

## **Safe Sanctuary Policy for New Hope United Methodist Church**

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

Jesus said, " Whosoever 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 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 states, "children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse" (para.162C).

God calls us to make our churches safe places for all, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from 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—200, pp. 180-181. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.)

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

### **Purpose**

Our purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

### **Statement of Covenant**

As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist Church, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, vulnerable adults as well as all workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults. 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, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirement of South Carolina state law.

### **Staff Selection Policies**

All volunteer and paid staff who work with children and youth at New Hope United Methodist Church will be:

- At least 21 years old or supervised by an adult who is at least 21 years old.
- At least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth they will be supervising.
- A member of New Hope United Methodist Church for at least 6 months.

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All volunteer and paid staff who have supervisory program responsibilities with children and youth at New Hope United Methodist Church will:

- Provide names of references and give permission to check them as necessary
- Provide appropriate background information and give permission to verify as necessary
- Undergo a criminal background check at no expense. Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children, youth or vulnerable adults.

### **Staff Supervision Guidelines**

Whenever supervising activities involving children and youth at New Hope United Methodist Church,

- Two adults who do not live in the same household will be present at all times.
- Children and youth will be accompanied in to and out of a church sponsored activity by their parent or legal guardian, or people authorized by parent/legal guardian.
- They will have access to a telephone, cell phone or pager when groups are at or away from the church facility.
- One-on-one interactions with children and youth will be with an open door and visible to all.

Whenever New Hope United Methodist Church sponsors an activity involving children or youth,

- Anyone has the right to visit and observe the children's/youth activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced.
- All classroom and office doors will have a window or visibility from hallway or remain open while occupied.
- Windows will be kept free from adornment.

Whenever New Hope United Methodist Church transports children or youth away from the church campus on a church sponsored activity,

- No youth should drive to/from events unsupervised or without consent from parent/legal guardian.
- Adults should never transport a child/youth by self.

Whenever New Hope United Methodist Church hosts an activity involving children or youth from another church or community organization, the groups using the church facility will follow New Hope's Safe Sanctuary policies and procedures.

New Hope United Methodist Church volunteer and paid staff will be expected to attend training about Safe Sanctuary policies, procedures and child abuse issues on a regular basis.

If a suspected incident of child abuse or neglect occurs at or is revealed to a volunteer/supervisor/paid staff person at a New Hope sponsored activity, the adult in charge of the activity must:

- Ensure the safety of the child, youth or vulnerable adult.
- Strictly follow South Carolina law reporting procedures.
- Call the church pastor or designee (Lay Leader or Administrative Council Chairman).

### **Conclusion**

In all of our ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child, youth and vulnerable adult 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 Book of Worship*, p. 96).