children ministries. It should not be used to pass along jokes, etc. E-mail addresses of youth and children should be protected and not given out. Any **photos on web sites**, posted in class rooms or posted on bulletin boards should not identify individuals. If allergy signs are posted, they should not show the names. Written permission must be received from parents before any photo of children or youth is posted on a church sponsored web site, in classrooms or on bulletin boards. Public Domain pictures, magazines, newspapers do not follow this rule.

Dismissal of Volunteers

Any worker can be dismissed or removed immediately from working with children if, in the event and sole discretion of the committee, Pastor, or Children's Director, the worker's service is deemed to not be in the best interest of our children.

Reporting Abuse

Fields Chapel UMC regards any form of abuse and evidence thereof as unacceptable and has a strict policy regarding the reporting of such abuse. This is a serious criminal allegation and will be taken seriously. If a volunteer becomes aware of an abuse allegation, he or she must report it to a Fields Chapel UMC staff member **IMMEDIATELY**. If there is not a staff member on the grounds, then the Senior Pastor should be contacted at home or his or her designee must be contacted. Please **do not** hesitate to contact a staff member if you feel there is abuse occurring. For ALL allegations, a report **MUST** be made by the Reporter by phone to the Department of Family and Children's Services in the county of the victim's residence. A copy of the report must be turned into the Senior Pastor within twenty four hours (see attached). If any further reporting is needed, the Senior Pastor and/or designee will handle the future reporting, including a report to the District Superintendent and law enforcement. Should the press or TV become involved, only an approved church spokesperson should respond. It is better not to make any response. Do not try to interview the victim. Leave that process to the proper professional law enforcement official, who is better qualified.

The following is a definition of child abuse supplied by The Georgia Department of Family and Child Services. The same definitions apply to elder abuse.

"What is considered child abuse and neglect?"

Physical abuse is injury to a child under age 18, by a parent or caretaker, which results in bruises, welts, fractures, burns, cuts or internal injuries.

Neglect is the failure of the parent or caretaker to see that the child is adequately supervised, fed, clothed, housed or provided medical care.

Sexual abuse occurs when a parent or other adult uses a child under age 18 for sexual stimulation."

Vulnerable Adults

While much of this policy addresses the need to protect our children and youth, Fields Chapel recognizes that abuse of impaired and older adults is a major concern. Many older adults are also subject to financial abuse. We must be vigilant for signs of abuse in our adult membership and report any suspected abuse, following the process outlined above. The local Department of Family and Child Services has a division with responsibility for supervising elder care.

Six Month Implementation

With the approval of this policy as of September 29, 2012, Fields Chapel will work to implement all aspects of this policy by March 29, 2013.