

New Hope  United Methodist Church

July 13, 2014

Dear Church Volunteer:

As you are aware, the United Methodist conference has mandated all United Methodist Churches to establish and implement a safe sanctuary policy for their congregation. Our purpose for establishing this policy is to demonstrate our commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Our policy was created to protect not only our children, youth, and vulnerable adults but to also protect you- the congregation members who assist with activities that involve them. It consists of numerous requirements, most of which come directly from the conference. One such requirement is that all volunteers and paid staff members who have supervisory program responsibilities with children and youth must consent to a criminal background check at no expense to the applicant.

We have many wonderful programs that involve children and youth at New Hope – and all of them rely on volunteers. Keeping this in mind, I am sincerely asking that you consent to the requirements so that you are able to continue to work with the children and youth of our congregation. They are relying on us!

We created this policy and it was effective around April 2009. If you previously completed a background check and paperwork during our “implementation”, it needs to be completed again. Background checks and paperwork completed and filled out during that time have expired and need to be completed and updated so that we continue to be in compliance with our Safe Sanctuary Policy.

Please find enclosed a copy of our safe sanctuary policy, an application and release form consenting to a criminal background check, and a volunteer profile form. If you would like to consent to the requirements again or even for the first time, please complete the application and release form and the volunteer profile form and return them both to Gary Graham. Your information will remain confidential. If you have any questions regarding our safe sanctuary policy or any of the requirements, please let me know. On behalf of all of the members of New Hope UMC, I thank you for all that you do for our church.

Sincerely,

Shane Livingston  
Safe Sanctuary Committee Chairman

3777 New Hope Road • Pomaria, South Carolina 29126  
Parsonage and Office Phone (803) 276-4200  
<http://www.newhope-umc.org>



# 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.

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).



***Authorization to Conduct Criminal Records and Background Check  
Release of Liability***

I, \_\_\_\_\_, understand that any felony criminal conviction, and any criminal conviction and/or adverse information relating to children, youth, or vulnerable adults (hereinafter collectively referred to as “Adverse Information”) will disqualify me from working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. I understand that a conviction for driving under the influence (“DUI”) or a similar alcohol-related driving conviction within the last five (5) years will disqualify me from transporting children, youth, and vulnerable adults. I understand that the appropriate leaders of the South Carolina Conference of The United Methodist Church (the “South Carolina Conference”) and/or New Hope United Methodist Church will be notified if my record disqualifies me from service in local church and annual conference and/or district activities based on the criteria set forth above.

**Authorization to Obtain and Disclose Background Information**

I hereby authorize the South Carolina Conference and/or New Hope United Methodist Church to contact any background investigation company (currently Trak-1) to request the disclosure of and obtain from them information about me regarding my record of charges, convictions, or other Adverse Information contained in their files or maintained about me in any criminal file or any other file, regardless of whether the file containing the Adverse Information is a local, state, or national file. I further authorize the South Carolina Conference to disclose any information obtained about me from any background investigation company to the appropriate persons of New Hope United Methodist Church and/or the South Carolina Conference so that they may evaluate the information in determining my fitness to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

**Release of Liability Regarding Collection and Disclosure of Information**

For valuable consideration received including, but not limited to, the evaluation of my fitness to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, I hereby release, discharge, and hold harmless any background investigation company, New Hope United Methodist Church, the South Carolina Conference, Trak-1, the employees, agents (collectively referred to herein as the “Releasees”) with respect to any loss, injury, or other damage to me arising out of or in any way related to the collection and disclosure of information about my background whether caused by the negligence of the releasees or otherwise. I have read this release of liability, fully understand its terms, and understand that I have given up substantial rights by signing it. I sign it freely and voluntarily without any inducement.

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Applicant Signature

Date



VOLUNTEER PROFILE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a valid SC driver's license and current auto insurance?  Yes  No

SC Driver's License Number: \_\_\_\_\_

If you answered Yes, would you be willing to provide transport to/from church-sponsored activities?  Yes  No

Are you certified in CPR and/or First Aid?  Yes  No Expires: \_\_\_\_\_

What activities would/are you be willing to help with?

Vacation Bible School  UMYF  Kids In Christ  Children's Choir

Sunday School  Family Ministries (Valentine's Party, Easter Egg Hunt, etc.)

Children's Church  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please list three personal references.

1) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to reference: \_\_\_\_\_

2) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to reference: \_\_\_\_\_

3) Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship to reference: \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interests, Hobbies, Skills: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_