

August 22, 2004 Original date of acceptance  
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## **First United Methodist Church of Franklin, NC Safe Sanctuary Policy for Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adult**

**Introduction:** The General Conference of The United Methodist Church in April 1996 adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of abuse of children and youth in the church.

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 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.” (Paragraph 162 C).

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 site 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 – 2000; pages 180-81. Copyright 2000, The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.)*

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**Purpose:** First United Methodist Church's purpose for establishing this Youth, Children and Vulnerable Adult Abuse Protection Policy, and accompanying procedures, is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all children, youth and vulnerable adult.

**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 children, youth, and vulnerable adult as well as the workers with these people. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of event staff; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all our children, youth, and vulnerable adult workers regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods; 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 our ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adult, First United Methodist Church of Franklin, NC is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child, youth and vulnerable adult will be "surrounded by steadfast love, established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" (from "Congregational Pledge 2" Baptismal Covenant II, in *The United Methodist Hymnal*, page 44).

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Adapted from *Youth Abuse Prevention Policy, Safe Sanctuaries for Youth: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries* By Joy Thornburg Melton, Discipleship Resources, 2003.

## **First United Methodist Church – Franklin, NC** **“Safe Sanctuaries” Procedures**

First United Methodist Church of Franklin, NC adopts the procedures detailed below. These procedures are intended to provide a safe sanctuary for youth, children, and vulnerable adult and protect adults from unfounded allegations of misconduct.

### **Definitions:**

1. Children: Birth through age 12
2. Youth: Age 13 to 18
3. Vulnerable Adult:
  - a. May be a person age 18 or older who is mentally, physically or psychologically challenged and is unable to make responsible legal decisions about his or her welfare.
  - b. May be elderly, defined as age 65 and older

### **Procedures to Protect Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adult during Church Activities:**

#### **Supervision:**

1. It is recommended that all volunteers shall be an active participant in the life of the church for a minimum of six-months.
2. We require a minimum two-person rule, preferably two unrelated adults when there is a child, youth, or vulnerable adult present. All small groups will include at least three persons and must be held in locations that are not isolated, including alone in a vehicle. Should an adult find himself or herself alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, they should make certain that they are in a location where they can be seen, not in an isolated location. The door should be left open and physical contact must be avoided.
3. All adult counselors working with children, youth, or vulnerable adult must be eighteen (18) or older. Any adult leader under the age of eighteen (18) shall have another non-related adult over eighteen (18) in the youth/children/vulnerable adult setting.
4. There should be a maximum of ten (10) children/youth/vulnerable adult for every one (1) adult.
5. For overnight trips: Male youth will require a male adult counselor. Female youth will require a female adult counselor.

#### **Staffing:**

1. Adult volunteer workers will be required to complete a volunteer application.
2. Adult paid and volunteer workers will be required to complete a medical/insurance/behavior information form. These forms will be accessible during the event in case of accident/illness, or other emergency.
3. Adult paid and volunteer staff that work with children, youth, and vulnerable adult will be required to complete a permission form for background checks on criminal records. No adult who has been convicted of abuse shall be permitted to work/volunteer with minors in any church sponsored activity. All other convictions will be handled on a case by case basis. Background checks are completed through a company that conducts continuous monitoring and will update if new information becomes available.
4. Adult paid and volunteer staff that transport children, youth, and vulnerable adult will be required to complete a permission form for background checks on driving records. All convictions will be handled on a case by case basis. Any paid and volunteer staff that transport children, youth, and vulnerable adult, in a personally owned vehicle, will provide a

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copy of their license and vehicle insurance. In extenuating circumstances, the DMV checks will be run after the event.

5. Assistant Pastor will contact references when appropriate, will do background checks and will relay information as needed.
6. There will be a training session for all paid and volunteer staff working with children, youth and vulnerable adult each year, alternating in-person and online, at which time the "Safe Sanctuary" policy and procedures, education about indicators of abuse will be covered. Failure to comply with the "Safe Sanctuary" policy and procedures may result in that staff or volunteer person not being allowed to serve on staff in the areas of children, youth and vulnerable adult ministries.
7. All adult paid staff working with children, youth, vulnerable adult shall obtain and maintain First Aid/CPR Basic certification as a condition of their employment. Volunteers who routinely work with youth, children, and vulnerable adult are strongly encouraged to obtain and maintain First Aid/CPR certification. The Parish Nurse and Education Committee shall insure that First Aid and CPR training is made available to all staff, volunteers and members of First UMC once per year.
8. All paid and volunteer staff working with youth, children, and vulnerable adult shall sign a covenant to follow policy and procedures prior to being permitted to participate in such activities.

### **Setting:**

1. The "Two-Adult" Rule – No fewer than two adults shall be present during any church-sponsored program, event or ministry involving children, youth, or vulnerable adult. It is preferred, but not required that at least two adults be unrelated by blood or marriage. Example: Two adults per classroom or one adult per classroom with a roamer. This also includes community organizations that use FUMC's facilities when children, youth, or vulnerable adult are involved.
2. The "Five-Years-Older" Rule – All adults who supervise activities for youth and children shall be at least five years older than the oldest child or youth. This procedure does NOT prohibit adults who are less than five years older than the youth or children in an activity from participating as "counselors" or "helpers" for the activity. This rule requires that the two-adult rule be met by persons at least five years older than the children or youth in any activity.
3. Windows shall be placed in the doors of all rooms where youth, children's, or vulnerable adult activities are routinely held or likely to be held. Windows shall be installed as soon as financially practical to do so.
4. If a youth, children's, or vulnerable adult activity is held in any room not having a window in the door, then the door to the room shall remain fully open during all aspects of the activity.
5. A window shall be placed in the door of the Pastor's study, Assistant Pastor's study and any other room where pastoral counseling or consultation are common. It is recognized that there may be times when it is necessary to protect the identity of the person or people being counseled. With this understanding the church secretary and receptionist should be reminded of confidentiality.
6. Open doors shall be utilized for non-pastoral counseling of youth, children, and vulnerable adult. It is preferred that such sessions take place where other people are nearby yet not within hearing distance.
7. Pastoral counseling is expected to be confidential in nature so it is anticipated that such counseling will take place behind closed doors. It is preferred that a pastor ensure that pastoral counseling take place where and when other people are nearby even though not within hearing distance.

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8. Parents of the children and youth attending an event should be given in advance of the event, written details about the event including a phone number to reach their child in an emergency. Parents or guardians shall always be given advance notice and information regarding any activity in which their child will be participating. Parents will be required to give permission for their children before the child's participation in an activity. Permission shall NOT be required for Sunday School. Parents may give a single "blanket: permission for standard activities along with medical release form so long as the permission lists the anticipated activities of the program. For children 5<sup>th</sup> grade and younger a child identification form shall be completed and kept on site.
9. First United Methodist Church must have parental permission forms on file for each child or youth to travel with the church group. These forms should include emergency contact numbers during the activity for the children and youth's parents or legal guardians.
10. At all events, two Counselors shall leave last to make sure all youth and children have left the event.

### **Housing:**

1. No child or youth shall be housed alone with an adult. There will be a minimum of two (2) adult persons when children or youth are housed in the same room.
2. No child or youth and adult shall share a bed. In some instances, we use motel-style accommodations with two double beds per room. The children or youth will share one bed and the adults the other bed, unless they are a part of a family unit.
3. Co-ed rooming is not permitted (except married couples and family units).
4. All event participants and staff will adhere to the established curfew and covenant.
5. Visitation between males and females in hotel rooms or residence halls is prohibited unless directly supervised in a group setting by the group's responsible adult for devotional or group discussion times.

### **Medical:**

1. Each child, youth and adult attendee must submit a completed medical / insurance form each year. Minor's forms must have a parent's signature. The originals of the form will be kept on file.
2. Group leaders should have access, or a photocopy, of all these medical forms in a file with them during the event.
3. Medical forms will be kept on site for the duration of the event.
4. First aid supplies will be available on site.
5. The church's medical insurance coverage is supplemental and does not cover snow or extreme sports.
6. A written report will be completed in the case of any accident, medical emergency, or injury. Please submit the form to the Senior Pastor or Assistant Pastor. Some facilities also require an accident form to be completed.

### **Conduct:**

1. Anything considered illegal under civil law and criminal law in North Carolina is illegal for children and youth participants at First United Methodist Church. This includes issues related to tobacco use; drug use; alcohol consumption, possession of firearms, weapons or fireworks.
2. Participants are to treat others as they would want to be treated to encourage positive nurturing relationships with the whole group without the use of profane language, without practical jokes that may be harmful; without any two children, youth, or vulnerable adult or one

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- child, youth, or vulnerable adult and one adult leader, separating themselves from the group in isolated locations; without inappropriate demonstrations of affection and physical contact.
3. For ALL adult counselors and ALL staff, a good rule of thumb for appropriate demonstrations of affection or physical contact would be to never be alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult; keep hugs brief; always be the one to end a hug; never impose your touches on the child, youth, or vulnerable adult in your group.
  4. Clothing for all is expected to be modest and appropriate, including swimsuits.
  5. Children, youth, adult participants, and all staff, will be expected to observe all policies, guidelines, and covenant of the event. This also includes host facility's rules and regulations.
  6. Local and host facility curfews will be enforced.

### **Internet and Social Media:**

1. Images and names of children, youth and vulnerable adult shall not be utilized on any website or application without explicit consent from parent or guardian.
2. A social media covenant shall be adhered to by all leaders. This covenant shall be kept on file as an addendum to this policy. At a minimum, this covenant includes:
  - a. Leaders shall never initiate a social media connection with children, youth or vulnerable adults (friend, follower, link, etc.);
  - b. Boundaries regarding calling, texting and private messaging;
  - c. Boundaries regarding taking and distributing photos and videos; and
  - d. Boundaries regarding social media posts.

### **Travel:**

1. When possible, no child, youth, or vulnerable adult should travel alone in a vehicle with only one adult leader unless it is their parent.
2. When possible, the driver and rider in the vehicle should not be married, this included Sunday morning pickup.
3. Youth may not leave the site of the church event without explicit permission from the church group leader or designated adult staff.
4. Please let director of event know if any church or staff vehicles should leave event location before the event is over.

### **Reporting In Cases of Abuse:**

1. Any suspected or reported case of abuse that occurs during a First United Methodist Church Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult event should be reported IMMEDIATELY to two persons: The Senior Pastor and Assistant Pastor. In the event that any of those persons is implicated, the Staff Parish Relations Committee Chair, Chairperson of the Trustee Committee and the Smoky Mountain District Superintendent must be notified within 24 hours.
2. The event coordinator must immediately have an incident report filled out with all available details. (Report forms to be supplied) The form shall be given to the Senior Pastor or Assistant Pastor where they will respond to the action that should be taken.
3. The Senior Pastor or chairperson of the Staff Relations Committee shall communicate the complaint to the Macon County Department of Social Services as required by the North Carolina Conference Communications Director.
4. If any complaint comes to the attention of the media, then only the Senior Pastor, District Superintendent or their designee will release information to the media. Before any statement is reported to the media, the statement must be sent to the Western North Carolina Conference Communications Director.

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5. The Senior Pastor or Chairperson of the Trustee Committee shall communicate the complaint to the insurance carrier providing liability insurance for First UMC as soon as he or she has received the complaint.
6. Any person named as an alleged offender in a complaint shall immediately be required to cease any contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adult through First UMC Franklin activities. The alleged offender may resume activities with youth, children, and vulnerable adult at such time as the District Superintendent, Senior Pastor and Staff Parish Relations Committee or Education Committee (depending on paid or volunteer staff) shall deem it appropriate.

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Implemented by April 2005

Revised October 7, 2020

**Addendum to the Safe Sanctuary Policy for Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult in  
Response to the Jessica Lundsford Act for North Carolina, Effective 12/01/08  
For Franklin: First United Methodist Church, Franklin, NC**

1. We, as the church, invite all people to be a part of the worshipping community of faith. However, we must weigh the duty to protect the children, youth, and vulnerable adult of the church with the right of all people to experience God's redeeming love through worship. In furtherance of our Safe Sanctuary policy and in compliance with North Carolina law, a registered sex offender who wishes to be part of a church community should expect to have conditions placed on his/her participation.
2. No adult who has been convicted of abuse shall be permitted to work/volunteer with minors in any church sponsored activity. All other convictions will be handled on a case by case basis. N.C. Gen Stat. § 14-208. 17(a) (2008)
3. A registered sex offender shall not be in attendance at any church event where children, youth, or vulnerable adult are the primary audience. These events include, but are not limited to, United Methodist Youth Fellowship activities, Vacation Bible School, and scouting activities. Note: If a registered sex offender does attend such an event, he/she will be told to leave and a report will be made to the sheriff's office.
4. A registered sex offender shall not be within 300 feet of any location on the church property intended primarily for the use, care or supervision of minors. N.C. Gen Stat. § 14-208.18(a) (2) (2008)
5. A registered sex offender shall not be in any area of the property intended primarily for the use, care or supervision of minors, including but not limited to, the nursery, preschool classrooms, children's Sunday School classrooms and playground. N.C. Gen Stat. § 14-208.18(a) (1) (2008)
6. While on church property, a registered sex offender must be accompanied by an unrelated, same gender adult covenant partner provided by the church.
7. A registered sex offender should identify himself/herself as a registered sex offender to the pastor or the Assistant Pastor. A registered sex offender who wishes to be part of our church community shall read and sign a Church Participation Covenant Statement. This document will also be signed by the pastor(s) and the Chairperson of the Church Council and be kept on file at the church.



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### **Registered Sex Offender Church Participation Covenant Statement**

The congregation of Franklin: First United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and vulnerable adult. In furtherance of our Safe Sanctuary policy and in compliance with N. C. Gen. Stat. §§ 14-208.17, 14-208.18, all registered sex offenders who wish to be part of our worshipping community must abide by the following procedures:

1. As a registered sex offender, I will have and abide by conditions placed on my participation in the church community.
2. While on church property, I will be accompanied by an unrelated, same-gender adult covenant partner. Providing a covenant partner will be the responsibility of the church.
3. I will not be permitted to work/volunteer with children, youth, or vulnerable adult in any church-sponsored activity. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-208.17 (2008)
4. I will not be in attendance at any event where children, youth, or vulnerable adult are the primary audience. This includes, but is not limited to, United Methodist Youth Fellowship activities, Vacation Bible School and scouting activities. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-208.18 (a) (3) (2008). If I attend such an event, I will be told to leave and a report will be made to the sheriff's office.
5. I will not be within 300 feet of any location intended primarily for the use, care or supervision of minors. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-208.18(a) (2) (2008)
6. I will not be in any area of the property designated for the use, care or supervision of children, youth, or vulnerable adult. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-208.18 (a)(1) (2008). These areas include, but are not limited to, the nursery, preschool classrooms, children's Sunday School classrooms and playground.

Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

Pastor: \_\_\_\_\_

Church Council Chairperson: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Printed \_\_\_\_\_

## **Approved Adult Leader Social Media and Technology Covenant**

This covenant is an outline of those obligations of an Approved Adult representing the congregation on any social networking site such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, or similar sites as well as general use of technology.

1. When you are the adult driver and you are driving youth in your car or rented vehicle, please **limit** use of your cell phone, or talk on hands-free device. If you need to have a lengthy conversation, pull over to the side of the road or hand your cell phone over to a passenger.
2. Please refrain from using your cell phone at events. If you have to return a call or text, please excuse yourself from the room to do it.
3. Each retreat or camp may have their own specific technology guidelines. Please follow and model these guidelines.
4. Texting messages **to children, youth or vulnerable adults** should be limited to youth group reminders, event changes, small group announcements, encouragements, and other ministry-related texts. Other important conversations should happen face-to-face.
5. **Do not** use your cell phone camera, personal camera, or any other digital recorder in sleeping areas or bathroom areas.
6. Pictures of children, youth or vulnerable adults taken while at a church event **cannot** be posted on websites, Facebook, or google plus, or through any other electronic means without a signed written consent by parent or guardian. See individual's emergency form for approval or denial.
7. Only staff may create and administer official social media pages for the church-related ministry programs.
8. **Adults should not initiate a social media connection. Before accepting** a child's, youth's or vulnerable adult's friend request on social media, remember that they will have access to your pages and comments. Adults who accept these friend requests, **should only** communicate on a child's, youth's or vulnerable adult's social media and **not through** private messages. Adults are encouraged to communicate with children, youth and vulnerable adults through the closed groups set up by the staff.
9. All approved adults agree to comply with using their own name on all social networks, and to understand that at all times that they are to represent the congregation's ministry and ensure that their postings will be appropriate to the mission. All confidential and sensitive information will be kept private and will not be posted. Should any Approved Adult have a concern about the proper nature of a posting, they agree to consult with their leadership person before posting. Post **only positive** comments about events and activities at church
10. Talk to the staff about any further technological questions or concerns. **When in doubt, talk to us.**
11. Adults leading and/or participating in a video-conferencing call shall conduct themselves as if they were attending a public in-person meeting.

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Print Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Safe Sanctuary Covenant

The congregation of First United Methodist Church Franklin is committed to providing a safe and secure environment of all children, youth, and vulnerable adults who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The policy reflects 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) should volunteer to work with children, youth or vulnerable adults 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, youth or vulnerable adults is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with one of our church's ministers before accepting an assignment.
3. Adult volunteers with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall observe the "Two-Adult Rule", whenever possible, so that no adult is left alone with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
4. Adult volunteers with children, youth or vulnerable adults shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
5. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

### Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a volunteer/staff in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children, youth or vulnerable adults?  Yes  No
2. As a volunteer/staff in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "Two-Adult Rule" to the best of your ability?  Yes  No
3. As a volunteer/staff in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment?  
 Yes  No
4. As a volunteer/staff in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor?  Yes  No
5. As a volunteer/staff in this congregation, do you agree to inform a minister of this congregation if you have ever been convicted of child abuse?  Yes  No

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

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Signature of Application (sign and print)

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Date