

## Child Abuse Prevention Policy

### **Introduction**

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes [a] child...welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church 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 and sexual exploitation, and abuse."

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse (ritual abuse refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be) occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma. Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse. God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (*From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church- 1996*. Copyright © 1996 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission. [pp. 384-386]).

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

### **Purpose**

Our congregation's purpose for establishing the Child Abuse Prevention 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).

## **Child Protection Guidelines**

1. All persons, employed or volunteer, who work with minors (defined as those under the age of 18 years) must be screened prior to beginning work.
2. Adults who have been convicted of sexual or physical abuse of minors or non-minors or who have a history of inappropriate conduct with children will not be employed or serve in a volunteer position in any church sponsored activity of program for minors.
3. Employees and volunteers who work with minors shall observe the “two person rule” which required the EVERY REASONABLE EFFORT shall be made to insure that there will be no situation where employee or volunteer is alone with the minor.
4. The “open door policy” will also be observed which is defined as having the door unlocked and the door windows uncovered to the extent of not obstructing the view of activities in the classroom from the outside.
5. The Children’s Ministry Director will patrol the halls during Sunday School and look in on the classes occasionally as a known “spot check”, while gathering attendance information.
6. All volunteers working with minors are required to go through training before they begin work with minors as an assistant or helper. Volunteers will be members or constituents for six months or serve for at least six months as assistant or helper before becoming eligible for a leadership position.
7. Our guidelines and procedures for reporting suspected incidents of abuse or any behavior which seems abusive or inappropriate are labeled “Appendix A.”
8. Our guidelines and procedures for responding to reported incidents of abuse are labeled “Appendix B.”
9. Children and youth in the church building for CUMC ministries, programs or childcare are under the care of the child protection policy. They are considered safe under the care and supervision of two trained and screened adults at all times. Should a potentially dangerous situation occur, the supervising adults will take the necessary steps to keep the children safe. As a result of this care, the church is still able to function as a church in the areas of the building that come into contact with youth and children’s ministries, programs, and childcare. Adults utilizing the church building for reasons other than working directly with children do not need to be background screened or trained on the child protection policy.

### **Appendix A**

#### **Reporting Procedures**

Indiana law requires a person to immediately report suspected and reported child abuse to the authorities and in organizations such as Christ United Methodist Church, Lafayette, IN to the appropriate individual in charge. A person who fails to do so can be prosecuted for a Class B misdemeanor or, in extreme circumstances, may be subject to civil liability for money damages. Therefore, all employees and volunteers at Christ United Methodist Church, Lafayette, IN must adhere to the following procedures:

1. In the event of suspected, reported or discovered child abuse or the violation of the Child Protection Guidelines of Christ United Methodist Church, Lafayette, IN the employee or volunteer shall immediately make a report to the local child protection service at 765-429-5100. AFTER reporting to child protection services, the employee or volunteer will immediately notify the pastor or, in the absence of the pastor, a person designated by the pastor and approved by the Church Council.

Physical signs of abuse MAY include:

- lacerations and bruises
- irritation, pain or injury to the genital area
- difficulty with urination
- discomfort when sitting
- torn or bloody underclothing
- venereal disease

Behavioral signs of abuse MAY include:

- nightmares
- anxiety when approaching the church, nursery or Sunday School area (beyond normal separation anxiety)
- nervous or hostile behavior towards adults
- sexual self-consciousness or acting out sexual behavior
- withdrawal from church activities and friends

Verbal signs of abuse MAY include statements such as:

- “I don’t like \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “\_\_\_\_\_ does things to me when we are alone.”
- “I don’t like to be alone with \_\_\_\_\_.”
- “\_\_\_\_\_ fooled around with me.”

[adapted from Child Abuse: Governing Law and Legislation by I. Sloan (1983).]

2. Reports shall be documented in writing with the date of the report, the time of the report, the telephone number to which the report was made, the recipient of the report and a brief synopsis of the report. If possible, all oral reporting will be done in the presence of a recording witness.

3. All church employees and volunteers working with minor children will receive training at the beginning of each school church administrative year regarding the signs of child abuse, including child sexual abuse, and the steps to report any and all suspected child abuse.

## **Appendix B**

### **Response Procedures**

1. The official spokesperson for Christ United Methodist Church, Lafayette, IN shall be the pastor, or in the absence of the pastor, the previously designated spokesperson. All inquiries or requests for information from the media, attorneys or any other parties shall be referred to the official spokesperson. No person other than the official spokesperson is to release any information regarding any alleged incident of child abuse without the express approval of the official spokesperson.
2. The official spokesperson shall immediately report any alleged incident of child abuse to the appropriate local Child Protective Services Agency of the county, our insurance carrier, the Conference Chancellor and the District Superintendent.
3. The care and safety of the minor is our first priority. We will not confront the accused without the approval of the Child Protective Service or law enforcement authorities.
4. We will not judge any person accused, but we will take any allegation of child abuse seriously and will reach out in Christian love and support to the minor and the mono's family, extending whatever pastoral care resources are needed. We will cooperate fully with any authorities investigating an allegation of child abuse.
5. We will treat the accused with dignity and respect. If the accused is a church worker, that person shall be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished and the person has been cleared by the authorities. If the accused is a paid employee of our church, his or her income will be maintained until the allegations are cleared by the authorities or until criminal charges are filed.
6. All communication to the media, congregation and the public will be by the official spokesman who will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
7. All efforts in responding to the alleged incident of child abuse shall be documented by the pastor or in the absence of the pastor, by the previously designated spokesperson, and maintained in a secure and confidential file.

**Christ United Methodist Church, Lafayette, IN  
Child Protection Guidelines Volunteer Form for Work with Minors**

This form is to be completed by all applicants for any position involving the supervision, custody or care of minors, whether employed or voluntary. It is not an employment application form. This form is used to help our church provide a safe and secure environment for those children, youth and adults who participate in our ministries and programs.

**Personal Information**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

(Identity must be confirmed with a valid driver's license or other photographic ID)

Birthdate \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a current driver's license? \_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

License Number \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Expires \_\_\_\_\_

Present Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Home

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security # \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate the type of ministry and work with minors you prefer:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The date you would be able to begin: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the minimum time commitment you can make: \_\_\_\_\_

List all previous church and non-church work you have done involving minors. List each organization by name and address, the type of work you did and the dates. List your gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for work with minors.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

---

---

---

---

*Appendix C (continued)*

**Please list three personal references (not family)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (day and evening) \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (day and evening) \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (day and evening) \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship \_\_\_\_\_

Have you ever been convicted of or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft or motor vehicle violations)?

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No

(If yes, please explain. Attach a separate page if needed)

Would you be willing to sign a release which would permit a police background check?

\_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ (If yes, please sign release)

Is there any fact or circumstance involving your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance and care of minors? \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ No

(If yes, please explain. Attach a separate page if needed)

---

---

---

The information contained in this application is true and correct to the best of my knowledge. I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give you any information that they may have regarding my character and fitness for work with minors.

Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures of Christ united Methodist Church, Lafayette, IN. I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT. This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understand.

**Applicant's signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

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

**Witness:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Appendix C (continued)*

**Parent's Statement if Applicant is a Minor**

(A minor is a person under eighteen (18) years of age.)

If the applicant is a minor, a parent or guardian is required to also sign and affirm that the minor has not engaged in illegal activities.

To my knowledge, \_\_\_\_\_ has not engaged in any illegal activity or child abuse of any kind and I know of no reason why he/she should not work with minors at Christ United Methodist Church, Lafayette, IN.

Parent or Guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness \_\_\_\_\_

## REPORT OF SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE

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