

WHY DO WE NEED A SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY?

Although the Upper New York Annual Conference passed a resolution at the June 2011 meeting requiring all churches to create and implement a policy, there are compelling reasons why we as disciples of Christ should strongly endorse the creation of a policy, even if the Bishop had not mandated that it will be done by December 31, 2012. The UNYAC has affirmed the need for this as follows:

Vision:

To live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

Purpose:

Growing in our relationship with God
Being the body of Christ within the world,
Living in accordance with the example of Jesus Christ by:

- Engaging, equipping and empowering local churches to be in ministry with and to our Global Neighborhood
- Encouraging and developing leadership within the laity and clergy that is diverse yet united by our love for Christ; and
- Building relationships with our neighbors, particularly with those who have been disenfranchised by mainstream society

WHEREAS God has called us to make disciples of Jesus Christ with concern that our ministries safely protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation; and

WHEREAS Jesus taught that "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me," (*Mark 9:37 NRSV*) and "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 NRSV*); and

WHEREAS The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state that "...children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse"²; and

WHEREAS at each child's baptism, we affirm our responsibility to their safety by our congregational response, pledging: "*With God's help, we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way to leads to eternal life.*"³; and

WHEREAS as Disciples, we affirm Christ's commandment to love our neighbors and serve as witnesses of Christ's power to transform lives.

Loving and protecting the young, innocent and vulnerable among us is what we as loving and caring people do to "Live and Walk in the Spirit of Christ" (*Galatians 5:25*).