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## Title: **Safe Sanctuary Policy**

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***INTRODUCTION:** Fuquay-Varina United Methodist Church (FVUMC) is concerned about the safety of all children and youth. This church is committed to being a “Safe Sanctuary” for each of God’s children. As part of the Body of Christ, we seek to ensure caring Christ-like role models for all ministries directly and indirectly associated with our church. Ministries under the auspices of and/or endorsed by FVUMC will comply with or exceed United Methodist standards and recommendations for best practices for safety and programming guidelines. Each ministry area will develop procedures that reflect these best practices and that will be reviewed at least annually by a Safe Sanctuary Procedures Review Committee.*

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### **1. Statement of Covenant and Policy Purpose**

- 1.1. **Statement of Covenant:** 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 children and youth, as well as all 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 our workers with children and youth regarding the use of appropriate policies and procedures; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of sexual, physical or emotional abuse or neglect of a child or youth that conforms to the requirements of all applicable laws; and we will be prepared to manage and respond to the allegations of abuse to those directly involved, as well as to the congregation and media inquiries, if an incident should occur.
- 1.2 **Policy Purpose:** Our congregation’s purpose for establishing this policy is to ensure that FVUMC extends safe Christian hospitality, nurture and community to the children and youth (aged 17 and under) in our midst so that they can grow in spiritual maturity in an environment that offers security from sexual, physical or emotional abuse or neglect to the fullest extent possible.

### **2. Scope**

This Safe Sanctuary Policy applies to all current and potential FVUMC employees and those complementary workers and volunteers who will be working in church-sponsored ministries that are being conducted under the auspices of and/or endorsed by FVUMC and that involve children and youth (aged birth to 17 years of age) of this congregation and community. (See Section 5 for definitions of terms.)

### **3. Minimum Procedural Requirements of this Policy**

- 3.1. **Screening Procedure for Potential Employees and Applicable Complementary and Voluntary Workers.** Written screening processes will be established, approved and implemented to prevent the employment of and/or use of services provided by individuals who will be in regular contact with children and youth under the ministration of this church and who do not meet FVUMC’s minimum, acceptable criteria. A national criminal background check is to be conducted on potential employees and applicable complementary workers being offered a position with FVUMC. Within two weeks of commencing activities on behalf of FVUMC, all



voluntary workers will complete a Volunteer Information Form, providing personal information and agreeing to a background check. A *Background Check Procedure* will be written and implemented immediately. *Procedures for Screening Potential Employees and Applicable Complementary and Voluntary Workers*, to be developed by SPRC will at a minimum:

- 3.1.1. Clearly define procedures for screening potential employees and applicable complementary and voluntary workers that are in compliance with all applicable local, state and federal laws;
- 3.1.2. Describe the minimum criteria for acceptance and rejection of applicants and voluntary workers; and
- 3.1.3. Define the processes for protecting the privacy of confidential information obtained through implementation of national background checks and other screening processes.

Both procedures will be reviewed and approved by The Safe Sanctuary Procedures Review Committee.

- 3.3. **Child Safety Procedures.** Reasonable safety measures and prudent procedures of operation for all church-sponsored activities involving children and youth will be established and implemented. Children and Youth Age-Level Directors and Coordinators Team (see Responsibilities Section 4.3) will develop *Procedures for Ensuring Child and Youth Safety*, which will be reviewed and approved by the Safe Sanctuary Procedures Review Committee. These procedures will include at a minimum detailed guidance on steps to take to ensure the safety of children and youth within any FVUMC property, as well as while participating in church-sponsored field trips and outings. Also, a *Safe Sanctuary Education Plan* will be written by the same group to ensure that all employees, complementary workers and volunteers, as well as youth and children as is appropriate, are educated regarding the established procedures. These procedures and education plan will be reviewed at least annually, updated as necessary and submitted to the Safe Sanctuary Procedures Review Committee for approval.
- 3.4. **Crisis Response Plan.** The Safe Sanctuary Crisis Response Team (see Responsibilities Section 4.5) will develop a proactive procedural Crisis Response Plan to manage any suspected sexual, physical or emotional abuse or neglect incident of a child or youth involved in activities within the scope of this policy. This Plan will: (a) succinctly state this congregation's absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth in our midst; and (b) clearly define FVUMC's stepwise procedures, which comply with requirements of all relevant local, state and federal laws, for reporting, investigating, documenting, and maintaining confidentiality while responding to a suspected incident of abuse incident. This Plan will be reviewed and approved by the FVUMC Council.

## 4. Responsibilities

- 4.1. **Staff-Parish Relations Committee** is a primary reviewer of this policy and its approval is required prior to submission of the policy to Council. The Chairperson, or his/her SPRC member delegate, is responsible for ensuring that the screening procedures described in Section 3.1 are written, approved and implemented. The Chairperson him/herself reviews results of all national background checks conducted for both paid and unpaid workers within the scope of this policy. The Chairperson or delegate ensures that the remaining screening results



(e.g., application forms, interviews, reference checks, etc.) fully satisfy or exceed standards of the United Methodist Church and this congregation.

- 4.2. **The Board of Trustees** is a primary reviewer of this policy and its approval is required prior to submission of the policy to Council. The Chairperson, or his/her Trustees member delegate, is responsible for reviewing this policy and its attendant procedures with the insurance company and for assuring that, in the event of litigation pertaining to an incident of sexual child/youth abuse, insurance coverage is sufficient to protect the people and assets of FVUMC. The Trustees will revise the Building Use Application Form and Guidelines to incorporate changes required by this policy. Also, the Trustees will assure that outside groups using the facilities of FVUMC, currently and in the future, complete the form and are given a copy of this policy, and where necessary, that adequate waivers have been duly processed. All relevant paperwork will be secured in church office files.
- 4.3. **Children and Youth Ministry Directors and/or Age-Level Coordinators** are responsible for ensuring that *Procedures for Ensuring Child and Youth Safety* are written, approved by the Safe Sanctuary Procedures Review Committee and implemented. At a minimum, these procedures will include processes for: (a) screening and recruiting volunteers who will be working with children and youth involved in church-sponsored events; and (b) describing safety measures sufficient to prevent, to the greatest extent possible, the sexual, physical or emotional abuse or neglect of children and youth participating in these ministries. The directors and/or coordinators also ensure that a *Safe Sanctuary Education Plan* is formulated proactively, approved by the Safe Sanctuary Procedures Review Committee and implemented so that pertinent individuals are educated about this policy and relevant processes.
- 4.4. **The Safe Sanctuary Procedures Review Committee** is comprised of a representative of the Trustees and the SPRC, a member of FVUMC clergy, and each age-level director/coordinator of children and youth (birth to 18 years). This committee is responsible for approving procedures within the scope of this policy, initially and at least annually thereafter, and for ensuring that up-to-date procedures are secured in church office files.
- 4.5. **The Safe Sanctuary Crisis Response Team** is comprised of the Pastor, Chairpersons of FVUMC's Board of Trustees and the Staff Parish Relations Committee and outside consultants as needed. On a case-by-case basis, the relevant age-level director/coordinator will be a temporary member of the team in managing an incident. This group is responsible for assuring that a *Crisis Response Plan* is written and approved by the FVUMC Council to manage any alleged sexual, physical or emotional abuse or neglect incident of a child or youth involved in activities within the scope of this policy and for implementing this Plan should such an event occur. In the unfortunate event of an abuse or neglect incident, this Team will disseminate appropriate information to staff, the congregation, and media (only if inquires are made).
- 4.6. **All members of this congregation**, but especially individuals who are directly or indirectly associated with the children and youth ministries of FVUMC, are responsible for reporting a suspected incident of sexual, physical or emotional abuse or neglect to a member of the Safe Sanctuary Crisis Response Team immediately.

## 5. Definitions

- 5.1. **Complementary Worker.** The term complementary work describes individuals who provide services to FVUMC but are not regular, established FVUMC employees. Categories of Complementary Works include:
  - Individuals who are providing services to FVUMC through contractual agreements, whether or not through an agency/firm.



- Professional or consulting services provided by a firm, organization or independent contractor who will be working on or off site to deliver a specific project or provide consultancy advice.

5.2. **Church-sponsored Activities.** Any activity within a ministry conducted under the auspices of and/or endorsed by FVUMC that primarily involves children or youth 18 years old and younger.

5.3. **Outside Groups.** Any group whose activity primarily involving children or youth 18 years old and younger that does not fall under the responsibility of a FVUMC age-level director and/or coordinator. Each outside group, including those currently using FVUMC facilities, will be known to the church by completion of the Trustees' revised Building Use Application Form, which will be secured in the church office files.

## 6. Administration

6.1. **Authors:** The Safe Sanctuary Policy Development Committee appointed by FVUMC Council on October 4, 2005, along with Bob Griffith, Board of Trustees Chairperson 2005, who served in an advisory capacity.

6.2. **Authorization:** This policy is authorized by FVUMC Council, Trustees and Staff-Parish Relations Committee by approval of each group and signature of its chairperson below. This authorization will remain in effect even though incumbents will change.

_____	_____
Chairperson, Board of Trustees	date
_____	_____
Chairperson, Staff-Parish Relations Committee	date
_____	_____
Chairperson, Fuquay-Varina United Methodist Church Council	date

6.3. **Effective Date of Policy** (date all approvals obtained): \_\_\_\_\_

*Within 90 days of the effective date of this policy, all named committees are to be established and plans and procedures required by this document are to be in the hands of the Safe Sanctuary Procedures Review Committee for prompt review and approval prior to implementation.*

## 7. Appendices

- 7.1. Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2004, pp. 201-203.
- 7.2. Resolution 6, adopted by the NC Annual UMC Conference, June 2005.
- 7.3. Excerpt from FVUMC Council Minutes, October 4, 2005.

## Appendix 7.1.

### **Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2004, pp. 201-203.**

#### **RESOLUTION 65. Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church (adopted in 1996 and readopted in 2004)**

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 and 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 little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that "children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse."

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse 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.

1. "Ritual abuse" refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be.
2. 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. In response to this church wide challenge, the following steps should be taken to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse:

#### **A. Local churches should:**

1. Develop and implement an ongoing education plan for the congregation and its leaders on the reality of child abuse, risk factors leading to child abuse, and strategies for prevention;
2. Adopt screening procedures (use of application forms, interviews, reference checks, background clearance, and so forth) for workers (paid and unpaid) directly or indirectly involved in the care of children and youth;
3. Develop and implement safety procedures for church activities such as having two or more non-related adults present in classroom or activity; leaving doors open and installing half-

doors or windows in doors or halls; providing hall monitors; instituting sign-in and sign-out procedures for children ages ten or younger; and so forth;

4. Advise children and young persons of an agency or a person outside as well as within the local church whom they can contact for advice and help if they have suffered abuse;
5. Carry liability insurance that includes sexual abuse coverage;
6. Assist the development of awareness and self-protection skills for children and youth through special curriculum and activities; and
7. Be familiar with annual conference and other church policies regarding clergy sexual misconduct.

**B. Annual conferences should:**

1. Develop safety and risk-reducing policies and procedures for conference-sponsored events, such as camps, retreats, youth gatherings, childcare at conference events, mission trips, and so forth; and
2. Develop guidelines and training processes for use by church leaders who carry responsibility for prevention of child abuse in local churches. Both sets of policies shall be developed by a task force appointed by the cabinet in cooperation with appropriate conference agencies. These policies shall be approved by the annual conference and assigned to a conference agency for implementation. It is suggested that the policies be circulated in conference publications and shared with lay professionals and clergy at district or conference seminars.

**C. The General Board of Discipleship and the General Board of Global Ministries should:**

1. Cooperatively develop and/or identify and promote the following resources;
2. Sample policies, procedures, forms, and so forth for reducing the risk of sexual abuse and exploitation of children and youth in local churches, both in relation to their own sponsored programs and to any outreach ministries or other programs for children or youth that use church space;
3. Child abuse prevention curriculum for use in local churches;
4. Training opportunities and other educational resources on child sexual abuse and exploitation and on ritual abuse; and
5. Resources on healing for those who have experienced childhood sexual trauma.

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## Appendix 7.2.

### Resolution 6. NC Annual United Methodist Conference, June 2005. Safe Sanctuary Policy for Children and Youth

**Action Taken:** *The Conference passed this resolution. It was then withdrawn as a resolution and introduced as a motion which was passed after the removal of the word "whereas".*

Whereas: One of the foremost duties of the church is to extend safe Christian hospitality, nurture and community to the children and youth (age 18 and under) in our midst, in which they can feel secure and unthreatened from physical and emotional abuse; and

Whereas: Jesus said of this responsibility, "Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me...If any of you put a stumbling block before 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 18:5-6); and

Whereas: Children and youth represent our hope and trust in the future of the Christian community while at the same time being active and invaluable full participants in the present life of the church; and

Whereas: Churches have tragically not always lived up to this sacred obligation, inasmuch as child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse occur in churches across the broad spectrum of society: large and small churches, rural and urban churches and churches of all socio-economic and racial backgrounds; and

Whereas: United Methodist Annual Conferences can cite examples of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches and churches have among their membership adult survivors of early abuse trauma; and

Whereas: Such instances are devastating to all involved---children, families, local churches and their leadership, exacting emotional, legal and financial tolls that accompany such allegations; and

Whereas: The 1996 General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution (***Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 1996, pp. 384-386***) designed to reduce the risk of any type of abuse of children and youth in the church, including neglect and physical, emotional, sexual or ritual abuse, prompting most Annual Conferences since this time to adopt for themselves policy and procedures to reduce the risk of child abuse in the church; and

Whereas: The North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church is committed to conducting ministry so that children, youth and adults may be safe to grow spiritually, demonstrating the love of Jesus in our midst 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);

Therefore, be it resolved that the North Carolina Annual Conference:

- a. Direct Conference and District program agencies which work with programs for children and youth, in covenant with the United Methodist Church, to adopt the following policy, in order that the abuse of children and youth in all conference and district related settings may be prevented to the fullest extent possible:

As a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the Gospel in a manner that assures the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth and the adults who work with them. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the recruitment and selection of staff. We will implement prudent procedures of operation for all programs and events. We will educate those who work with children and youth in conference and district settings as to the use of all appropriate policies and procedures. We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting suspected incidents of abuse that conform to the requirements of state law.

- b. Direct each and every local church to adopt and implement for themselves a safe sanctuary policy and procedures as outlined in the 1996 General Conference Resolution for use in their present and future ministry with children and youth. Training events will be offered throughout the Conference using the resource book *Safe Sanctuaries for Youth Ministry* by Joy Melton (Discipleship Resources) to assist local churches in this. The local church shall send at least two (or more) of the following: clergy, staff or lay leadership with direct responsibility for children/youth ministry, trustees, staff-parish relations committee members, nurture/education chairpersons, Sunday School superintendents, lay leaders, etc.
  - c. Create a Conference ***Safe Sanctuaries Committee***, to be selected by the Conference Committee on Nominations, for the purpose of providing oversight for the Conference safe sanctuary policy and procedures and to oversee and resource the implementation of a safe sanctuary policy and procedures within each local church of the North Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Funding will come from the Children's Ministry line item of the Conference budget.
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## Appendix 7.3.

### Excerpt from FVUMC Council Minutes, October 4, 2005.

#### **Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Procedures.**

Pastor Elaine raised a matter of new business. At the Annual Conference in June, 2005, a Safe Sanctuaries policy was adopted to ensure the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth in a proactive manner. FVUMC, as well as all other churches within the purview of the NC Conference, are under a directive to adopt and implement its own safe sanctuary policy and procedures. Current FVUMC personnel policy requires that background checks be done prior to hiring potential new staff members; however, compliance with the mandate requires that FVUMC take this to the next level of action and conduct background checks on all volunteers who work with our children and youth.

Rene Knox made a motion that FVUMC conduct background checks on all volunteers (approximately 120 at this time) who are working with our youth and children. The motion was seconded by Don Reeves and unanimously approved.

However, after additional discussion, the motion was amended to specify that a national, rather than statewide, background check be done for volunteers. Furthermore, the motion was amended to establish a committee, comprised of David Bell, Judy Casper, Denise Frie, Mildred McManus, Bob Sorrels and Cathy White, to develop a Safe Sanctuary Policy. This policy will be considered and approved by SPRC prior to implementation. The amended motion was approved unanimously.

Note: The cost of conducting these background checks must be factored into the 2006 budget; approximately \$17 per person is charged by one source.

Council members and staff who voted on this motion were:

- Council Members Caroline Jackson (Chair), Tamara Anderson, Tim Brady, Paula Cade, Eric Coates, Debbie Corr, George Gierman, Bob Griffith, Mary Hornsby, Gary Jordan, Shari Judd, Rene Knox, Mildred McManus, Perry Monds, Don Reeves, Bob Sorrels, Stephanie Weeks
- Staff Members: Ray Broadwell, Brent Hubbell, Kristy Hochhalter, Elaine Lilliston and Debra Murphy.