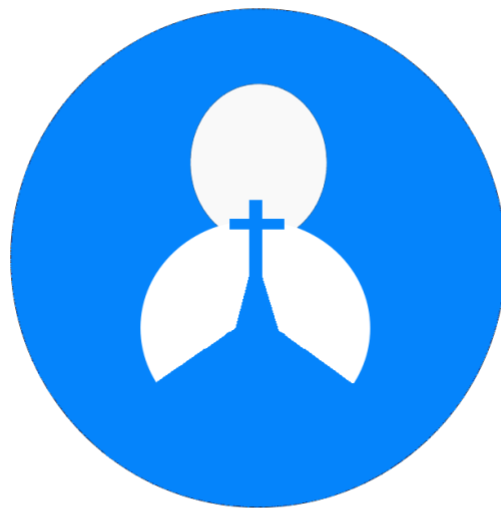




Lebanon First United Methodist Church

415 W. Main St. Lebanon, TN 37087 | 615-444-3315 |
lebanonfumc.com

Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries Policy



SafeSpaces

Creating Safe Spaces that become Sacred Places

[Jesus] took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.” —Mark 9:36-37 NIV

[Jesus also said,] “If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.” —Matthew 18:6 NIV

Introduction

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 any abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.

—from the 1996 General Conference Resolution

Purpose

Lebanon FUMC is committed to providing and maintaining a safe, nurturing environment for all children, youth, and adults while they are participating in the life of the church.

Statement of Covenant

We pledge to nurture an environment that is safe for all children, youth, and adults by:

- 1) Using prayerful discernment in selecting those who will work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults
- 2) Maintaining background checks for all staff, employees, and volunteers
- 3) Conducting thorough training of all new Staff/Employees/Volunteers of this policy and safe practices, and requiring regular refresher classes
- 4) Conducting annual classes for all staff, employees, and volunteers on all church policies, first aid, methods of discipline, etc.
- 5) Ensuring all staff, employees, and volunteers are aware of procedures for reporting suspected abuse of any kind, as a matter of law as well as Christian compassion

Thus, we adopt the following Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries Policy for the general safety of our community and for the prevention of abuse in our church.

Scope

This Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries policy shall apply to all Lebanon FUMC staff, adult volunteers, and authority figures whose duties or volunteer activities bring them into direct contact with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults participating in any specific ministry area programming, activities, or events sponsored by Lebanon FUMC. Lebanon FUMC is committed to providing an environment that is as safe as possible for all who to the best of our ability. This policy does not supersede or countermand requirements that apply to any paid or unpaid staff/volunteers by reason of applicable law or regulation.

Though we encourage all safe spaces trained persons to always be aware of the safety and security of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults, during church-wide, community outreach, or non-specific ministry area programming, activities, or events, the expectation will be the parents or guardians are primarily responsible for the safety and security of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

Training

- A. All staff and adult volunteers will be given a written copy of the Safe Spaces policy and will sign a written acknowledgement that they have read and understand it.
- B. A training course will be offered periodically throughout the year for new staff and/or new adult volunteers to inform them of the Safe Spaces policy.
- C. Upon completion of training, staff and adult volunteers will complete a Safe Spaces covenant and submit it to leadership (prior to any participation). *(See Appendix E)*
- D. All staff and adult volunteers shall also participate in mandatory training as deemed necessary. Staff and adult volunteers already screened and approved shall be required to annually renew their covenant to abide by and cooperate with the church's policies and procedures.
- E. All forms will be kept on file in the ministry director's office under strict confidentiality.
- F. Training materials will be available for review from the staff person directly responsible for the ministry area.
- G. Certified First Aid/CPR training will be offered on an as needed basis.

Safe Spaces Guidelines

2-Adult Rule — There will be two adults present for all interactions with children and youth at all times, both in person and online. In person interactions in any room must be observable at all times from outside of the room. If one-on-one interactions are unavoidable, they should occur with door open, in an unenclosed area, and with the knowledge of another approved adult.

Abuse — Lebanon FUMC will not tolerate any physical, verbal, sexual, emotional, or mental abuse of any child, youth, or adult — in person and/or online — which breaches the trust relationship of our hospitable, safe, nurturing, Christian environment.

(See Appendix A)

Accidents/Injuries — The authority figure present shall fill out a hard copy of an Incident Report form. A copy shall be given to a parent/guardian, the original to the director of the ministry area to keep on file. *(See Appendix C)*

Appropriate Boundaries — All persons (staff, adult volunteers, and participants) will maintain physical and emotional boundaries appropriate to their specific roles, ages, and relationships to others. This includes in person and online. Any inappropriate contact received by any person (staff, adult volunteers, or participant) should be reported immediately to an authority figure or ministry area leader.

Attendance Procedures — Parents/Adult guardians will sign children in and out of rooms/events. Staff and Adult Volunteers are responsible for ensuring youth sign themselves in to rooms/events. This includes VBS, children's choir, Sunday school, nursery, and others as needed.

Bullying — Lebanon FUMC will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps as needed to eliminate such behavior. This policy applies to all adults and minors. Examples include, but are not limited to physical, verbal, nonverbal, emotional, relational, or cyber bullying.

(See Appendix A)

Discipline — Staff and adult volunteers are not to use physical force except in self-defense or defense of others. It is against Lebanon FUMC policy to use corporal punishment.

Electronic Communication — The use of electronic communication such as texting, email, and group messaging apps may be used following the 2-Adult Rule. If an authority figure is contacted through a direct message, they should reply with another staff or adult volunteer in the communication. Parents/guardians may request in writing that a child not be contacted through any form of electronic communication by any Lebanon FUMC staff or adult volunteer.

(See Appendix B)

Equal Treatment — All ministry participants—including children, youth, adults, staff, employees, volunteers, visitors, etc.—will be treated equally, regardless of sex, race, age, orientation, background, religion, or other qualities and characteristics.

Facility Security — Authority Figures are responsible to ensure the security of the facility at all times during their respective department events, activities, etc. This includes requiring that all doors be supervised by at least one adult when open/in use, and securely locked when not in use and after the event/before leaving.

Five Years Older Rule — Authority figures supervising children and/or youth will be at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth participant.

Medical Release/Registration Forms — All children and youth shall have a completed medical release/parental permission form for any off-site or overnight trips. The medical release form will be valid for a 1-year period beginning with the first event for which it is submitted; a new form must be submitted if a change in medical status occurs. All forms will be maintained by the ministry director and will be available upon request as needed. *(See Appendix D)*

Ministry Requirements — All staff, employees, or volunteers for church-sponsored and ministry events must have completed a background check, interviewed with the ministry leader, and completed training on the Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

Movement Within the Facility — Unless they are signed in to a ministry area event or program, parents/guardians are responsible for escorting their children from one location to another (i.e., to the bathroom during worship, from worship to donuts, from Sunday School to worship, etc.).

Online Meetings — Online platform meetings taking place on programs like Zoom, Skype, Team, Google Meet and so on must occur in an open forum or following the 2-Adult Rule.

Outside Interactions — When interactions with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults are outside of ministry area events or programming, like familial or social relationships, mentoring, sporting or extracurricular events, etc. staff and adult volunteers must work to ensure proper boundaries are drawn and followed. One-on-one meetings must be approved and documented by the parents/guardians prior to outside interaction.

Photo Policy— Adult leaders should post photos on social network sites only with prior written permission granted by a parent/guardian. When posted, PHOTOS MUST NOT BE TAGGED with names or location indicators. All photos must be appropriate and in keeping with the spirit of the ministry event. *(See Appendix D)*

Physical Contact — Lebanon FUMC promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting ministry participants, staff, and adult volunteers. To that end, we encourage appropriate forms of physical contact and prohibit inappropriate ones. *(See Appendix A)*

Prohibited Conduct —conduct that is prohibited both in person and/or online and includes but is not limited to:

- Possession or being under the influence of any illegal substances
- Possession of any type of weapon on church property
- Use of language with sexual connotations, overtones, or innuendo in the presence of, directed toward, or about a minor or any adult
- Sexual advances or activity of any kind between any adult and a minor/vulnerable adult or a child/youth and another child/youth
- Possessing or watching obscene or pornographic materials

Recommended Ratios — Ratios will vary depending on the age. It is the responsibility of the Authority Figure to know the exact ratio, but a minimum of two adults must always be present. Employees, volunteers, and other caregivers are empowered and encouraged to limit children/youth to these recommended ratios or lower.

- Infants-3 years 2:10
- 4 years-Kindergarten 2:20
- 1st grade-5th grade 2:30
- 6th grade-12th grade 2:40

For any activity held off church premises, it is recommended that a stricter ratio of adults to children/youth apply (typically 2:16 minimum).

Rooming — In situations where authority figures are lodging with children or youth, the 2-Adult Rule must be followed at all times. Authority figures may not sleep in the same bed with children or youth.

Searches — Lebanon FUMC staff and adult volunteers are not to perform searches on children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Staff shall notify parents and the appropriate law enforcement if a child/youth is committing or has committed an unlawful act upon church campus or at a church function. Such unlawful acts may include but are not limited to possession of any weapons, drugs, alcohol, or dangerous instruments.

Six-Month Rule — All volunteers involved with children, youth, or vulnerable adults must be members of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment. Persons not meeting this minimum requirement may serve only in partnership with fully screened and trained volunteers.

Social Media — An authority figure shall never initiate a connection (friending, following, etc.) on social media. All interactions through social media will only occur in an open forum or following the 2-Adult Rule. Parents/guardians may request in writing that a child not be contacted through any form of social media by any Lebanon FUMC staff or adult volunteer. *(See Appendix B)*

Transportation — The 2-Adult Rule will be followed when transporting children, youth, or vulnerable adults by an authority figure. In order for one driver to provide transportation for one child, youth, or vulnerable adult passenger, parent/guardian permission must be obtained and documented in advance. Transportation Release Agreement must be signed by a parent/guardian for children/youth to be transported to and from Lebanon FUMC events or programming. *(See Appendix D)*

Verbal Interactions — Staff and adult volunteers are prohibited from speaking in a way that is or could be construed as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. They must not initiate personal sexually oriented conversations or discuss their own sexual activities. *(See Appendix A)*

Reporting of Abuse

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with minors or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously.

- 1) Lebanon FUMC will provide minors and parents/guardians with information about how to respond to abuse and inappropriate communication from staff, employees, volunteers, and other adults or minors, including safe methods for reporting concerns.
- 2) The staff person/ministry leader will do whatever is necessary to ensure the child, youth, or adult is safe and cared for in the immediate moment.
- 3) Staff and adult volunteers shall immediately report any incident actually witnessed, learned of indirectly, or suspected to a staff person or authority figure.
- 4) In cases involving abuse, alleged sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct of a minor, the person receiving the report shall promptly report the incident to the local authorities of child welfare and protective services. Lebanon FUMC will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made which require investigation.
- 5) The staff/employee/volunteer shall fill out an Incident Report form. The person making the report shall also notify the ordained clergy.
- 6) If a staff person is involved, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee chairperson will be notified by one of the pastors.
- 7) An ordained clergyperson will contact the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent cannot be reached, the bishop's office will be contacted.
- 8) An ordained clergyperson will notify legal counsel and insurance agent.
- 9) In the event of any form of abuse, church staff and members will not speak to the media. The District Superintendent and Senior Pastor (unless the Senior Pastor is involved in the abuse) shall turn over the information to allow the Conference Media Crisis Response team to make public announcements.

APPENDIX A

Terms and Definitions

Abuse— when someone uses their behavior or influence over another person to cause harm or to exert power over them, especially when that behavior is repeated regularly.

- **Child Abuse** — harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare by a person responsible for the child’s health or welfare or by a person in a position of trust; such harm may be physical, emotional, mental, or sexual and may occur or be threatened through language and/or in-person or virtual contact
- **Child Sexual Abuse** — any in-person or virtual interaction in which a child is used for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older child. A child is powerless either to consent to or resist such sexual acts. This includes language/innuendo, fondling, sexual intercourse, forced participation in sexual acts, incest, exploitation for the purpose of pornography or prostitution, and/or exposure to pornography and/or adult sexual activity.
- **Emotional/Mental Abuse** — abuse in which a person exposes a person to spoken and/or unspoken violence, emotional cruelty, and/or manipulation; includes shaming, humiliation, and cruelty
- **Neglect** — abuse in which a person endangers a person’s health, safety, or welfare through negligence; includes withholding food, water, shelter, bathroom breaks, and other basic needs
- **Physical Abuse** — abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to another; includes hitting, shaking, and using unnecessary restraints
- **Sexual Abuse** — abuse in which sexual contact or language occurs between a person and another person (including a child/youth and another child/youth); includes inappropriate touching, exposing oneself, and sexually oriented conversations or language
- **Vulnerable Adult Abuse** — harm or threatened harm to a vulnerable adult’s health or welfare by a person responsible for the vulnerable adult’s health or welfare or by a person in a position of trust; harm may be physical, emotional, mental, or sexual and may occur or be threatened through language and/or in-person or virtual contact

Adult — A person who has attained the age of 18 years.

Adult Volunteer — Any non-staff or unpaid person who has the care/supervision of a participant/participants at an event and may also serve in the role of an authority figure. Such persons should be 18 years of age or older and at least 5 years older than the age group with which they are to work. This role requires background checks and extensive training in Safe Spaces and risk reduction.

Appropriate Physical Contact: side hugs; handshakes; high-fives; pats on the arm, shoulder, or back; holding hands with young children in escorting situations

Appropriate Verbal Interactions: positive reinforcement, appropriate jokes, encouragement, praise, affirmations

Authority Figure — A paid staff or adult volunteer who is a primary leader of any activity for children, youth, or vulnerable persons, and therefore responsible to be in charge of a group of children, youth, or a vulnerable person/persons and to be giving direction, setting boundaries, disciplining appropriately, and/or maintaining safety in all situations. Such persons should be 18 years of age or older and at least 5 years older than the age group with which they are to work. This role requires background checks and extensive training in Safe Spaces and risk reduction.

Bullying — Aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time, and involving an imbalance of power or strength. Anyone who sees an act of bullying and then encourages it is also engaging in bullying.

- **Physical Bullying** — when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
- **Verbal Bullying** — when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
- **Nonverbal, Emotional, or Relational Bullying** — when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, gossip, and intimidating by using gestures.
- **Cyberbullying** — the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:
 - a. Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
 - b. Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
 - c. Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad.
 - d. Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
 - e. Hazing: activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
 - f. Sexualized bullying: when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Child — Generally defined as person who is under 18 years of age.

Children's Ministry — At Lebanon FUMC, this ministry area includes all programs and care for children ages birth through 5th grade.

Inappropriate (Prohibited) Physical Contact: kissing; full-frontal hugs; lap-sitting older than kindergarten; piggyback rides, tickling; wrestling; massage; touching private areas outside of authorized and documented personal care assistance; showing affection in isolated areas or one-on-one; any form of touching or affection which is unwanted

Inappropriate (Prohibited) Verbal Interactions: name-calling, cursing, off-color or sexual jokes, secrets, shaming, belittling, derogatory remarks, harsh language which may frighten, threaten, or humiliate

Participants — Children, youth, adults, or vulnerable adults who are registered, enrolled, attending, or otherwise participating in an event or activity sponsored by Lebanon FUMC.

Staff — Any Lebanon FUMC clergy person, ministry area leader, paid employee of the church, and/or paid employee of any children's, youth, or vulnerable person's ministry that has the care or supervision of a participant at an event and may also serve in the role of an authority figure. Such persons should be 18 years of age or older and at least 5 years older than the age group with which they are to work. This role requires background checks and Safe Spaces training.

Youth Helper — Younger than 18 years of age and considered a child, therefore, can serve in no role of authority over children, youth, or vulnerable persons but may assist with programming and supervision. This role requires age-appropriate situational briefing on procedures related to the event.

Youth Ministry — at Lebanon FUMC, this includes all ministry area programs and care for youth 6th grade through 12th grade

Vulnerable Adult — any person aged 18 or above who, by reason of age, illness, mental or other disability, or other situation is unable to take care of themselves or to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation

APPENDIX B

YOUTH ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS OPT OUT FORM

Valid for 1 year from date signed

Youth Name

E-mail

Mobile Number

School Attending Currently

6 7 8 9 10 11 12

Grade

F M Prefer Not to Say

Gender

My student may NOT receive electronic or social media communications from members or representatives of Lebanon FUMC.

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

APPENDIX C



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Incident Report

Name of Injured/Victim: _____ Age: _____

Date and Time of Incident: _____

Place of Incident: _____

Caregiver at the Time of Incident: _____

Describe Incident: _____

Describe nature of injury: _____

Name of any other person(s) involved: _____

Witness(es) to Incident: _____

Is abuse, harassment, or bullying suspected, reported, or witnessed? YES NO

Type(s): _____

Was a parent/guardian contacted? YES NO Time: _____ How? _____

Was a doctor contacted? YES NO Time: _____ Name: _____

What action was taken?

Describe medical treatment/first aid: _____

Follow-up suggested: _____

Next Steps: _____

Completed by: _____ On _____

Signature of Caregiver/Person Making Report

Date

Signature of Parent/Guardian

Date

Signature of Ministry Leader/Authority Figure

Date

Signature of Pastor

Date

APPENDIX D

LEBANON FUMC MEDICAL, PHOTO, AND TRANSPORTATION RELEASE AGREEMENT

Valid for 1 year from date signed

Parent/Legal Guardian 1: _____

E-mail: _____ Mobile Phone: _____

Parent/Legal Guardian 2: _____

E-mail: _____ Mobile Phone: _____

The names/grade of your children: _____/_____/_____
_____/_____/_____

Parents, please initial next to each item to signify you have read and agree to it.

I/we acknowledge that participation in children/youth ministry activities involves risk and may result in sickness, bodily injury, death, emotional injury, personal injury, property damage and financial damage, and I/we accept the risks of injury associated with participation in and transportation to and from children/youth ministry activities. _____

I/we accept personal financial responsibility for any injury or other loss sustained during children/youth ministry activities and transportation to and from them, as well as for any medical treatment rendered. _____

I/we release and promise to indemnify, defend, and hold harmless Lebanon FUMC for any injury arising directly or indirectly from children/youth ministry activities. _____

I/we authorize Lebanon FUMC leadership, in whose care the minor has been entrusted, to consent to any X-ray examination, anesthetic, medical, surgical or dental diagnosis or treatment, and hospital care, to be rendered to the minor under the supervision of any physician or dentist licensed under the provision of the Medical Practice Act on the medical staff of a licensed hospital, whether diagnosis or treatment is rendered at the office of said physician or at said hospital. _____

I/we agree to be liable and to pay all costs and expenses incurred in connection with such medical and dental services rendered to the minor pursuant to this authorization. Should it be necessary for my/our child to return home due to medical reasons or otherwise, I/we shall assume all transportation costs. _____

I/we do also hereby give permission for my/our minor to ride in any vehicle designated by Lebanon FUMC leadership while attending and participating in children/youth ministry activities. _____

I/we give authorization for Lebanon FUMC leadership to use my child's first name, voice, likeness, photograph and video in program materials, promotional materials, and Internet publication. _____

I/we give authorization for my/our minor to receive electronic and social media communications from members or representatives of Lebanon FUMC. _____

SIGNATURES: Must sign in blue ink in front of a Notary.

Parent/Legal Guardian: _____ Date: _____

(Notary Stamp Here)

Notary: _____

Date: _____ Commission Exp. _____



APPENDIX E

Lebanon First United Methodist Church

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Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries Covenant

Lebanon FUMC is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and adults who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policies statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a sacred 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:

- No one who has been convicted of child abuse (sexual abuse, physical abuse, or mental/emotional abuse) will be authorized to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.
- Adult staff, employees, and volunteers with children and youth shall observe the "2-Adult Rule" at all times both in person and via electronic communications, as well as all of the procedures outlined described in the Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries Policy.
- Adult staff, employees, and volunteers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep informed of church policies and state laws regarding abuse.
- Adult staff, employees, and volunteers shall immediately report to their leaders/ Authority Figure any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a staff member or adult volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to inform your leaders/Authority Figure if you have been convicted of child abuse?
 yes
2. As a staff member or adult volunteer at Lebanon FUMC, do you agree to observe and abide by all procedures outlined in the Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries Policy?
 yes
3. As a staff member or adult volunteer at Lebanon FUMC, do you agree to participate in training and education events as requested related to your assignment?
 yes
4. As a staff member or adult volunteer at Lebanon FUMC, do you agree to report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your leaders/Authority Figure immediately?
 yes

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

Signature of Staff or Adult Volunteer

Date

Print full name