

BONAIRE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY

INTRODUCTION

Safe sanctuaries is the name commonly given by United Methodist Annual Conferences and local churches to their individual efforts to make conferences, districts, and local church programs welcoming and safe for children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

PURPOSE

Bonaire United Methodist Church's purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuaries Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

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).

STATEMENT OF COVENANT

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children, youth, and vulnerable adults entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers and we will be responsible in overseeing our programs and events and in training our staff, so that they are able and equipped to minister to all in Jesus' name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience and we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator.

KEY TERMS

- Child/Youth – a person under the age of 18.
- Vulnerable adult – adults whose mental or physical condition makes them susceptible to abuse.
- Staff person – any person employed by Local church or programs using its facilities who is responsible for children's activities. This person has regular and direct contact with children, must be 21 years of age or older and is counted in the 2-adult rule.
- Supervisory Adult – any person who supervises a children or youth activity. This person has regular and direct contact with children and is counted in the 2-adult rule.
- Pastor – the most senior clergy at a church sponsored event.
- BUMC – Bonaire United Methodist Church

PROCEDURES

We adopt these minimum standards for our ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

I. Screening and recruiting

- a. All staff and volunteers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will have completed the VOLUNTEER COVENANT STATEMENT before being considered to supervise in ministry.
- b. All volunteers will demonstrate an active relationship with this church of at least 6 months before being allowed to supervise children, youth, and vulnerable adults. New staff persons will have their references checked before hiring.
- c. All volunteers and staff will sign the ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND AUTHORIZATION form in order for BUMC to receive a Criminal Background Check. These background checks will be updated every three (3) to four (4) years. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant's confidential personnel file. All forms shall be kept in a locked file on the church premises under supervision of the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator and others designated by the Church Council.

2. SUPERVISION

- a. The 2-Adult Rule: there will be at least two adults, not married to each other, in each classroom. If this is not possible, there will be a roving teacher who moves amid the classrooms during the program period.
- b. No child will be left unsupervised while attending a children's or youth event at BUMC.
- c. Each children's classroom will have a window in the door or the door will be left open at all times.
- d. No person shall supervise children/youth unless he/she is at least 5 years older than the oldest student.
- e. No person under 16 shall be considered as one of the 2 adults for activities within the church.
- f. No person under 18 shall be considered as one of the 2 adults for activities away from the church.
- g. Adults should avoid transporting children or youth by themselves. In such circumstances, every attempt should be made to get a parent's/guardian's permission in advance.
- h. Activities in which children are outside direct supervision of their parents/guardians and away from the Bonaire Church property shall require signed written permission forms that include pertinent health information in order to participate. If participants are old enough to understand, they shall sign a covenant of participation listing rules for all trips, overnights, etc.

3. **TRAINING** –is a requirement for all Staff persons and Volunteers working with children or youth at BUMC. An educational component of the Safe Sanctuaries Program will be part of the Application Packet and orientation. Thereafter, the minimum training shall occur at least once a year and teachers shall be trained to recognize the signs of abuse, as well as our policies around Supervision and Reporting.

4. TECHNOLOGY AND SOCIAL MEDIA – The use of social media and technology to communicate continues to expand and affect our human relationships in ways that are both positive and negative.
 - a. BUMC recognizes that informal contact between adults (both staff persons and volunteers who act as supervisory adults) and children and youth occurs and is usually legitimate and beneficial. Informal contact refers to phone calls, letters, e-mail, instant or text messaging, other forms of internet/electronic communication, or any face-to-face contact between an adult and a child/youth that is not connected to official church activities.
 - b. We expect that adults will advise the parents or guardian of the nature of this relationship and seek permission of the parent or guardian before establishing an informal contact relationship with their youth.
 - c. In every instance, it is expected that messaging and social media between adults and unrelated young people will happen in public settings or in group messaging, and never one on one (if you are going to text with a child, copy the parent(s) or another adult, as well).
5. REPORTING
 - a. When an allegation of abuse is made against a staff member or volunteer, the person who witnesses the abuse or receives the allegation of abuse will be sure the child is safe from imminent danger. The safety of the victim is the church's primary concern.
 - b. Upon receiving information of alleged abuse, the teacher will report immediately to the pastor, supervising staff person, or Staff Parish Relations Chair who will call the Georgia CPS Central Intake Center at 1-855-422-4453. An oral report must be made within 24 hours by phone to the Georgia Centralized Intake (1-855-GACHILD or 1-855-422-4453).
6. RESPONDING
 - a. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously and thoroughly investigated.
 - b. The pastor is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the pastor, who will work with the South Georgia Conference Director of Communications.
 - c. If the allegation is against a staff person or pastor, the SPR Chair will be contacted immediately.
 - d. Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident.
 - e. The Church will contact the North Central District Superintendent (478-254-6023) and the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator in the Office of Connectional Ministries (912-393-5524) or the South Georgia Conference's Director of Communications (912-270-6172).

DISCLOSURE

[IMPORTANT -- PLEASE READ CAREFULLY BEFORE SIGNING AUTHORIZATION]
DISCLOSURE REGARDING BACKGROUND INVESTIGATION

Bonaire United Methodist Church, may obtain information about you for volunteering or employment purposes from a third party consumer reporting agency. Thus, you may be the subject of a “consumer report” and/or an “investigative consumer report” which may include information about your character, general reputation, personal characteristics, and/or mode of living, and which can involve personal interviews with sources such as your neighbors, friends, or associates. These reports may contain information regarding your credit history, criminal history, social security verification, motor vehicle records (“driving records”), verification of your education or employment history, or other background checks. Credit history will only be requested where such information is related to the duties and responsibilities of the position for which you are applying. You have the right, upon written request made within a reasonable time after receipt of this notice, to request disclosure of the nature and scope of any investigative consumer report and a copy of any report about you. Please be advised that the nature and scope of the most common form of investigative consumer report obtained with regard to applicants for employment is an investigation into your education and/or employment history conducted by First Advantage Background Services Corp. (“First Advantage”), P.O. Box 105292, Atlanta, GA 30348, 1-800-845-6004. The scope of this notice and authorization is all-encompassing, however, allowing the Company to obtain from any outside organization all manner of consumer reports and investigative consumer reports now and throughout the course of your volunteering or employment to the extent permitted by law. As a result, you should carefully consider whether to exercise your right to request disclosure of the nature and scope of any investigative consumer report.

Para informacion en espanol, visite www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore o escribe a la Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 1700 G Street N.W., Washington, DC 20552.

A SUMMARY OF YOUR RIGHTS UNDER THE FAIR CREDIT REPORTING ACT

The federal Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) promotes the accuracy, fairness, and privacy of information in the files of consumer reporting agencies. There are many types of consumer reporting agencies, including credit bureaus and specialty agencies (such as agencies that sell information about check writing histories, medical records, and rental history records). Here is a summary of your major rights under the FCRA. **For more information, including information about additional rights, go to www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore or write to: Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, 1700 G Street N.W., Washington, DC 20552.**

- **You must be told if information in your file has been used against you.** Anyone who uses a credit report or another type of consumer report to deny your application for credit, insurance, or employment – or to take another adverse action against you – must tell you, and must give you the name, address, and phone number of the agency that provided the information.
- **You have the right to know what is in your file.** You may request and obtain all the information about you in the files of a consumer reporting agency (your “file disclosure”). You will be required to provide proper identification, which may include your Social Security number. In many cases, the disclosure will be free. You are entitled to a free file disclosure if:
 - a person has taken adverse action against you because of information in your credit report;

- you are the victim of identity theft and place a fraud alert in your file;
- your file contains inaccurate information as a result of fraud;
- you are on public assistance;
- you are unemployed but expect to apply for employment within 60 days.

In addition, all consumers are entitled to one free disclosure every 12 months upon request from each nationwide credit bureau and from nationwide specialty consumer reporting agencies. See www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore for additional information.

• **You have the right to ask for a credit score.** Credit scores are numerical summaries of your credit-worthiness based on information from credit bureaus. You may request a credit score from consumer reporting agencies that create scores or distribute scores used in residential real property loans, but you will have to pay for it. In some mortgage transactions, you will receive credit score information for free from the mortgage lender.

• **You have the right to dispute incomplete or inaccurate information.** If you identify information in your file that is incomplete or inaccurate, and report it to the consumer reporting agency, the agency must investigate unless your dispute is frivolous. See www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore for an explanation of dispute procedures.

• **Consumer reporting agencies must correct or delete inaccurate, incomplete, or unverifiable information.** Inaccurate, incomplete or unverifiable information must be removed or corrected, usually within 30 days. However, a consumer reporting agency may continue to report information it has verified as accurate.

• **Consumer reporting agencies may not report outdated negative information.** In most cases, a consumer reporting agency may not report negative information that is more than seven years old, or bankruptcies that are more than 10 years old.

• **Access to your file is limited.** A consumer reporting agency may provide information about you only to people with a valid need – usually to consider an application with a creditor, insurer, employer, landlord, or other business. The FCRA specifies those with a valid need for access.

• **You must give your consent for reports to be provided to employers.** A consumer reporting agency may not give out information about you to your employer, or a potential employer, without your written consent given to the employer. Written consent generally is not required in the trucking industry. For more information, go to www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore.

• **You may limit “prescreened” offers of credit and insurance you get based on information in your credit report.** Unsolicited “prescreened” offers for credit and insurance must include a toll-free phone number you can call if you choose to remove your name and address from the lists these offers are based on. You may opt-out with the nationwide credit bureaus at 1-888-567-8688.

• **You may seek damages from violators.** If a consumer reporting agency, or, in some cases, a user of consumer reports or a furnisher of information to a consumer reporting agency violates the FCRA, you may be able to sue in state or federal court.

• **Identity theft victims and active duty military personnel have additional rights.** For more information, visit www.consumerfinance.gov/learnmore.

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VOLUNTEER COVENANT STATEMENT

The congregation of Bonaire U.M. Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter; as a place where 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) can volunteer to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity. A person who has been so convicted by law, will be welcomed into the redemptive fellowship of the congregation, and may serve in other areas, will not be permitted to not volunteer with children or youth.
2. Adult survivors of child abuse are offered the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to volunteer in some capacity of work with children or youth is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with our church's Senior Pastor.
3. All adult volunteers supervising children or youth of our church need to be active in the life of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment. "Active involvement" will be determined by the Senior Pastor.
4. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall observe the "two-adult rule" at all times so that no adult is alone with children or youth.
5. Adult volunteers supervising children and youth shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep- volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
6. 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 in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "two-adult rule" at all times? ___ Yes ___ No
2. As a volunteer supervising children and youth in this congregation, do you agree to abide by the "six-month rule" before beginning a volunteer assignment that involves leadership or contact with children or youth? ___ Yes ___ No
3. As a volunteer supervising children and youth 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 in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor? ___ Yes ___ No
5. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to inform the Senior Pastor of this congregation if you have ever been convicted of child abuse? ___ Yes ___ No

I have read this Volunteer Covenant Statement, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above:

Print full name _____

Signature of Volunteer Applicant _____

Date of Training _____

Date of Birth _____

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