

**Mt. Sylvan United Methodist Church
Safe Sanctuaries Policy to Reduce the Risk
Of Abuse in the Church**

Preamble:

At baptism, the question is posed to the congregation; "Do you, who witness and celebrate this sacrament, promise your love, support and care to the one (s) about to be baptized, as he/she/they live and grow in Christ? And with all honesty and intention the congregation responds, "we promise our love, support and care."

It is our responsibility to make the best possible world for the most dependent and vulnerable among us. By taking seriously the threat of harm that child abuse poses and by responding in positive, proactive ways, we are living out our baptismal vows as members of Christ's household of faith. The church is called to be a place of sanctuary set apart from the world for the purposes of worship and growth in holiness. This is no less true for the most vulnerable of our members, youth. As such our church must do all it can to remain a place of nurture and shelter.

Mt. Sylvan United Methodist Church affirms the resolution adopted by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church in April 1996, which is aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church and so create communities of faith where youth and adults can grow in holiness. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

"God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting youth and other vulnerable persons from sexual and physical abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where youth and adults grow safe and strong ". Under all circumstances, adults are expected to treat all youth as the gift from God that they are.

The consequences of abuse can be severe. There may be little or no physical or emotional damage or it may be extensive. Beyond the financial consequences, an abuse lawsuit can have a major effect on the church's reputation and can lead to considerable distraction and detraction from the church's ministry. Relationships can be strained if members take sides in support of or against the originators of a lawsuit. These consequences should be avoided at all reasonable cost and for the sake of maintaining the church's witness to the nature of mercy and justice inherent to the Body of Christ.

The purpose of this policy is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our youth. We create this policy to protect all the youth that come to us, to protect both our paid and volunteer staff from potential false allegations of abuse and to limit the extent of legal liability of local church.

This plan was approved by the Mt. Sylvan United Methodist Church Administrative Council December 17, 2007.

This plan was reapproved with amendments (in bold) by the Mt. Sylvan Church Administrative Council on September 27, 2011.

- information on how to identify and report child abuse. The church commits itself to offering regular volunteer training for new volunteers and members.
- B. Minimum supervisory standards will include the "two-adult rule". The two-adult rule requires that no matter the size of the group, there will always be two adults present. This may include the presence of an adult "roamer" who moves in and out of rooms. Persons under the age of 18, Youth Volunteers, will be partnered with another adult and not supervised only by a roamer.
 - a. Minimum adult-youth ratios are set at 1:8 for youth above age 5, 1:4 for youth under age 5.
 - b. All co-ed overnight activities will be supervised by at least two adults; one male, one female. Youth and adults will never share the same bed. While the preference remains to have youth and adults in separate rooms, if an adult is in a room with youth, the "two-adult rule" will apply.
 - c. Any group activity (such as small groups) supervised by only one adult will be held in a public setting or in a room that has an unobstructed window or other opening, permitting those outside the room to see inside the room, or the door shall remain open during the class or session. When the activity takes place in the church building there shall be others in the building at the same time.
 - C. No child will intentionally be left unsupervised when attending a church youth activity.
 - D. Any adult transporting youth in their personal or church vehicle will abide by the Mt. Sylvan Transportation policy. All drivers with youth should have more than one youth and every effort will be made to have another adult with them while traveling in a vehicle. In the cases where this is not possible, one adult and one approved youth volunteer would suffice.
 - E. A pastor providing confidential counseling services may meet in private with a youth while another adult is in the vicinity and is aware of the meeting. If any such counseling extends beyond a single session, the pastor shall obtain consent from the parent or guardian of the youth.
 - F. All ministries commit to giving advance notice to parents of church-sponsored programs for Youth as well as advance notice of any program changes.
 - G. We do not use corporal punishment, humiliating or frightening techniques in disciplining Youth.

Reporting:

Once an incident of child abuse occurs or allegation of an incident is made, it is crucial that it be dealt with speedily and in a clearly outlined manner. In any removal of a person from any youth activities, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted. **The church will not do any investigation.**

A. The Volunteer or Staff Member who observes alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported is required to report the incident immediately to the responsible staff member.

B. The responsible staff member of the activity in which the alleged abuse was observed or disclosed shall immediately attempt to obtain necessary information such as the name of the alleged victim and his or her address and family information.

C. Upon receiving such information, the responsible staff member will comply with all state reporting requirements. In Durham County, such reports are to be made immediately to the

Volunteer Expectations For Working with Children and Youth at Mt. Sylvan United Methodist Church

Appearance

“People look on the outward appearance but God looks on the heart.” 1 Sam 16:7

The first phrase is not the heart of the verse, but it's the truth. Students and adults will base their impression of our ministry on their visual impressions of us. For this reason, we respect ourselves and our youth by wearing appropriate clothing. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

- The activity should dictate the type of clothing worn.
- All of our clothing should communicate personal discipline and recognition of self-worth, be modest, protecting the reputation and image of the Holy Spirit.

Student Relationships

Discretion in staff members' personal lives is fundamental to both spiritual integrity and to continuing to do spiritual ministry among students and their families. (Ephesians 5:1-2, 15-16). To live wisely and without any hint of misconduct, we keep the following standards:

- Any verbal or nonverbal sexual interaction with any student is inappropriate.
- Dating any junior or senior high student is forbidden.
- Discretion must be used in physical contact with any students. Innocent behavior can be misinterpreted. A hug around the shoulders is not sexual abuse, but holding too closely, stroking, massaging, or affectionate kissing raises questions. Any overt display of affection, appropriate hugging for example, should be made in a public setting in front of others.
- Sexual gestures or overtures to a volunteer or staff member by a student should be reported to the pastoral staff member responsible so that a discussion can be held with the student.
- Volunteer staff should form male/female teams whenever possible.
- One-on-One counseling with a student should always occur in a public place, never alone in a car or private place. As a general rule, when counseling a student, invite another adult to observe.
- When a situation arises where you are alone with a student of the other gender, quickly move that situation to a public setting. Make the meeting as brief as necessary to accomplish God's purpose.
- Romantic or sexual attraction for a student by an adult leader should be brought up and discussed with the pastoral staff person responsible for prayer and guidance.
- All suspicions of child or sexual abuse must be reported to the pastoral staff person.
- Any knowledge or suspicion of any youth ministry staff having an inappropriate relationship with a student must be reported promptly to the pastoral staff person.
- No wrestling or physical horseplay should ever occur between staff and students of the opposite sex.
- Church staff or volunteers should obtain the consent of the student's parent or guardian before meeting with that student.

Volunteer Application for Work with Youth and Children

Mt. Sylvan United Methodist Church

BASIC INFORMATION

Name: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____ Email: _____

Emergency Contact: _____

Relationship: _____

Emergency Phone: _____

Church Membership: Member Regular Attendee (non-member)

How long have you regularly attended this church? _____

Occupation: _____

Employer: _____

Previous Work Experience: _____

Previous Volunteer Experience: _____

Special Interests, hobbies, and skills: _____

EDUCATION

High School: _____ Year Graduated: _____

College/Trade School: _____

Degree and Major: _____

Other Education, Training, or Licenses: _____

Name _____

MINISTRY EXPERIENCE

List churches in which you have volunteered and in what areas:

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF:

Please describe yourself in three words:

Describe or name highlights from your faith journey:

What do you do to grow spiritually?

What would you do to maintain your spiritual growth as a volunteer?

What are your spiritual gifts?

Please list any personal weaknesses, areas where you need to grow, or special concerns that could affect your ministry with children and youth:

What special qualities or qualifications would you contribute as a volunteer counselor?

What are your expectations for children's and youth ministry?

MEDICAL INFORMATION

Have you had any prior injuries that might be aggravated by working with children or youth?

If yes, please explain.

Are you currently taking any medication prescribed by a doctor for a physical or other condition that would affect your ministry? If yes, please explain.

Do you have any medical conditions that might be hazardous to others? If yes, please explain.

REFERENCES:

Please provide three character references (other than family members) who can identify your strengths and weaknesses and describe your background. Please have each of these references fill out one of the attached Reference Forms and mail them back to the church office.

Name: _____ Relationship: _____ Contact #: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____ Contact #: _____

Name: _____ Relationship: _____ Contact #: _____

Letter of Reference

_____ is applying to become a volunteer youth/children's counselor with the youth/children's ministry at Mount Sylvan United Methodist Church and has given your name as a personal reference.

The person in this volunteer staff position will be in close contact with children and youth and we want to ensure that these relationships will be healthy ones. Please complete the form below and return in the enclosed envelope with your evaluation of this person's character and integrity. Your response will remain confidential.

1. Describe your relationship with this person.

2. How long have you known this person?

Please use the following scale to respond to questions 3 through 8:

1-low 2-below average 3-average 4-very good 5-excellent

How would you rate his/her ability in the following:

3. Involvement in peer relationships? 1 2 3 4 5

4. Emotional maturity? 1 2 3 4 5

5. Resolving conflict? 1 2 3 4 5

6. Following through with commitments? 1 2 3 4 5

7. Ability to relate to students? 1 2 3 4 5

8. Spiritual maturity? 1 2 3 4 5

9. What are this applicant's strengths?

10. Do you have any concerns with this person working with students? If so, please explain.

___ Please check here if you have concerns that you would prefer discussing in person.

Thank you for taking the time to fill this out. If you have any questions regarding this reference, please contact Jennifer Rogers at (919) 201-7504.

Your Name (printed)

Daytime phone

Signature

Street Address

City

State

Zip

Letter of Reference

_____ is applying to become a volunteer youth/children's counselor with the youth/children's ministry at Mount Sylvan United Methodist Church and has given your name as a personal reference.

The person in this volunteer staff position will be in close contact with children and youth and we want to ensure that these relationships will be healthy ones. Please complete the form below and return in the enclosed envelope with your evaluation of this person's character and integrity. Your response will remain confidential.

1. Describe your relationship with this person.

2. How long have you known this person?

Please use the following scale to respond to questions 3 through 8:

1-low 2-below average 3-average 4-very good 5-excellent

How would you rate his/her ability in the following:

3. Involvement in peer relationships? 1 2 3 4 5

4. Emotional maturity? 1 2 3 4 5

5. Resolving conflict? 1 2 3 4 5

6. Following through with commitments? 1 2 3 4 5

7. Ability to relate to students? 1 2 3 4 5

8. Spiritual maturity? 1 2 3 4 5

9. What are this applicant's strengths?

10. Do you have any concerns with this person working with students? If so, please explain.

___ Please check here if you have concerns that you would prefer discussing in person.

Thank you for taking the time to fill this out. If you have any questions regarding this reference, please contact Jennifer Rogers at (919) 201-7504.

Your Name (printed)

Daytime phone

Signature

Street Address

City

State

Zip

Letter of Reference

_____ is applying to become a volunteer youth/children's counselor with the youth/children's ministry at Mount Sylvan United Methodist Church and has given your name as a personal reference.

The person in this volunteer staff position will be in close contact with children and youth and we want to ensure that these relationships will be healthy ones. Please complete the form below and return in the enclosed envelope with your evaluation of this person's character and integrity. Your response will remain confidential.

1. Describe your relationship with this person.

2. How long have you known this person?

Please use the following scale to respond to questions 3 through 8:

1-low 2-below average 3-average 4-very good 5-excellent

How would you rate his/her ability in the following:

- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3. Involvement in peer relationships? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Emotional maturity? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Resolving conflict? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. Following through with commitments? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. Ability to relate to students? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. Spiritual maturity? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

9. What are this applicant's strengths?

10. Do you have any concerns with this person working with students? If so, please explain.

___ Please check here if you have concerns that you would prefer discussing in person.

Thank you for taking the time to fill this out. If you have any questions regarding this reference, please contact Jennifer Rogers at (919) 201-7504.

Your Name (printed)

Daytime phone

Signature

Street Address

City

State

Zip