

Child Care Policy of The Kettle Moraine United Presbyterian Church Hartland Wisconsin

Introduction

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church, USA, in June of 1993, adopted a resolution entitled A Vision for Children and the Church. That resolution reads:

Because we affirm that all children are a gift of God, created by God and created good; all children are a gift to the whole of the human community; all children have a real faith and gifts for ministry; all children have the right to be children; and all children are not just tomorrow, they are today.

Because we believe that all children depend upon adults for safety and security in a world that does not always value children; all children are affected first and most deeply by those things that work against health and wholeness; where there is disease, children sicken and die; where there is homelessness, children sleep on the streets and in other dangerous places; where there is war, children are frightened and without a safe place; where the air and water are polluted, children feel the effects in their bodies and in their futures; where there is shame, children's spirits are wounded.

Therefore we hope for a world where all children can find a safe place; where all ages, races, genders, creeds and abilities are recognized, valued, and celebrated; where all adults hear the voices of children and speak with as well for them; where all children have "first call" on the world's resources and first place in the minds and hearts of the world's adults.

Because Jesus welcomed children and encouraged us to welcome them in his name; Jesus lifted up a child as an example of what the realm of God is like.

Therefore we hope for a church where we take seriously our baptismal vow to nurture all children committed to our care; where we bring good news to all those places where children are in need; where adults and children alike share in ministry.

We covenant to act so that this vision may be made real for all children, now and in times to come. Thus, in covenant with all Presbyterian congregations, we adopt this child care policy in our church.

Purpose

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this *Child Care Policy and accompanying procedures* is to *demonstrate our absolute and unwavering* commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of our children and youth.

Statement of Covenant

The congregation of Kettle Moraine United Presbyterian 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 policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to

preserving this church as a sanctuary for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

In keeping with the covenant of baptism, we have committed ourselves and our resources to the nurturing of children. We understand that children cannot grow in faith and in wisdom when they are frightened, distrustful, anxious, or depressed. They cannot learn to love and trust God when those who represent God to them are unloving and untrustworthy. We promise our children that we will provide the structure, education, and the policies that will keep them safe from harm and abuse. In that context, we will screen volunteers train them and ask that they abide by the policies of our church. We will make sure **that no one who has not been actively participating in our church for at least six months is not a volunteer with our children and youth.** We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms with the requirements of state law.

Conclusion

In all our ministries with children and youth, our congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will understand our “promise to guide and nurture them, by word and deed, with love and prayer, encouraging them to know and follow Christ and to be faithful member of his church.” (Congregational promise from the order for “The Sacrament of Baptism” in the *Book of Common Worship*)

Child Care Procedures of The Kettle Moraine United Presbyterian Church Hartland, Wisconsin

I. Background Checks

Youth workers are those who volunteer in the nursery or at overnight youth sleepovers. All current Youth Workers and all future candidates for Youth Workers shall be requested to complete a candidate information questionnaire in a form that is approved by the Christian Education Committee

1. Complete and sign a written consent to the Church's performance of a background check in a form approved by will be responsible for obtaining the completed candidate information questionnaire and providing the completed questionnaire to the person designated by the Christian Education committee to supervise background checks.
2. A candidate who fails as requested to complete the candidate information questionnaire, or give written consent will not be given further consideration for a position with the Church.
3. After a candidate has provided the material requested in accordance with the above, the Christian Education Committee shall obtain background checks as follows:
 - a. For all current employee youth workers (Youth Director) a national criminal background search will be done. (The Personnel Committee will handle all paid staff searches.)
 - b. For all current volunteers in the following positions:
 - i) In our nursery; Sunday School
 - ii) Involving any overnight activities with children
 - iii) Involving any one-to one interaction with children (e.g. mentorship's):
 - (1) A statewide criminal background search or statewide sexual offender search in each state in which the candidate has lived during the past seven years.

II. Nature of Background Checks

Criminal background searches shall be conducted by a contractor designated by the State of Wisconsin Department of Justice, or other states, as may apply.

III. Use of Background Checks

No candidate shall be permitted to act as a Youth or Nursery Worker unless the background checks required by these policies have been completed and reviewed by the Christian Education Committee and has been recommended by the committee for the position. In no case will the committee recommend a candidate who has not been actively participating in the life of the church for at least six months. The committee will recommend against accepting a candidate if background checks disclose that a candidate has or may have committed sexual misconduct with a child, child abuse, or other acts substantially related to such behavior. Other offenses will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

IV. Maintenance and disposition of back check records

In order to protect the privacy of volunteers, to avoid unintentional or malicious distribution of private information, and to provide a record that proper procedures have been followed, written applications for volunteer Youth or Nursery Worker positions shall be kept in a locked cabinet, in the Pastor's office, or similar secure facility as long as a person acts as a volunteer, and for a period of six years after the person has last acted as a volunteer Youth or Nursery Worker. Records of criminal background checks for an applicant shall be maintained with such applications. Those persons designated to do the background checks shall make a written record of the action taken with respect to each applicant and whether or not the criminal background check disclosed information that affected the qualification of the volunteer.

V. Training

Youth Workers will be provided with an explanation of these policies and with an explanation of appropriate responses to reports of Child Abuse. This training will be done on a yearly basis before the start of the Sunday School year (traditionally known as Rally Sunday).

VI. Adult-Child/Youth Ratio

There will be a minimum of two adults per classroom/event.

1. Nursery-
 - a. One adult for the first 5 children. An additional adult will be added for every 5 additional children.
2. Grade 1 and up:
 - a. One adult for the first 10 children. One additional adult for every 10 additional children.
3. At least one Assistant Teacher will float between the classrooms to monitor and support as needed during the entire church event period.
4. Under no circumstance will a one-on-one situation be permitted. Should a class age group result in only one student, that student will be temporarily moved to an adjacent grade class
5. Attendance variations: Adult-to-child ratios are planned based on the enrollment. If attendance exceeds a threshold (for example, a friend accompanies a regular attendee). If the threshold is exceeded by a small amount temporarily, the teacher and CE coordinator will assess the need for additional support and adjustments will be made accordingly.

VII. Check-In/Check-Out System

An age appropriate check-in/check-out system shall be established. With high school youth who drive, it should be understood, with parental approval, who may ride with whom, to and from church. For activities outside of church adults will provide the transportation.

VIII. Touching and Toileting Procedures

1. Nursery and Toddlers:
 - a. Hugging, holding, back rubbing and patting are all acceptable and important way of communicating love and care for a child.
 - b. Genital areas should never be touched except during diaper changing or toileting as is appropriate.
 - c. Children should not be tossed in the air, swung by their arms or legs, or tickled.

- d. Children have the right to refuse touch, except for safety or cleaning.
- e. Touching should be something the child wants and should be done respectfully.
- 2. Ages four, five, and Kindergartners
 - a. Children should only be touched from the shoulder up. Touching the genital or buttock areas is never appropriate. Hugging is appropriate only in supporting a child's need but never if a child declines the desire for such comfort.
 - b. A teacher or helper should avoid being alone in a room with a child or a group of children.
 - c. An adult must accompany children to the bathroom. The adult should wait outside until the children are finished. The door to the bathroom may be propped open so that an adult can hear and see what is going on without actually being inside. An adult should never be alone in a bathroom stall with a child.
 - d. If a child requests help in buttoning or zipping after toileting, the adult should comply in the presence of another adult.
 - e. When possible an adult of the same gender should assist the child.
- 3. Grade 1 and Older:
 - a. Children should only be touched from the shoulders up. Touching the genital or buttocks areas is never appropriate. Hugging is appropriate only when requested by the child.
 - b. A teacher should avoid being alone in a room or a bathroom with one child.

IX. Discipline

Children and staff will covenant to show respect in three special areas:

- 1. We will be respectful of God by:
 - a. Discovering who God is and what God has done for us.
 - b. Loving and serving God.
 - c. Paying attention as we worship and learn about God.
 - d. Doing our best not disturb others in their worship of God.
- 2. We will be respectful of the church building by:
 - a. Being careful not to run, push, or damage property.
 - b. Staying out of locked or closed areas of the building.
 - c. Remembering that the church belongs to Christ not us.
- 3. We will be respectful of all God's people by:
 - a. Learning to love and accept ourselves as Christ loves and accepts us.
 - b. Never hit, kick hurt or make fun of others.
 - c. Obeying those who are teaching and leading us.
 - d. Showing care and compassion to others, remembering that each of us is a "child of God" and should be treated as such.

Violations of the covenant will be addressed as follows:

A child will be given a warning in a manner that should not cause embarrassment. If the child's behavior repeatedly falls short of the expectations of this covenant, they will be excused from

the class or activity, at first for a short “time out”. If the child is not able to control his/her behavior after the “time out”, the child may be sent for a “time out” with one of the staff members, away from the class or activity. If the child is habitually disruptive, parents will be consulted and a conference will be scheduled so that no misunderstanding will occur. The parent may be asked to accompany the child to the program for a given period of time, or the child may be excused from the program.

X. Youth Trips

Youth and parents and staff and volunteers shall covenant with respect to the following behaviors during youth trips:

1. No smoking, drinking of alcoholic beverages or use of illegal drugs.
2. Appropriate public displays of affection should be observed; sexual activities not appropriate by definition are that which go beyond propriety.
3. When the activity is overnight, there shall be separate sleeping areas for each gender. The space should be respected by the opposite gender. If dorm rooms are being used, doors to the rooms will be left open when members of the opposite gender are together.
4. An understanding of the consequences of not living according to the Covenant, such as being sent home at the expense of the parents, shall be presented to all youth participating in the activity.

XI. Reporting of Incidents

1. Workers may be in a position to detect Child abuse. The policy of KMUPC is to respond to and report facts that provide reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subject to or is threatened with Child abuse.
2. If a child or other person makes statement indicating that a child has been the subject of Child abuse, listen. A worker who hears the statement should not treat the statements as frivolous and should obtain the child’s name, description and basic facts that may provide reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subject to or is threatened with Child abuse.
3. A worker who hears statements that may provide reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subject to or is threatened with Child abuse should report the statements to the Youth Director (or the Pastor if Youth Director is unavailable) as soon as practical and always within 24 hours.
4. The Youth Director shall fully inform the Christian Education Committee chairperson of any report received and shall have the primary responsibility to investigate the report, using appropriate resources of the Committee, and promptly informing the Committee of the report, in no case later than 72 hours after the report was received. Investigations should be documented in writing.
5. In the event an investigation discloses reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subject to or is threatened with Child abuse, the Youth Director who conducted the investigation shall report the results of the investigation, including documentation, to the appropriate county child welfare agency or local law enforcement agency immediately and in compliance with the reporting requirements of Wisconsin law, particularly section

49.981, Wisconsin Statutes, and should cooperate with the investigation conducted by those agencies. To the extent possible, the report should report only the facts ascertained by the investigation without making comments or accusations. No one should discourage another person from reporting the person's belief that there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subject to or is threatened with Child abuse.

6. The Youth Director shall inform KMUPC's liability insurance carrier and the church's legal counsel (if required) of the results of the investigation.
7. In instances involving alleged or potential Child abuse involving any worker, the matter should be referred to the Youth Director for immediate consideration. (Following the same guideline listed in (d)). The Youth Director should take prompt action to insure that the investigation of the report is conducted fairly and without conflict of interest and that the worker implicated in the report does not participate in duties involving children until the investigation has been completed and the Youth Director can act upon the findings of the investigation.
8. Details disclosed by an investigation including the identities of a putative victim and any suspected perpetrator, should be disclosed only to the Christian Education Committee, the Pastor, Youth Director and law enforcement authorities, unless such disclosure is made with the advice of legal counsel. The fact that an investigation is being conducted may be disclosed to the congregation and the family of the putative victim. Disclosures should be made only by a spokesperson designated by the Christian Education Committee and inquiries from the news media should be referred to the designated spokesperson.