

Safe Sanctuary Policy
Bartlett United Methodist Church

I. OUR THEOLOGICAL TASK

“Then [Jesus] took a little child and put [him] among them; and taking [her] in his arms, he said to them, ‘Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.’” (Mark 9:36-37) 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)

The Church, above all institutions, is called to welcome and nurture the child. Our goal is to maintain a safe, secure, loving place where children may grow, and where those who care for them may administer to their needs in responsible ways.

The 1996 General Conference approved a resolution that calls upon local churches and Annual Conferences to institute policies and procedures to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in our churches and church-related activities. We, in the Memphis Conference, accept the nature of this call and seek to expand it to include all forms of child abuse that could be possible in these settings.

We uphold that to report abuse is to be a witness to the world of the love and justice of God and fully recognize that reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. Simply, to report abuse can help to stop existing abuse and prevent further abuse.

As caring Christians, we are also committed to protect and advocate for children, youth and 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 safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, youth, and adults in which they are protected from abuse.

Additionally, as we move into caring for the abused child, the church community must also be intentional in embracing the family system as we call upon them to look at their wounds and the wounding of their child. Further, we recognize the grace that God gives in upholding Christian community; and, we will look for grace-filled ways of dealing with both those who have been victimized and the accused.

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church. (The Memphis Annual Conference Safe Sanctuary Policy, 2005)

Purpose

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

Statement of Covenant

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 of our children and youth as well as all of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident 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

In all of our ministries with children and youth, 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)

COMMON MYTHS ABOUT CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

MYTH: Sexual abuse is about sex.

FACT: Sexual abuse is about power.

MYTH: Child sexual abuse is rare.

FACT: Recent research indicates that 1 in 3–4 girls and 1 in 6–10 boys will be sexually abused by the age of 18.

MYTH: Children under the age of 10 are safe.

FACT: More than 1/3 of the reports are children five years or younger. Age six is the average of onset, with an average duration of 1-4 years for the abuse to continue.

MYTH: If children are taught to avoid “dangerous strangers” they will not be sexually abused.

FACT: 85-90% of offenders are known to the child. Children have been molested by mothers, fathers, siblings, grandparents, adoptive and step-relatives, babysitters, neighbors, aunts, uncles, teachers, clergy, and coaches. Any adult or older child may molest a child.

MYTH: Sex offenders are weird, pathetic, violent older men who are alcoholic and can't keep a job. Molesters are sexually depraved or homosexual and retarded or crazy.

FACT: Molesters usually appear normal in most ways. Sex crimes have been committed in all racial, religious and ethnic groups and at all socioeconomic levels. Children are abused in rural, urban and suburban settings. The majorities of sex offenders are heterosexual males and have access to sexual relationships with adults.

MYTH: If a child “consents,” they must have liked it; if they don't say “no” it's not abuse.

FACT: Sexual abuse is never the fault or responsibility of the child. The offender bears the entire responsibility for the crime, whatever form it takes. Most sexual abuse occurs not by force but by trickery, bribery, manipulation and misuse of authority.

MYTH: Child sexual abuse is usually a one-time violent act that involves intercourse.

FACT: Child sexual abuse is the exploitation of a child for the sexual stimulation of an adult or any significantly older person. It may include obscene phone calls, exposure of genitals or breasts, showing a child pornographic material, fondling, masturbation, oral/anal/vaginal intercourse or attempts, and exploitation of children through prostitution and/or the production of pornography.

MYTH: If a molester is caught and he/she promises to stop, he/she generally will.

FACT: Offenders almost never seek treatment to stop the abuse voluntarily. They may stop abusing the child with whom they were caught, but often another child is sought out. Abuse almost always continues in some form unless a report is made and the offender is in treatment with an agency or therapist who have expertise in working with molesters and issues of victimization.

MYTH: Most children will forget the abuse if adults don't remind them.

FACT: Children usually do not forget. They may try to hide their hurt, confusion and anger because they believe the adults in their lives don't want to hear about it or it will hurt their feelings. They may interpret adult silence as blame or anger. Often very young children feel responsible and guilty about the abuse. It is very important that the victims, offender and non-abusive parent or parents be given the opportunity for therapy and support from a qualified agency or therapist.

- MYTH: Children do not tell the “secret” only if they have been threatened with violence.
- FACT: Children may not tell because of fear of violence to themselves or someone they love. They also don’t tell because they fear blame and the possible breakup of a family. Children may feel embarrassed, guilty and responsible because they were unable to say “no” or tell earlier. They feel that this tremendous hurt and betrayal is “something they just have to live with”. A sexually abused child may have a difficult time trusting any of the adults in their lives. Telling is a very major and scary step for a child and they should be given support and consideration if they choose to do so.
- MYTH: Talking about “touching” and sexual abuse will make parents and children uncomfortable with normal affection.
- FACT: All people need physical contacts. Child sexual abuse should not be confused with contacts between an adult and child that are fond, nurturing or playful expressions of love. Sexually abusive contacts are for the benefit of the molester, not the child. Healthy, warm and nurturing touching respects and recognizes the needs and feelings of the child.
- MYTH: Children make up stories about sexual abuse.
- FACT: Children very rarely make up stories of exploitation. Children speak from their own experience and cannot make up information unless they are exposed to it. If a child indicates either through direct disclosure or you have “reasonable cause” to believe that abuse has occurred, it is always best to resolve doubt in favor of the child. Seek professional help and discuss your suspicion. Seek out agencies in the community with expertise in working with abused children and their families.
- MYTH: My child could never be sexually abused.
- FACT: All children are vulnerable to sexual exploitation because of their innocence, trust in adults, size, and eagerness, to please and need for affection.

The child victim is **NEVER** responsible for causing the abuse and is **NEVER** to be blamed for the abuse. A child is **NEVER** capable of consent to abusive behavior, either legally or morally. Child sexual abuse is **ALWAYS** wrong and is solely the responsibility of the abuser.

Special Guidelines for Listening to Children

Most often the abuser is someone the child knows and trusts. Children who are being abused have often been convinced not to tell about their “secret.” The abuser will often make the child feel special by giving them lots of gifts, saying things to make them feel special, and by showing them lots of attention.

Boys often don’t tell because they feel ashamed they could not stop the abuse. Some boys might feel they are homosexual if the abuser was a male. The public hears more about females being abused, but the reality is that cases involving boys are just not reported as often.

Once children decide to tell, their first statements may be incomplete, and they may only hint to see the reaction of the individual they are trusting with their secret. They want the hurting to stop, but they are afraid of what else will happen to them. If a child does trust you enough to tell you about an incident, your initial reaction is vital to the child's ability to continue being open about their situation.

If a child reports abuse to you:

- **Keep calm** to let the child know that you are not angry with them. They will not be able to understand that you are angry at the situation and not them.
- **Believe the child** since in most situations children do not lie about sexual abuse. (Be alert to the possibility of the child being "coached" when parental custody is known to be in dispute.)
- **Give positive messages** such as "I'm proud of you telling."
- **Explain** to the child that she or he is not to blame.
- **Respect** the child's right to privacy.
- **Report** the information to the appropriate individuals.
- **Don't panic or overreact** when the child is talking about what has happened. Remember, the child is telling you because he or she trusts you, and they need you to be calm.
- **Don't pressure the child** to talk or avoid talking about the abuse. Let the child talk at his or her own pace. Forcing information from the child can be harmful.
- **Don't confront the offender (unless intervention is needed to stop the abuse)**, as this is the job for those individuals in authority.
- **Don't blame** the child.

Standards of Conduct for Supervisors of Children and Youth

Verbal Communication

1. Verbal Communication is to be instructional, respectful, encouraging and friendly. Even when verbal communication must be authoritative, raised voices are generally not necessary. Permissible uses of raised voices include:

- Calling names of children to get their attention, either outside or in a noisy environment
- Calling names of children to determine their whereabouts
- Warnings of physical danger
- Giving instructions on a playing field or in a noisy environment
- Cheers of encouragement

2. Name calling, making fun, yelling, screaming, threatening, frightening, harassing or otherwise verbally demeaning or assaulting children are forbidden.

3. Profanity, cursing, degrading jokes, and the use of slang derogatory terms, or racial or sexual innuendoes are forbidden.

4. Adult supervisors, chaperones and counselors are to immediately intervene if negative verbal situations occur between and among youth, children and adults.

Physical Contact and Touching

1. Actions of physical affection toward children and youth shall only be in the light and in the presence of others, never in the dark and when alone. Using good judgment, appropriate touching includes:

- Brief hugs of greeting, congratulations, encouragement or consolation
- Handshakes for greeting and congratulations
- Walking hand-in-hand
- Congratulatory and assuring pats on the back
- An arm around the shoulder

2. All other forms of touching are to be avoided. Any touching that involves even the slightest possible sexual connotation is forbidden.

3. Touching in anger, disgust, or aggression is forbidden, as is tickling, hitting, slapping, or shaking a child or youth.

4. It is recognized that the physical needs and emotional nurturing of infants and toddlers require more touching and holding than would be appropriate for older children and youth.

5. Adults, supervisors and counselors shall immediately intervene when inappropriate physical activity occurs between and among children, youth and adults.

Special Considerations for Youth Ministry

Youth counselors, supervisors and chaperones have the added responsibility of providing sufficient oversight and exercising the necessary authority and mature judgment so as to ensure that the following does not occur:

1. Exploitive (physical, verbal or otherwise) behavior by older and more powerful youth, or group of youths, toward a younger, less powerful youth, or group of youths, of either the same or opposite sex.
2. Unsupervised circumstances or inappropriate overnight accommodations that facilitate improper physical activity between youths of the opposite sex.

Youth counselors, supervisors and chaperones shall intervene immediately when this form of forbidden activity is observed, suspected or foreseen.

Indicators of Child Abuse

Children suffering abuse often will not tell anyone about it. Therefore, it is important to be able to recognize other signs of abuse. The following characteristics may be indicators of abuse, although they are not necessarily proof. Individually, any one of the indicators may be signs of a number of other more or less serious problems. When these indicators are observed in a child, they can be considered as warnings and lead you to look into the situation further.

Possible Signs of Physical Abuse

- 1. Hostile and aggressive behavior toward others*
- 2. Fearfulness of parents and/or other adults*
- 3. Destructive behavior toward self, others, and/or property*
- 4. Inexplicable fractures or bruises inappropriate for child's developmental stage*
- 5. Burns, facial injuries, pattern of repetitious bruises*

Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse

- 1. Exhibits severe depression and/or withdrawal*
- 2. Exhibits severe lack of self-esteem*
- 3. Failure to thrive*
- 4. Threatens or attempts suicide*
- 5. Speech and/or eating disorders*
- 6. Goes to extremes to seek adult approval*
- 7. Extreme passive/aggressive behavior patterns*

Possible Signs of Neglect

- 1. Failure to thrive*
- 2. Pattern of inappropriate dress for climate*
- 3. Beggars or steals food; chronic hunger*
- 4. Depression*
- 5. Untreated medical conditions*
- 6. Poor hygiene*

Possible Sign of Sexual Abuse

- 1. Unusually advanced sexual knowledge and/or behavior for child's age and developmental stage*
- 2. Depression – cries often for no apparent reason*
- 3. Promiscuous behavior*
- 4. Runs away from home and refuses to return*
- 5. Difficulty walking or sitting*
- 6. Bruised/bleeding in vaginal or anal areas*
- 7. Exhibits frequent headaches, stomachaches, extreme fatigue*
- 8. Sexually transmitted diseases*

In addition to these indicators, children who have been sexually abused at church may exhibit some of the following:

- 1. Unusual nervousness or anxiety about being left in the nursery or Sunday school class*
- 2. Reluctance to participate in church activities that were previously enthusiastically approached*
- 3. Comments such as "I don't want to be alone with _____" in reference to a child care worker or Sunday school teacher*
- 4. Nightmares including a childcare worker or teacher as a frightening character*
- 5. Unexplained hostility toward a childcare worker or teacher*

Child abuse occurs every minute of every day, and it occurs in every community. Child abuse occurs in every economic, racial, ethnic, religious, or other demographic group. No segment of our society is immune. As Christians, we are called to be vigilant in protecting the children in our midst and in preventing child abuse in the community of faith. (Safe Sanctuaries, Melton, p. 18)

SIGNS OF AN ABUSING PARENT

- Seems to trust no one, especially the system. They isolate themselves and, therefore, have no support, which allows the abuse to escalate.
- Refuses or else offers farfetched or contradictory explanations about the child's injuries
- Reacts extremely to child's injuries by either overreacting (becomes hostile when questioned) or underreacting (seems unconcerned about child's condition); or may blame another person
- Reacts with excessive impatience to child's crying
- Seldom touches or looks at the child (The parent is not very loving.)
- Lacks control
- Expects or demands behavior beyond child's years
- Appears isolated from normal human relationships, such as friends, family, relatives, neighbors, and community groups
- Consistently fails to keep appointments, discourages social contact, or never attends or participates in school or other community events
- Appears to be misusing alcohol or drugs
- Can never be located

Information provided by The Exchange Club Family Center, 2180 Union Avenue Phone: 276-2200

Reporting of and Response to Abuse/Alleged Abuse **Reporting should be done by the person who sees or suspects the abuse**

Incidents of abuse or reasonably suspected cases of abuse against children, youth, or adults with special needs shall make the following contacts and begin the following documentation within 24 hours of the report or complaint. Whether allegedly perpetrated by individuals, volunteer or staff, associated with the church or with an outside group in relationship with the church incidents or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse **shall be reported to the director of the pertinent program and ministerial staff, such a senior minister or associate minister.**

The pertinent program director/minister will then:

- Notify the parents of the victim and take any necessary steps to assure the child's safety until his/her parents arrive
- Treat the accused abuser with dignity, but immediately remove him/her from further involvement with children or youth
- Contact the appropriate state agency (Department of Human Services and/or Children's Services) and local law enforcement
- Inform the Pastor
- Document all facts and circumstances of the incident in question with cooperation of the reporting person.
- Document all steps taken in the handling of the incident and/or report

The Senior Pastor shall report any reasonably suspected incident of abuse to the church legal counsel. The church legal counsel will notify the liability insurer for the church, if the person being suspected as an abuser possibly did so as a staff member or volunteer in behalf of the Church. The Senior Pastor shall be the sole spokesperson for the Church in-so-far as media inquiries are concerned. The Conference Director of Communications will be consulted for the purpose of writing a proper statement regarding the circumstances under investigation.

An in-depth investigation shall be carried out by the civil authorities rather than by church personnel.

Above all else, the confidentiality of all persons involved shall be safeguarded.

The incident report forms are found in Bartlett UMC's Safe Sanctuary Policy.

The Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS) is mandated by law to investigate within 72 hours reports of suspected child abuse and neglect. Immediately report your suspicions by calling: 543-7120

Include in the report :

Name, age, and address of child

Name and address of parents or guardians (if known)

Nature of suspected abuse

Identity of the offender (if known)

Persons reporting suspected cases of abuse are protected against civil or criminal liability if the report was made in good faith.

Persons reporting abuse may either remain anonymous or not.

Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth

1. During a church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children or youth, no fewer than two adults(***non-related***) shall be present at all times. Preferably, if family members teach the same class, a third adult will be in the room. This is the “Two-Adult Rule.” (***see attached adult/child ratio***) ***If this is not possible there will be a floater, walking the halls and checking in occasional or an assistant as described in 4b.***
2. First aid and CPR training will be offered at the church on an annual basis for all church workers with children and youth. We encourage you to avail yourself of this opportunity. ***For all youth and children activities, there will be a least one person trained in CPR and First Aid.***
3. All workers with children and youth, whether volunteer or paid, will be required to attend an annual training session in which they are informed of our policies, appropriate steps to report an incident of child abuse, and given information about child abuse. At this time, volunteers will have an opportunity to complete their application and fill out appropriate forms. Before starting to work with children/youth, those who do not attend will be contacted and required to attend a make-up training session.
4. **MINIMUM AGE** - The following standards for Authority Figures (whether volunteers or staff) are designed to separate Authority Figures from the group they are serving by age or enough years to reinforce recognition of the Authority Figure’s role.
 - a. **AUTHORITY FIGURES** – the primary leaders of youth and children’s activities.
 - i. To work with youth (grades 6th and above), the Authority Figure must be a minimum of 22 years of age.
 - ii. To work with children (infant – 5th grade), the Authority Figure must be a minimum of 18 years of age.
 - b. **ASSISTANTS** – persons who lend aid to the Authority Figure and act at the direction of the Authority Figure, including volunteers. Whether working with youth or children, Assistants must be:
 - i. A minimum of 12 years of age and 4 years older than the participants; and
 - ii. In the judgment of a staff member, be competent to assist in the activity.
 - iii. An Assistant may not be counted as an adult in the child/adult ratios.
5. All **lead** volunteers must have been members of this church at least 6 months.
6. Each room set aside for children and youth should have a door with a window, a half door with the top part open, a hall window, or leave the door open. Windows should not be covered with posters and other teaching materials.
7. At any “one on one” guidance sessions with children or youth, the door of the room should remain open for the entire time. Ideally, it will be conducted at a time when others are nearby. “One on one” guidance sessions should be done by the paid program staff person working with that age group. (***See attached page for explanation of “counselor” and “spiritual guide.”***)
8. In advance, persons planning ministries with children and youth will think through the advantages and disadvantages of the settings in which they will be with the children/youth, whether this be indoor, outdoor, classroom, ball fields, gym, bus, hotel, etc. Plans must be made for adequate supervision. ***Please see policies on hotel and transportation.***

ALSO, safety and supervision should be assessed regarding the use of equipment (such as vigilance when children are using playground equipment).
9. Parents will ALWAYS have advance notice and full information regarding events in which their children will be participating.
“Volunteer Application”, “Covenant Statement”, “Volunteer Disclosure Form” and “Background Check” forms are available from the Assistant Office Manager. All forms are to be completed and returned to the Assistant Office Manager’s office.

ADULT CHILD RATIO FOR ALL CHURCH SPONSORED ACTIVITIES

Tennessee State Codes (**note for our Safe Sanctuaries Policy, where there is one adult we have 2**)

- Infants (non-handicapped and not walking) – 1 Adult to 4 Infants
- Toddlers (walking, non-handicapped) – 1 Adult to 6 Toddlers
- 2 years of age – 1 Adult to 7 Children
- 3 years of age – 1 Adult to 9 Children
- 4 years of age – 1 Adult to 13 Children
- 5 years of age – 1 Adult to 16 Children
- 6 years of age and above – 1 Adult to 20 Children

Mixed Age Groups:

- 6 wks to 30 months – 1 to 5 • 2 to 3 year old – 1 to 8
- 2 to 4 year old – 1 to 8 • 2½ to 3 year old – 1 to 9
- 2½ to 5 year old – 1 to 11 • 3 to 5 year old – 1 to 13
- 4 to 5 year old – 1 to 16 • 5 to 12 year old – 1 to 20

Melton, Joy. *Safe Sanctuaries for Youth: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries*. Nashville: Discipleship Resources, 2003.

ROOMING

a. In a dormitory [cabin type] setting:

- At least two adults of the same gender as the residents should be assigned to each room of youth or children. Follow “Adult/Child Ratios” to determine when to add additional adults.
- Adults should not share the same bed with a youth or child under any circumstances.
- Adults should not be alone with a youth or child in a room.

b. In a motel/hotel setting:

- Select a hotel with rooms opening to the interior (i.e. a closed hallway) of the building. Where possible, select adjoining rooms on a single hallway.
- When two adults cannot be assigned to a room housing youth, the youth should be roomed separately from the adults. If adjoining rooms are available with doors that can be left in the open position, a single adult in each of the adjoining rooms is acceptable.
- An adult should not share a bed with a child/youth.
- Where adults need to be assigned to separate rooms, it is recommended that one adult room be located between every two youth rooms on the hall.
- Adults should develop a rotating schedule allowing for the hallway to be monitored throughout the night.
- If room checks are needed, they should involve two adults of the same gender as the room residents.

TRANSPORTATION

a. Traveling to or from programmed events:

- All drivers should be screened in the same manner as other leadership for an event including a review of their motor vehicle record.
- When private vehicles are used to transport children and youth for programmed church related events, leaders should ensure that appropriate insurance is being maintained by both the church and the private driver.
- All drivers of church vehicles must be 25 years of age or older.
- Where possible, it is recommended that two adults be placed in each vehicle or the vehicles teamed in minimum groups of 2 that stay together at all times.
- On bus trips, whenever possible adults should not share the same seat as the youth/child.
- It should be requested of the trustees or bus committee that they establish safety policies and guidelines for the operation of church owned vehicles and that they should be strictly followed at all times. (Such as seat belts for all persons and car seats/booster seats when required.)
- For every trip each child and youth shall have a regular permission slip from the parents/guardian, signed. A medical slip shall be on file for each child or youth. In the absence of a regular permission slip and yearly notarized permission/medical slip, the church staff person should call a parent or relative to pick up the child.

b. Transporting Children and Youth to and from home:

It is often out of the pastor, children’s or youth leaders control as to the manner and procedures by which children or youth arrive for and depart local church events. It is, however, likely that these persons may occasionally be asked to drive a child or youth. We offer the following guidelines:

- Church related staff should make every effort to not transport a youth or child unless a second adult is in the vehicle with them.
- Call the child's parents as you leave, state the time you are leaving and when you will be there (they know how long it takes to get to their home), then as you leave, your last volunteer or staff can leave. When you drop the child off, walk them to the door and recognize the time. Also, keep a log book of your mileage.

COUNSELING

- a. By counseling we do not mean counseling by a licensed professional. That technical counseling should only be done by one who is trained and licensed. We are talking about counseling in the Christian tradition better defined as Spiritual guidance or pastoral care. This includes skills such as those of listening, encouragement and compassion.
- b. Open-Door and Visual Access Counseling
At any counseling session with children, youth or adults the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session or be held in a room that has clear visual and physical access. Ideally, the session will be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance. Counseling sessions conducted behind closed doors are a breeding ground for false allegations of abuse. Closed doors also make it too easy for the abuser to have the privacy and isolation he or she needs to carry out abusive acts. When someone is troubled and seeks counseling, it is critical to resist the temptation to meet in secret, even if the child, youth or adult makes that request. (Melton, 2003, pg. 41)
- c. Limited Counseling Sessions
Whenever someone seeks counseling, it is important to determine in the initial meeting if you are actually qualified to address the needs effectively. If you do not believe you are sufficiently qualified, refer the member to another counselor. In the event you do agree to counsel them, it may be prudent to agree to a limited number of sessions (two or three) and then refer the member to another counselor if the problems have not been resolved. In this way, if you cannot successfully help the member, you will at least not unduly delay the counseling process with someone else. (Melton, 2003, pg. 41)

INTERPERSONAL BOUNDARIES

Youth ministry [more so than children's ministry] can be described by many adjectives, but the first one is almost always relational. Youth [and many children] get involved, and stay involved, with ministries because the ministries offer opportunities to experience relationships with peers and adults that are healthy, both physically and spiritually. Whether they can articulate this or not, the youth [and children] want and need to see good examples from the adult leaders of appropriate ways to relate to others. Adults who model respectful and nurturing behaviors that do not interfere with another's privacy provide these types of good examples. The youth [and children] follow the lead of the adults in this regard; therefore, it is important for the adult workers to be clear about appropriate behaviors. Adult workers must be attentive to:

- a. appropriate dress codes [It is suggested that your group adopt dress codes that address types of swimsuits, shirts, etc. that can and cannot be worn at any group function.],
- b. appropriate use of language,
- c. appropriate demonstrations of affection and encouragement. A good rule of thumb for adult leaders is to never initiate a hug and to always be the one to end the hug. (Melton, 2003, pg. 37)

VISITING AT YOUTH AND CHILDREN'S WORKERS HOME

- a. Follow the two adult rule (non-related adults)
- b. Suggestions:
 - i. If youth or children "drop by" you can visit outside in the front yard, tell them you will meet them at a local restaurant or have them go recruit another adult to be present.
 - ii. Educating youth and children of these requirements before they "drop by" is most beneficial. This way they either recruit another adult ahead of time or call you to have you meet them at a local restaurant.

Age-Level Characteristics

– Knowing what is appropriate for each age level enhances the learning by our students. Each level has its own unique aspects that when they are acknowledged and planned for, produces more learning and less discipline problems. Here are some sample ideas, more can be found in curriculum resources and educational textbooks.

Ages 3-6:

Moral Development: Preschoolers are very “me-oriented.” They are the center of their own worlds. Their entire view of right and wrong – along with their faith – is based upon what influential models (such as parents and teachers) tell them.

Cognitive Level: Preschoolers’ play is symbolic of real life.

Ages 6-8:

Moral Development: For younger children, the moral code is “an eye for an eye.” If they are pinched, they pinch back. Personal values are rooted in a “law and order” approach. Things that benefit young children are almost always seen as right, whereas harmful things are almost always viewed as wrong. The world, like their faith, is black and white.

Cognitive Level: Young children think in concrete terms about the ideas and concepts they are learning. They need help understanding symbolic or abstract ideas.

Ages 9-12:

Moral Development: Children at this age begin to see shades of gray in their world. They question authority more and understand that individual values can impact the lives of others. They also begin to understand that doing “wrong things” means more than just “getting into trouble” or facing punishment from parents or teachers. Faith becomes a working, personal faith.

Cognitive Level: Older children continue to think in concrete terms, although by the end of childhood they can more readily understand abstract concepts.

Ages 13-15:

Moral Development: Adolescence is a time of accelerated moral development. Youth begin to face complex moral questions. Often they feel a great deal of struggle between what their family has taught and what peers are telling them. A strong sense of right and wrong develops, but deciding which to do puts them in constant dilemmas. Youth of this age are vulnerable to predators because they are so willing to follow those who will affirm them. Status and self-identity in relation to peer groups are major issues.

Cognitive Development: At this age youth begin to think in more abstract terms and the desire to explore concepts and ideas accelerates. Questioning of concepts and ideals is common.

Ages 16-18:

Moral Development: These years see the continued struggle between the moral codes learned in childhood and the moral codes of the peer group. Rebellion can lead to choices that place these youth in serious circumstances.

Cognitive Development: The ability to think abstractly is strong, though sometimes set aside to accommodate the peer group. Individual creativity blossoms with encouragement.

GROUP	TRAINING REQUIRED	BACKGROUND CHECK REQUIRED	VOLUNTEER APPLICATION	COPY OF POLICY AND SIGNED COVENANT	SIGNED AGREEMENT	CPR FIRST AID TRAINING
Office Staff	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	N/A
Program Staff	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes
Custodial/Maintenance	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	No
KDO-Preschool	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes
Nursery	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	N/A	Yes
*Volunteers	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	No
Outside Groups	No	No	No	No	Yes	No

Individual work areas (preschool, kdo, youth ministries, etc.) may have additional requirements.

*Volunteers are not required to have the CPR-First Aid training, but if there is not a staff person available for the ministry, then the staff person in charge is responsible for having someone with CPR-First Aid training at the event. For all sports, when the program staff is not available, it is important to have someone there who is trained in CPR/First Aid. This may be done in conjunction with the other groups participating in that particular sport.

Please note that before any person can serve as a volunteer they must complete the required forms.

Volunteer Application-Church History and Ministry Experience

Participation Covenant Statement-every year

List of Reference-Form for Reference Check

Background Check every three years

Participation Covenant-signed by volunteers-every year

Statement of Agreement-outside groups

Disclosure Form

These forms are located in the Assistant Office Manager's office and may be gotten through a staff member .

As a part of our concern for all of our staff volunteers, the church wants to be sensitive and caring to any of you who may have been victims of childhood abuse. Please contact our Counseling Center or one of the pastors if we can help you. Of course, all such contacts will be handled in a confidential manner. Your acknowledgement of being a victim would not in itself prevent you from serving as a volunteer in ministry to children, youth, or adults with special needs.

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION
Bartlett United Methodist Church

Name: _____

Social Security # _____ Date of Birth (mo/day/year) _____

Driver's License # _____ State _____

Address: _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____ How long at this address? _____

Previous Address (if lived at current address less than 3 years): _____

_____ How long at "Previous Address"? _____

Daytime phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Occupation: _____

Employer: _____

Current job responsibilities and schedule: _____

Previous work experience: _____

Previous volunteer experience:

Church membership where? _____ How long? _____

Special interests, hobbies, and skills: _____

In what areas are you interested in volunteering? _____

What time commitment can you make? _____

Can you make a one-year commitment to this volunteer role? _____

Do you carry homeowners or other personal liability insurance? Yes No

Why would you like to volunteer as a worker with children and/or youth? _____

_____ What qualities do you have that would help you work with children and/or youth?

_____ Would you report abuse if you witnessed it? Yes No

Page 2 Volunteer Application Policy

The Church's policy is no corporal punishment. Will you abide by that? Yes No

Have you ever been charged, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, and other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violations)? ___ Yes ___ No

If yes, please explain fully: _____

Have you ever been reported for child abuse or neglect? ___ Yes ___ No

If so, what and when? _____

Was it substantiated? Yes No

References: Please list three personal references (people who are not related to you by blood or marriage) and provide a complete address and phone information for each. References are confidential.

1. Name: _____
Address: _____
Daytime phone: _____
Evening phone: _____
Relationship to reference: _____

2. Name: _____
Address: _____
Daytime phone: _____
Evening phone: _____
Relationship to reference: _____

3. Name: _____
Address: _____
Daytime phone: _____
Evening phone: _____
Relationship to reference: _____

CPR Training ___ yes (year completed _____) ___ no

First Aid Training ___ yes (year completed _____) ___ no

I am ___ adult

I am ___ student ___ age ___ current grade _____ School

By signing this form, I am affirming that the above statements I have made are true and factual to the best of my knowledge; and I am granting permission for all persons, organizations, or agencies, such as the Department of Human Services or state law enforcement, to be contacted for the purpose of conducting a criminal records check for the expressed purpose of service screening.

Signature of Applicant

FORM FOR REFERENCE CHECK

Applicant name: _____

Reference name: _____

Reference address: _____

Reference phone: _____

1. What is your relationship to the applicant?
2. How long have you known the applicant?
3. In what capacity?
4. How well do you know the applicant?
5. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children and/or youth?
6. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to adults?
7. How would you feel about having the applicant as a volunteer worker with your child and/or youth?
8. Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with children and/or youth? If so, please describe.
9. Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been convicted of a crime? If so, please describe.

How would you rate him/her in the following areas?

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Do Not Know
Personal habits					
Character					
Morals					
Compassion for those in need					
Responsible to complete commitments					
Emotional stability					
Christian maturity					
Receives constructive criticism well					
Health					

Reference inquiry completed by: _____

Signature

Date

PARTICIPATION COVENANT STATEMENT

The congregation of Bartlett United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) shall volunteer to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.
2. Adult survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to volunteer in some capacity to work with children or youth is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with one of our church pastors before accepting an assignment.
3. All lead/adult volunteers involved with children or youth of our church must have been members of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
4. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times so that no adult is ever alone with children or youth. After an emergency situation in which an adult had to be alone with a child or youth, the volunteer will contact the supervisor who will document the report.
5. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
6. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate and all witnessed warning signs of child abuse or neglect. This is in following Bartlett's procedures on Reporting an Incident.

Please circle your answer for each of the following questions:

1. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth? Yes No
2. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "Two-Adult Rule?" Yes No
3. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to abide by the six-month rule before beginning a volunteer assignment? Yes No
4. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training/education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment? Yes No
5. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor? Yes No
Will you report witnessed warning signs of child abuse/neglect? Yes No
6. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to discuss with a pastor of this congregation your experience, if any, as a survivor of child abuse? Yes No N/A (Answering "yes" does not automatically disqualify you from working with children or youth.)
7. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to inform a pastor of this congregation if you have ever been convicted of child abuse? Yes No
8. I will abide by the disciplinary procedures as I received in training today. Yes No

I have read this **Participation Covenant**, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Applicant's signature

Date

Print full name

Bartlett United Methodist Church

Statement of Agreement for Outside Groups in Relationship with BUMC

As a representative of _____, I am aware of and have read the attached Safe Sanctuary Policy held by Bartlett United Methodist Church. Because our organization works with children, youth, and/or special needs adults; and because we meet on or in Bartlett United Methodist Church facilities, we agree to adhere to this statement of policy in *at least* these three actions:

1. We will educate the adult leaders of our organization about the prevalence, forms, signs, and indicators of child abuse and we will train the adult leaders of our organization in the prevention of child abuse.
2. We will provide documentation that explains when and how such education and training is accomplished.
3. We will observe the “two-adult rule” outlined in this policy statement during all of our activities while on or in Bartlett United Methodist Church facilities.

Signed _____ Date _____

Disclosure Form

Our church cares about the children and youth in our programs and desires to ensure their safety while they are in the church's supervision. Some state legislatures have helped us assure security for children, vulnerable adults and developmentally disabled people by requiring disclosures by all people who are employed by the local church. The United Methodist Church supports this requirement. Because we care for all God's children, Bartlett United Methodist Church joins in asking all staff members and volunteers to complete this disclosure form.

Please complete the following questions by circling "yes" or "no" on each question. Please attach an explanation for any "yes" answer.

1. Have you ever been convicted of any crime against children or other persons? yes no
2. Have you ever been found in any dependency action to have sexually assaulted or exploited any minor or to have physically abused any minor? yes no
3. Have you ever been found by a court in a domestic relations proceeding to have sexually abused or exploited any minor or to have physically abused any minor? yes no
4. a. Have you been convicted of the possession, use, or sale of drugs within the last 7 years? yes no
b. Have you been released from incarceration for a conviction of the possession, use, or sale of drugs within the last 7 years? yes no
5. Within the past 30 days have you abused alcohol, legal or illegal drugs? yes no
6. Has your driver's license been suspended or revoked within the last 7 years? yes no
7. Have you ever been convicted of crimes relating to financial exploitation where the victim was a vulnerable adult? yes no
8. Have you ever been found by a court in a protection proceeding to have abused or financially exploited a vulnerable adult? yes no
9. a. Have you ever been licensed by a licensing board that licenses businesses/professions? (If yes, please answer b. and c.) yes no
b. Have you ever been found by that licensing board, or any other disciplinary board, to have sexually or physically abused or exploited any minor or developmentally disabled person? yes no
c. Have you ever been found by that licensing board or any other disciplinary board, to have abused or financially exploited any vulnerable adult? yes no
10. Other than the above matters, is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance and care of young people, vulnerable adults or developmentally disabled persons? yes no

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 _____

Print name _____

**WHEN ALLEGATIONS ARE MADE AS PART OF A CHURCH SPONSORED
PROGRAM OR EVENT (this information is for the Senior Pastor once an incident has been reported)**

1. Notify the annual conference authorities (District Superintendent and resident bishop), the church's insurance agent, and the church's attorney. Keep the conference authorities aware of the congregation's actions through resolution.
2. Keep a written record of the steps taken by the church in response.
3. Call upon the church's designated spokesperson (the Senior Minister) to make any necessary statements or responses to the news media. See separate sheet.
4. Prepare a brief and honest statement that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim's privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns.
5. Fully cooperate with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.

REPORT OF SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE
(To be completed by the person who is reporting the incident)

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse: _____

2. Victim's name: _____

Victim's age/date of birth: _____

3. Date/place of initial conversation with/report from victim: _____

4. Victim's statement (give your detailed summary here): _____

5. Name of person accused of abuse: _____

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other): _____

6. Reported to pastor: _____

Date/time: _____

Summary: _____

7. Call to victim's parent/guardian: _____

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

8. Call to local children and family service agency: _____

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

9. Call to local law enforcement agency: _____

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

10. Other contacts: _____

Name: _____

Date/time: _____

Summary: _____

Signature of Applicant

Date

RESPONSE TO THE MEDIA

ONE person capable of speaking calmly and thoughtfully will be designated to speak to the media, answering questions honestly without adding extra or unnecessary information. The designated person will be given permission to answer questions by saying, "We don't know at this time."

NONE but the spokesperson should be authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the congregation. This person should be prepared with:

- the church's policy for the prevention of child abuse
- the church's concern for the safety of the victim and all children
- the procedures the church has followed to reduce the risk of abuse to children.

The spokesperson would do well to have a prepared statement. NEVER make statements indicating that the church fails to take this allegation seriously or that the church suspects the victim is not speaking truthfully.

Currently, the designated spokesperson is our Senior Minister.

If staff members are questioned, they are to refer all questions to the Senior Minister of Bartlett UMC.

CARE FOR THE CONGREGATION

The first step in ministry with victims of child abuse that has occurred within the program ministries of a congregation must be truth telling. This does NOT mean engaging in gossip or speculation. Above all, truth telling does NOT mean blaming the child victim in any way!

By the time law enforcement and the conference authorities have been informed, rumors are probably spreading within the congregation. At this point, it is important to provide honest and forthright information. This may begin with a letter to the members that briefly explains the incident and the initial action taken by the church. Do NOT identify the victim or the accused abuser. The letter should include a statement of the actions taken to assure the safety of all the children and to assure our congregation's continuing ability to provide ministry to children and youth. Everything possible has been done to provide for the safety of the victim(s) and to enable the safe continuation of the church's ministry.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

There must be thoughtful and prayerful preparation for such a meeting to keep it from becoming a time of anger and confusion. Schedule a specific time and place and give everyone advance notice, so people can choose whether or not they want to come.

Select leaders for the meeting very carefully. Lay leadership and a representative of the conference (like the District Superintendent) should be present. The lay leadership can provide information about the actions taken by the church thus far. The district superintendent may not need to do anything more than reinforce the support of the annual conference as the congregation deals with this crisis. Also, the presence of a qualified counselor is important. The meeting will inevitably elicit strong feelings and emotions. The counselor can help immediately those who experience strong feelings, instead of putting them off or minimizing the feelings. If the pastors and program staff are not the accused, then they should be present also.

In the agenda, include the following elements:

- fact sharing
- small group sharing time
- closing moments of reflection and worship

Open the fact sharing by giving an accurate description of what has happened and what actions have been taken, or will be taken. Answer questions as accurately as possible without jeopardizing any ongoing investigation by the church or law enforcement. Protect the identity of the victim, especially if the family has requested as much privacy as possible. Do not be afraid to answer questions with, "We don't know the answer to that yet." It is better to admit not knowing than to speculate about the incident or the outcome.

The small group sharing time probably will be the most important part. Divide the total group into small groups of five or six. Have a prepared facilitator for each group. The annual conference may be able to suggest facilitators in our area. The facilitator will begin by letting everyone know that it is permissible to express any feeling or emotion within the small group. All will be allowed time to share, and there will be no debate about the feelings or emotions expressed. The purpose of small groups is to help people identify and verbalize their feelings about the incident. The purpose is not to strategize a response or elicit premature forgiveness toward the abuser. Be prepared for this part of the meeting to take an hour or more.

When the small groups are able to bring their time together to a close, reassemble the whole group. Acknowledge the reality of this painful situation and offer a prayer for the congregation as it seeks to achieve justice for all involved and healing for all who are suffering.

One letter and one meeting will not be all the church needs. Existing groups within the church could plan appropriate ministries of healing, support, justice, education, and worship. Again, advance notice and publicity are important. Education may include programs on the consequences of child abuse, how to comfort families suffering from abuse, how children and youth can protect themselves from abuse, resources in our community for victims/survivors.

Support ministries can be developed for families suffering as a result of child abuse as well as for victims of child abuse. Programming with children and youth aimed at restoring their trust in the church and in its workers will be an important support ministry. Programs and discussion groups focusing on justice, mercy, and reconciliation in difficult situations will set a solid foundation for their continuing spiritual growth. This requires extensive planning and well qualified leadership.

All of these suggestions for continuing ministries are based on the premise that the more the congregation does to encourage openness and honesty in communication, the faster healing and recovery can proceed. No matter how long the process takes, there are two things that should NEVER be allowed: Blaming the victim and offering forgiveness to the abuser without any sign of repentance from the abuser. The child abuse victim is NEVER responsible for being abused and did NOT do anything to cause it. ONLY when justice has been done and the abuser is truly able to live a changed life demonstrating sorrow and repentance will it be possible for the congregation to offer the grace of forgiveness. NO pressure to forgive should ever be placed on the victim simply to help the abuser feel better.

Finally, after enough time has passed, organizing a time for sharing that is similar to that in the first congregational meeting might be helpful. This can be used to assess how much healing and recovery has occurred AND identify any remaining needs or issues that have not been resolved and possible ways to address them. Conclude with worship expressing gratitude for the progress that has been made toward healing and recovery and to express joy in the congregation's united efforts to do justice and to trust in the abiding grace and love of Jesus Christ.

Information about the congregational responses was taken from Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church by Joy Thornburg Melton, pages 56-60.

Revised September 2006