



PLEASANT GROVE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Issue 12: October 21, 2024

BACKGROUND

Introduction

The 1996 General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a resolution stating that “God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.” At the 2005 North Carolina Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church a motion was passed that each local church shall develop and implement its own Safe Sanctuaries policy. Pleasant Grove UMC has developed this policy to help prevent any opportunities for the occurrence, or appearance, of abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This policy is also designed to protect staff members and volunteers from false accusations and suspicions. This policy is based on *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth* by Joy Thornburg Melton, copyright ©2008 Discipleship Resources and *Safer Sanctuaries: Nurturing Trust within Faith Communities*, copyright ©2023

Spiritual and Doctrinal Context

The context of this policy is based upon the following quotes:

“As a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the Gospel in a manner that assures the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth and the adults who work with them. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the recruitment and selection of staff. We will implement prudent procedures of operation for all programs and events. We will educate those who work with children and youth in conference and district settings as to the use of all appropriate policies and procedures. We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting suspected incidents of abuse that conform to the requirements of state law.” Resolution 6, 2005 Session of the North Carolina Annual Conference.

“Those who humble themselves like this little child will be the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me. As for whoever causes these little ones who believe in me to trip and fall into sin, it would be better for them to have a huge stone hung around their necks and be drowned in the bottom of the lake.” Matthew 18:4-6 (CEB)

“In the same way, my Father who is in heaven doesn’t want to lose one of these little ones.” Matthew 18:14 (CEB)

“...children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse.”

¶162 C The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012

“With God’s help we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” The United Methodist Hymnal: Baptismal Covenant 2, page 44.

Application

The Safe Sanctuaries policy shall apply to all persons, including all paid and unpaid leaders, whether lay or clergy, who have any direct or indirect contact with children or youth, who participate in any activities or events sponsored by Pleasant Grove UMC, or by other organizations which occur on property under the control of Pleasant Grove UMC.

The Director of Children & Youth Ministries will be the Safe Sanctuaries program administrator along with others who the Director designates. The administration includes, but is not limited to:

- a) Securely maintaining all files related to the Safe Sanctuaries program
- b) Preserving the confidentiality of all aspects of the program
- c) Providing training of staff and/or volunteers, and maintaining accountability of volunteers for adhering to the Policy and Procedures
- d) Providing communications concerning the Safe Sanctuaries program to any staff and all volunteers
- e) Insuring the implementation of the Policy and Procedures
- f) Reevaluating the Policy and Procedures at least once a year

POLICIES

Procedures

In order to provide as safe and secure an environment as possible for our ministry participants, and to minimize staff persons and volunteers vulnerability to unwarranted accusation, we adopt the following procedures:

Screening:

- 1) As a condition of employment, all employees of Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church, both lay and clergy, will be required to sign the necessary forms and consent to a criminal history and background investigation.
- 2) All volunteers must be approved by the Director of Children & Youth Ministries before being permitted to work directly with children or youth. All adult volunteers with unsupervised interaction will be required to sign the necessary forms and consent to a criminal history and background investigation. Volunteers should be active participants at PGUMC for at least six months to be in unsupervised settings.
- 3) Once the necessary forms and consent for background investigations are completed and signed a criminal history and background investigation will be performed on that individual. The results of the criminal history and background investigation will be kept confidential. The Director of Children & Youth Ministries, with the supervision of the pastor, will decide on allowing any volunteer to participate due to the information received from the criminal history and background investigation. The results on the criminal history and background investigation will only be shared with designated staff (SPRC Chairperson when a staff position) or volunteer if it reveals a history that is unsuitable for the position or volunteer role.
- 4) All staff and volunteers will receive appropriate training on the policy and procedures associated with Safe Sanctuaries.
- 5) Any person who may pose a threat to children or youth will be prohibited from working with children and youth. Convictions that will prohibit a volunteer from working with

children or youth are child abuse, child molestation, incest, any crime against a child or teenager that was committed as an adult, history of other violent crimes, and name on Sex Offender registry.

If information indicates that charges were filed against the employee/volunteer but there was no conviction, PGUMC will investigate how the issue was resolved. The police department or prosecuting attorney's office will be contacted to discover more of the details. When all the information has been gathered, the minister and Director of Children & Youth Ministries will decide if the applicant poses too great a risk to the child or youth. This step is important because many perpetrators of crimes against children do not end up with an actual conviction, however there may be a pattern of charges that eventually are dismissed due to the family's unwillingness to pursue litigation or the inability of the child to testify.

Other questionable convictions (i.e. reckless driving, illegal drugs, driving while impaired, and shoplifting) will be evaluated by the minister and the Director of Children & Youth Ministries Length of time since the conviction, age at conviction and circumstances may be taken into consideration. It also may be appropriate to discuss the findings with the applicant before the decision is made regarding whether the applicant will be able to fill the volunteer position.

- 6) If Director of Children & Youth Ministries and the Pastor feel that a volunteer's history puts our children/youth/vulnerable adults at risk and is asked to not volunteer, the volunteer can choose to appeal to the Administrative Council for a decision. If asking for an appeal, the volunteer is relinquishing their criminal history and background check to members of the Administrative Council for decision making.
- 7) Criminal background checks will be run by an independent company every 5 years for staff and every 3 years for volunteers, and in addition, the NC Sex Offender Registry (<http://sexoffender.ncsbi.gov/search.aspx>) and National Sex Offender Registry (<http://www.nsopr.gov/>) will be checked. The NC Sex Offender Registry will be checked annually for staff and volunteers who have unsupervised interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

GUIDELINES

General Supervision Guidelines:

- 1) The Two-Adult Rule: Simply stated, the "Two-Adult rule" requires that, whenever possible, no fewer than two adults be present at all times during any church sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children and youth. Leaders should take every precaution to never be alone with a child or youth in inaccessible areas. It is recommended that where it is impossible to staff two adults in every room that an additional adult serve as a floater with visual and physical access to all areas. An appropriate and safe ratio of adults to children/youth/vulnerable adults is 2:8.
- 2) If volunteers are husband and wife, they only count as one for the "Two Adult-Rule."
- 3) Whenever possible, each room set aside for children and youth should have a door with a window in it or a half door. If this is not possible, the door should remain partially open.

- 4) In private conversations with children or youth, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session.
- 5) When working with minors, the leader should always be five years older than the oldest participant. Youth, age fourteen to eighteen, are allowed to provide childcare for church events with adult supervision.
- 6) When an offsite event is happening, parents should be given advanced notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will be participating. Full information includes contact information for adults in charge, general schedule overview, address of overnight accommodations (if applicable), and general layout of overnight accommodations (if applicable).
- 7) For any off-site event, the trip's leader must obtain release forms, including medical information, liability, transportation, photo/video, and communication release forms for all participants and have them in possession.
- 8) Street crossing should be kept to a minimum and avoided as much as possible. One adult needs to be in front of the children/youth and one adult needs to be behind children/youth if it is necessary to walk across the street.

Supervision Specific to Transportation:

- 1) Every effort should be taken to ensure more than one adult and one child are in a vehicle. If that is not possible, the child's parent or another non-related adult should be called and put on speakerphone while driving. Exceptions ONLY during emergencies.
- 2) When having a youth event off site, youth may drive themselves to and from the event with the understanding that parents/guardians are responsible for youth that transport themselves. If meeting at the church first, and then going off site, youth may not drive themselves or others to and from the location.
- 3) Follow the guidance provided by the Board of Trustees regarding those allowed to operate church vehicles, including rented vehicles used for church activities, and instructions for driving church vehicles. Drivers must have a DMV background check.
- 4) Additionally, any adult providing transportation in their own vehicle must have a DMV background check.

Supervision Specific to Children (5th grade and below):

- 1) Children should not leave a classroom or event without a parent/guardian present.
- 2) A parent/guardian should sign out their child from Children's Church.
- 3) Outside of Sunday School and Children's Church, if a child is being dropped off their parent/guardian or designated adult should sign them in and out.
- 4) Childcare is provided for on-site sanctioned church functions for those parents who are participating in those functions. The parent(s) should be on-site at all times or designate an adult (eighteen years or older) to be responsible for their children. Nursery staff must be notified and contact information should be provided on the sign-in log.

Supervision Specific to Overnight Trips:

- 1) Use a housing option over hotel option when possible. Selected hotels should have rooms that open to the interior of the building, and rooms should all be in the same hall if possible.
- 2) Participants should never sleep alone in a room with an adult. Participants should only room with an adult if there are 'dormitory' sleeping styles and two unrelated adults in the room. The only exception is if youth share a room with their parent/guardian.
- 3) When adults are assigned to separate rooms, it is recommended that adult rooms be dispersed between the rooms of other participants as much as possible.
- 4) Rooms should be assigned with at least three children/youth per room. If needed, only two youth is allowed. Participants should be provided with their own bed whenever possible.
- 5) If a parent/youth has a concern with the overnight accommodations, they should consult with the youth leader(s) ahead of time to work through the concern and strive to find a satisfactory resolution.
- 6) There will be at least one adult for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. If only one gender present, then two adults is required.

Restroom Guidelines:

- 1) Infant and Toddler: Unless there is an emergency, paid staff should be the only ones changing diapers or assisting with bathroom trips. Diapers should be changed in the bathroom.
- 2) Preschool: An adult leader should accompany preschool children to the restroom. Leave the bathroom door open and allow the child to enter the stall alone. Stand in the doorway of the bathroom or outside the stall and offer assistance if needed.
- 3) Younger Elementary (Kindergarten-2nd Grade): An adult leader should accompany younger elementary children to the restroom (if bathroom is visually in sight, teacher can stand in their classroom door and watch the restroom). Allow the child to enter the bathroom alone. Wait outside the bathroom door for the child unless assistance is needed.
- 4) Older Elementary (3rd-5th Grade): Children in older elementary may go to the bathroom without an adult leader. Leaders should watch their classroom door until the student returns to class.
- 5) Separate shower and bathroom facilities should be maintained for each gender when occupancy is more than one.

Appropriate Boundaries and Discipline:

1. Consent, consent, consent! At its core it means that someone should provide affirmation or approval before something takes place. We should ask permission to touch others, to hug others, and to show affection for others.

2. Physical boundaries change as children grow older. A young child sitting in the lap of a caregiver is appropriate, whereas an older child or youth sitting in a leader's lap would not be acceptable. Physical boundaries also extend to peer interactions as well. According to the Center for Disability Leadership, healthy touch is defined as "two people trusting one another and giving permission to be touched and being in a location where each is comfortable with the touch."
3. Emotional boundaries are also important. As a child grows older it is important for the leader to maintain appropriate boundaries in relationships so that a child may not grow too attached or inappropriate conversations take place. When a leader recognizes that there might be an issue with these boundaries, greater space should be allowed to come between them and the child or youth in question.
4. Never seek out youth to spend one-on-one time.
5. Children and youth should be made aware that appropriate behavior and following the law is expected at all events. Gentle reminders are always necessary when dealing with children and youth. In cases where behavior must be addressed, leaders, **in consultation with parent/guardian**, and the pastor (where necessary), should address the issue.
6. In no case is physical discipline an appropriate measure to deal with problems. A reasonable response might include a period of "time-out" for a child or temporary removal from the activity for youth. For serious offenses, at the discretion of the leaders, the appropriate response is to send the child or youth home immediately.

SOCIAL MEDIA/COMMUNICATIONS

Connecting on Social Networking Sites

In addition to participating on the ministry pages, youth may wish to establish social media connections with church leaders and adult volunteers engaged in youth ministry. Adults who are willing to participate in these relationships should use the following guidelines when establishing these connections:

- 1) Adults should not submit 'friend' or 'follow' requests to children or youth. Minors may feel like they are not able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between them and adults. Exceptions to this rule should only be made in situations when the adult's privacy settings make it difficult or impossible for the youth to find the adult's page on the site. In these circumstances, it is acceptable for an adult to request a youth as a friend, if the youth has requested that they do so. If accepting 'friend' or 'follow' requests of one youth/child, all requests must be accepted.
- 2) Due to the greater potential for misinterpretation, inappropriate discussions, and inadvertent exposure of youth to inappropriate content; personal social media accounts of staff members and volunteers should be maintained appropriately. This means that they may not be used to harass, bully, or intimidate others. Behaviors that constitute harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to, comments that are derogatory with respect to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, color, or disability; comments that are sexually suggestive, humiliating, or demeaning; and threats to stalk, haze, or physically injure another person. In addition, staff and volunteers, must not post images

that contain the inappropriate use of alcohol, the use of illegal drugs, sexual harassment, sexual behavior, and bullying.

- 3) Children and leaders should avoid relationships with children/youth via social networking sites, unless an actual relationship (ministry (ex: youth leader, small group leader, Sunday school teachers, etc.), family relationship, family friendship, etc.) already exists between them. If connections have been made prior to September 2019 through ministries of the church, those connections can remain.
- 4) For the sake of their own privacy and the well-being of the child/youth participants, leaders should not add or invite children or youth to any groups, events, pages, chat rooms, etc. that are not solely dedicated to activities directly related to the children or youth ministries or ministry activities.
- 5) If a social networking site is used to support a ministry, a designated PGUMC staff member should have administrative rights to the platform and should check the site periodically (e.g. every quarter) to ensure proper use of the communication platform.
- 6) Given the continuing evolution of privacy settings and capabilities on many social networking sites, church leaders and adult volunteers should be willing to continue to educate themselves on what settings are needed to support the above recommendations. Additionally, the child and youth ministry programs should establish education for adult volunteers who wish to use social media as part of their ministry efforts.

Communication

Social media is an excellent way to quickly share both good and sad moments in a person's life with a large number of people. However, as with all forms of communication, users should be respectful of the privacy of others. This is particularly the case with youth and children's ministry leaders. Leaders should be especially mindful of how information is presented in such a permanent medium, and should never share news about another person without their express prior consent.

- 1) The vast majority of digital messages should be informational. A quick check-in or word of encouragement is okay, but if a response goes beyond something simple like, "Thanks," you should tell the youth that you should continue the conversation in person (following policy guidelines).
- 2) Staff and volunteers should not share news about another person without their express prior consent. However, never promise to keep secrets when a youth wants to confide in you about something that is going on.
- 3) Use prudent judgment in the time you contact youth and children. The "home phone rule" is a basic rule of thumb to use – do not text or chat with youth at a time you would not normally call their home phone line, i.e. before 9:00 AM or after 9:00 PM. Exceptions to this rule are as follows:
 - In emergency situations
 - When children or youth reach out to a church staff or adult leader with issues that they feel they need to discuss immediately
- 4) 'One on One' texting and emailing with youth/children is generally not appropriate unless an actual relationship (ministry (ex: youth leader, small group leader, Sunday school teachers, etc.), family relationship, family friendship, etc.) already exists between them. Church leaders and adult volunteers should, where applicable, utilize the Remind Application when texting with youth/children. If necessary to text or email only one child

for specific requests, church staff and adult leaders should copy other leaders or church staff on communications.

- 5) Church staff and adult volunteers should avoid direct digital communication with children/youth. Another unrelated adult should be copied on any communication to children/youth whenever possible.
- 6) Humor and sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted and should be used only where appropriate. All communication sent digitally (email, social networking sites, notes or posts, etc.) may be shared or reposted to others. Adults should be mindful that comments sent to a youth may be shared by that youth in a number of ways and that misinterpretation of those comments may occur.

Identity Protection

Pleasant Grove seeks to protect the privacy and identity of all minors in our use of social media. All church leaders and adult leaders in youth and children's ministry should closely monitor the privacy settings of any posted youth images to ensure the safety of our children/youth.

- 1) All church leaders and adult volunteers engaged in ministry with minors must not post photos or video that identify children or youth on any online site or printed publication without the written consent from a parent or legal guardian.
- 2) Even with the written consent from a parent or legal guardian, pictures should be posted to either PGUMC sponsored events/web pages and names should be avoided.
- 3) We strongly encourage the respect and dignity of every person depicted in an image. Only pictures depicting youth in an appropriate light should be posted. "Appropriate" pictures may include goofy pictures that the youth's parents are comfortable being posted. If a picture would make the youth feel self-conscious, vulnerable, or would subject the youth to ridicule, the picture should not be posted.
- 4) When checking in with any location tagging social media, only check in yourself. Never check in minors. Be sensitive to tagging or revealing other participants' locations.

REPORTING AND RESPONDING TO ABUSE

Reporting:

If someone suspects abuse or neglect of a caretaker as defined by NC law, they should report their concern to the department of Social Services and let the Director of Children's & Youth Ministries know. If someone suspects abuse or discloses abuse by an adult at the church, they should report their concern to the Director of Children's & Youth Ministries. In cases where the Director of Children's & Youth Ministries is suspected of abuse or neglect, the report should be directed to the SPRC chairperson. The Director of Childrens & Youth Ministries or SPRC Chairperson will work with the person that reports the abuse to contact proper law enforcement and/or family service agencies.

North Carolina General Statute (§7B-301) requires that any person or institution that has cause to suspect any child is abused, neglected, or dependent (as defined by G.S. 7B-101), or has died because of maltreatment must make a report to the Department of Social Services in the county where the child resides or is found.

The report may be made orally, by telephone, or in writing. The report shall include information as is known to the person making it including the name and address of the juvenile; the name and address of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or caretaker; the age of the juvenile; the names and ages of other juveniles in the home; the present whereabouts of the juvenile if not at the home address; the nature and extent of any injury or condition resulting from abuse, neglect, or dependency; and any other information which the person making the report believes might be helpful in establishing the need for protective services or court intervention."

The statute is comprehensive, requiring the reporting of numerous types of maltreatment. The law applies to any child under 18 years of age when a parent or any person responsible for the child's care:

- Causes or threatens to cause non-accidental physical or mental injury
- Has a child present during the manufacture or attempted manufacture of a controlled substance or during the sale of such substance where such activity would constitute a felony violation
- Neglects or refuses to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, emotional nurturing, or health care
- Abandons the child
- Neglects or refuses to provide adequate supervision in relation to the child's age and level of development
- Knowingly leaves a child alone in the same dwelling with a person, not related by blood or marriage, who has been convicted of an offense against a minor for which registration is required as a violent sexual offender
- Commits or allows to be committed any illegal sexual act upon a child, including incest, rape, indecent exposure, prostitution, or allows a child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.

North Carolina General Statute (§7B-309) states that anyone who makes a report or testifies in any judicial proceeding or investigation is immune from any civil or criminal liability provided the person making the report acted in good faith. Immunity means that if you make a report in good faith (without malice), no one can bring civil or criminal charges against you. Immunity is provided for anyone who cooperates or testifies in a court action.

North Carolina Juvenile Code (the laws and procedures that the child protective services system is based on) defines abused and neglected children in terms of the effect on children of the conduct or caretaking abilities of parents, guardians, custodians, or caretakers. The definition does not cover teachers, coaches, Sunday school teachers and others with similar temporary caretaking responsibilities for children. In other words, if someone suspects that one of these "non-caretakers" has harmed or neglected a child or placed a child at risk, the law does not require that person to make a report to the department of social services. Still, most people can and should take steps to ensure that the child and other children are not exposed to further risk of harm.

Appropriate responses include:

- notifying the child's parents, guardian, custodian; and/or
- contacting law enforcement authorities.

If a person does report a problem involving a non-caretaker to a county department of social services, the department will not investigate, since it is not authorized to do so. The law, however, requires the department to relay the information to the district attorney's office and to law enforcement officials if the report describes criminal conduct that results in harm to a child.

Responding:

Pleasant Grove should be prepared to respond to others regarding allegations of abuse: the victim, the victim's family, the governing structure of the United Methodist Church, the alleged perpetrator, and possibly the news media.

The Victim and Family

The safety and well-being of the child/youth should be the church's primary concern. The child's parents should be notified immediately (if the parent was not involved in disclosing the allegations of abuse). The church should advise the victim and the family of their right to make a report to law enforcement and support this right - this includes taking the allegation seriously and respecting the victim's privacy. The church should commit to ensuring that assistance is provided to allow for healing and reconciliation, both for emotional and spiritual well-being. This may include provision of counseling, spiritual assistance, support groups, and other social services that may be requested by the victim or the family.

Conference of the United Methodist Church

The response to the annual conference will include notifying conference authorities (the church's district superintendent or the resident bishop) as soon as allegations of abuse are received. Conference authorities should be kept aware of the congregation's actions throughout the process, up to and including the final resolution of the situation. The church should also keep a written record of the steps the church has taken in response to the allegations. It will also be necessary to notify the church's insurance agent and an attorney if an allegation of abuse is made.

The Alleged Perpetrator

The first step that must be taken is to remove the accused from his/her position as a worker with youth until the allegations are fully investigated and resolved. It is also important that the alleged perpetrator is not confronted with anger and hostility, but treated with dignity and respect. If after the incident has been fully investigated and the alleged perpetrator is found guilty or confesses, the church should hold the perpetrator accountable for the acts committed. Faithful response does not include forgiving the perpetrator before justice is achieved and the victim is ready to consider whether forgiveness is appropriate or not.

News Media

Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church will designate a spokesperson for the church on behalf of the congregation. The designated spokesperson should be prepared to state Pleasant Grove's prevention policy, the concern for the safety of the victim and all youth, and the procedures the church has followed. The designated spokesperson should *never* make any statements indicating the church does not take the allegation seriously or suspects the allegation is not true. The person chosen should be capable of speaking calmly and thoughtfully in front of cameras and microphones. Best practice would include the use of a prepared statement. The spokesperson

should also be prepared to answer questions honestly, without adding extra or unnecessary information.

Post Abuse Ministry:

When abuse of a youth occurs, there may be many victims in addition to the one who has been physically harmed. The other victims may include:

- Family members of the youth that was abused
- Other youth in the congregation
- Parents
- Remaining youth workers
- Family of the accused abuser
- The whole congregation

After abuse is experienced steps should be taken to minister to those affected by the abuse and to restore confidence in the ability of the church to protect the youth of the church. At Pleasant Grove the Administrative Council will lead this work. Steps that should be considered include

- It is important that the facts be given to the congregation. This can be accomplished with
 - A letter the congregation explaining the incident and the actions taken or to be taken by the church. The letter should not include the name of the abused or accused.
 - A congregational meeting explaining the incident and the actions taken or to be taken by the church. Again this should not include the name of the abused or accused. This meeting shall be announced ahead of time so that people can make a choice to attend. This should not be tacked on to a worship service or other church meeting. The meeting needs to be carefully planned. The pastor will be the leader of the meeting unless he or she is the accused abuser. The following people should be considered for the leadership team for the meeting
 - Lay leaders
 - Representatives from the annual conference such as the district superintendent
 - A qualified counselor who is not a member of the congregationThe agenda for the meeting should include fact sharing and moments of reflection and worship.
- After some time has passed the Administrative Council may want to organize another congregational meeting to assess how much healing and recovery has occurred and to identify any remaining needs that should be addressed.

The Administrative Council should review these Safe Sanctuary policies and procedures and make any changes based on what was learned from this incident.

Document Control:

Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures will be under document control and regular review (at least annually), and updated as necessary. A record of changes is recorded below. A formal distribution list will be maintained for key groups and individuals who will receive updates automatically. Other interested parties may obtain copies upon request but will not be included in the automatic distribution of updates. This document will be available on the church web site.

Document Control Record:

<u>Issue</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Record of changes</u>
Issue 1	3-12-07	Initial issue
Issue 2	5-1-07	Sections 7 & 14 –Background checks of volunteers reassigned Section 8 – “Whenever possible” added to 2 adult rule; miscellaneous minor changes
Issue 3	12-9-07	Changes made to include Program Director and Volunteer Coordinator
Issue 4	1-23-12	Expanded to include vulnerable adults, specified background checks every 3 or 5 years, six month restriction on new participants revised, general updates.
Issue 5	6-24-12	Expanded to address parent(s) off site and needing childcare.
Issue 6	4-12-15	Created a condensed version for Safe Sanctuary training adding specific areas of supervision for Quest, Children’s Church, and nursery.
Issue 7	11-9-16	Converted complete Safe Sanctuary policy into a more condensed version, primarily removing the personal interview and application process for volunteers.
Issue 8	8-30-17	Removed Director of Family Ministries from policy, updated statistics, added clause about crossing the street
Issue 9	8-8-19	Added Social Media and Communications policies, updated overnight trip policies
Issue 10	10-10-19	Added Restroom Guidelines to policy
Issue 11	8-26-21	Updated restroom and overnight policies to include transgender and gender-fluid persons.

Issue 12 9-16-24 Updated to provide more recent Safe Sanctuary definitions and guidelines. Updated *Appropriate Boundaries* section. Updated overnight accommodations and restroom guidelines. Added appendices for definitions, signs of abuse, childcare, and church van usage.

NOTE: The issue number will be raised by one for each update, along with the date of issue, and a very brief description of the changes provided under “Record of Changes”. For reviews not requiring an update, show the date of the review and “no changes required” shown under “Record of Changes”.

Distribution List:

Senior Pastor

Administrative Council – All members

Staff Parish Relations Committee - Chairperson

Preschool Director

Director of Children’s & Youth Ministries

Office Administrator

Children’s & Youth ministry leaders

Appendix A: Definitions

‘Adult’ means any person 18 years of age or older.

‘Abuse’ means harm or threatened harm to the health and welfare of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult by any person responsible for the health and welfare of that child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Abuse includes:

- a) Physical abuse – deliberately aggressive or violent behavior by one person toward another that results in bodily injury
- b) Sexual abuse – sexual contact inflicted upon a person by forcible compulsion; sexual contact with a person who is incapable of giving consent because of age or mental or physical incapacity
- c) Emotional abuse – a pattern of behavior in which one person deliberately and repeatedly subjects another to nonphysical acts that are detrimental to the individual’s daily life and overall mental well-being
- d) Neglect – when a person endangers a child’s health, safety, or welfare through negligence, often unintentionally

‘Appropriate’ means conduct that one understands would be acceptable and permissible by a child’s parent or guardian.

‘Child or Youth’ means any person under the age of 18.

‘Leader’ means anyone personally responsible for supervising and overseeing a specific church – related function, event, or activity.

‘Parent or guardian’ means any parent, stepparent, foster parent, grandparent, or appointed guardian with general responsibility for the health, education, or welfare of a child or vulnerable adult.

‘Private Conversation’ means the child or youth has requested to talk with a trusted adult in confidence. Confidentiality should be maintained unless keeping that information confidential leads to foreseeable harm.

‘Staff’ means any person employed and paid by Pleasant Grove United Methodist Church.

‘Volunteer’ means any person who participates as a leader or assists a leader in activities relating to any event or ministry without compensation.

‘Vulnerable adult’ means any person over 18 years of age who is unable to protect themselves from abuse, neglect, or exploitation.

Appendix B: Indicators of Abuse

It is important to remember that this is not a complete list of possible signs of abuse, nor are the behavioral and emotional indicators a definite sign that a person is being abused. Instead, you should think of them as red flags, a sign that something in a person's life has created enough stress to change their behavior.

Behavioral signs of abuse:

- Excessive fear, anxiety, and clinging behavior
- Nightmares, sleeping problems, or bed wetting
- Social withdrawal, especially withdrawing from or avoiding activities a child/youth previously enjoyed
- Hyperactivity or poor concentration/distractibility
- Decreased school performance and chronic school absenteeism
- Speech disorders or regressive behavior for age
- Eating issues
- Depression, passivity
- Increased verbal or physically aggressive behavior
- Destroying objects or injuring pets
- Substance abuse
- Self-harm such as cutting and suicidal tendencies
- Sexualized behavior inappropriate for the age and development of the child
- Withdrawal from touch or fear of physical examination
- Low self-esteem, negative self-talk

Physical signs of abuse and/or self-harm:

- Poor hygiene
- Dressing inappropriately for the weather
- Poor weight gain or malnutrition
- Fractured bones, dislocations, lacerations, bruising, or injuries on the forearms
- Bite marks
- Burns from a cigarette, rope, immersion, or shape of a hot object
- Signs of restraint
- Traumatic hair loss
- Facial injuries
- Diagnosed sexually transmitted disease or pregnancy
- Trouble walking

Childcare Employee Handbook

Requirements for Paid Nursery Staff

- Background checks every five years
- CPR/First Aid training every three years
- Adhere to Safe Sanctuary Policy & Employee Handbook

Timesheets

- Timesheets should be turned in every two weeks - on the Sunday prior to payday.
- Timesheets should be turned into the Administrative mailbox in the church office hallway.
- If a timesheet does not get turned in, e-mail your hours to office@pgumc.org and ashley.yohman@pgumc.org.
- If a timesheet is submitted late, payment for those hours will not be included in the current pay cycle and will be added to the subsequent pay cycle.
- Copies of blank timesheets can be made in the church office workroom.

Time Off

- If time off is needed, an e-mail should be sent to ashley.yohman@pgumc.org at least 2 weeks prior to the dates of the time off. If something comes up on the day childcare is needed, call 919-618-2211.
- In the event of bad weather and a schedule change, the Director of Children's & Youth Ministries will contact childcare employees by phone and e-mail.
- In the event of bad weather and no schedule change, childcare employees should contact the Director of Children's & Youth Ministries by phone at 919-618-2211 if they are unable or feel it is unsafe to come in.

Sunday Mornings

- Two nursery staff should be in the nursery from 8:15 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. and stay the entire time, even if no children are present.
- Timesheet should reflect 4 hours.

Special Services/One Sunday Services

- Special services are worship services that take place during the week and are open to the entire congregation. (i.e. Ash Wednesday, Maundy Thursday, Quiet Christmas). One Sunday Services happen on Sunday mornings when our only service is 10:00 a.m. (i.e. July 4 weekend, last Sunday in December)
- Arrive 15 minutes prior to the start of the service and stay the entire time, even if no children are present.

- Timesheet should reflect 2 hours. If the service is over 2 hours, the timesheet should reflect the time you are there.

Requested Childcare for Meetings/Rehearsals/Bible Studies/Events

- Childcare is available for onsite meetings, rehearsals, Bible Studies and events. The lead person is required to let the Director of Children's & Youth Ministries know at least ten days in advance. In turn, childcare employees shall be informed at least one week in advance by the Director of Children's & Youth Ministries.
- Arrive 15 minutes prior to start time.
- If there are no children dropped off 15 minutes after the start time of the event, the childcare staff can leave.
- Timesheet should reflect 2 hours. If the event is over 2 hours, the timesheet should reflect the time you are there.

Expectations

Cleaning

- Use disinfectant wipes or spray bottles to wipe down tables and bathroom changing tables prior to children arriving.
- If a child puts a toy in their mouth, put the toy in the sink and clean with disinfectant wipes or spray.
- Final Cleaning: Spray/wipe down all tables, bookshelves, and counter spaces with disinfectant, stack chairs and place to the side of the room, place toys back on shelves and return anything taken from other rooms back to the original location.
- Extra snacks and cleaning supplies can most often be found in the gray cart in the hallway (the key is in the mug on top of the cart).

Food

- Cheerios and Goldfish are provided as snacks. It is the parent's responsibility to let childcare staff know if these foods should not be given to their child.
- Cheerios and Goldfish should be the **only** snack offered to kids unless the parent provides their own from home.
- If a parent provides a child's snack, it should not be shared with anyone else.
- Food allergies are listed on sign-in sheets and clipboard roster.
- Gloves should be worn when handling food.
- Children's hands should be washed before eating food.

Sign-In/Sign-Out Procedure

- When a parent/guardian is dropping off their child for the first time in the nursery, introduce yourself to the parent and child, make sure they get a blue "Welcome to PGUMC's Nursery!" sheet, and fill out the attendance sheet with emergency numbers/allergies on the gray cart in the hallway. They should also receive a blank registration form located on the clipboard to fill out if planning on returning to the nursery. They can bring this to you after the service.

- When a parent/guardian is dropping off their child, make sure they sign their child in on the attendance sheet on the gray cart in the hallway.
- Children do not need to be signed out of the nursery, but the parent/guardian (not siblings) should be standing at the doorway or inside the classroom for children to be released. Before and after services it is good practice to stand at/by the doorway so that no kids run out of the room unnoticed.
- At “sign-out” inform the parent/guardian of any injuries sustained, diapers changed, and if the child has eaten.

Diaper Changes

- Unless there is an emergency, paid staff should be the only ones changing diapers or assisting with bathroom trips.
- Diapers should be changed in the bathroom.
- Wear gloves when changing diapers. If changing multiple diapers at once, dispose of gloves in between each change.
- Disinfect changing table after each diaper change. Leave disinfectant on the pad for two minutes before wiping.
- Both the hands of the child (if over 12 months) and the staff are to be washed after each diaper change.
- Dirty diapers can be thrown in the diaper bin located next to the changing table.
- If a change of clothes is needed, there should be extra clothing in the black cart with cloth drawers near the changing table.

Emergencies

- The first aid kit is located over the water fountain in the Education Building hallway.
- In an emergency, contact the parent using the information provided by them at check-in.
- If you are concerned for your safety, call or e-mail the Director of Children’s & Youth Ministries at 919-618-2211.
- In the event of a safety emergency, lower and close blinds, and make sure both doors are locked. Keep children away from windows/doors.

Miscellaneous

- If, in the opinion of the staff, a child cries excessively, the parent/guardian in worship should be contacted, via text message.
- Childcare staff should stay in the classroom at all times unless there is an emergency or bathroom/water is needed. This is especially important when you have children under your care.
- Ensure every child is using age-appropriate items.

Reporting/Requests

- The Director of Children’s & Youth Ministries oversees childcare staff and scheduling.
- Toy, snack, and furniture requests should be made to the Director of Children’s & Youth Ministries outside of service times (i.e. beginning/end of shift or by e-mail).

- If childcare staff have concerns regarding the Director of Children’s & Youth Ministries, their job responsibilities, or paycheck they should contact their SPRC representative. Information for the representative can be found on the clipboard roster.

Nursery Information for Parents

- Pleasant Grove UMC’s Sunday morning nursery is set up to care for children who are infants through age three.
 - During the Sunday School hour, children age three can attend the Preschool class in room 104E.
- PGUMC employs two childcare staff, Purabi Dey and Janet Keller, who have been with Pleasant Grove for over 15 years.
- Ensure your child is registered and checked-in at drop off. Check-in is located opposite the classroom door on the gray cart in the hallway. Unless arranged at check-in, the same individual will be expected to pick up the child.
- Use good judgment and do not bring your child if they have had a fever or illness* within the past 24 hours.
- The nursery provides Cheerios and Goldfish as snacks. Please, let childcare staff know if this is not okay.
- Please, do not bring toys from home with your child. There are clean, age appropriate toys in the nursery. *If a familiar toy is needed for the transition, please limit it to one toy.*
- Label the diaper bag and all other items you bring into the nursery for your child.
- Childcare is only for your convenience while you are participating in church activities.
- We encourage parents/guardians to enjoy the worship service, knowing that the childcare staff will contact them as needed. If, in the opinion of the staff, a child cries excessively, the parent/guardian in worship will be contacted, via text message. Parents/Guardians are asked to provide their cell phone numbers and to keep their phones on vibrate.

**fever, vomiting, diarrhea, runny nose with yellow/green discharge and/or constant cough, sore throat or croup, unexplained skin rash or skin infection, eye infection, any symptom of childhood disease (i.e. measles, mumps, chicken pox, whooping cough)*

Appendix D: Church Van Policy & Instructions

All PGUMC volunteers and staff who are using personal, rented, or PGUMC owned vehicles to transport individuals for a church activity are required to:

- be between the ages of 25 and 80 years old
- maintain a valid driver's license
- maintain vehicle insurance as required by state law
- comply with motor vehicle regulations and state traffic laws
- report all moving violations to Board of Trustees
- have a DMV background check done prior to transporting individuals

DMV background checks returned with violations will be reviewed and signed-off by the Trustee chair. DMV background checks returned with no violations will be reviewed and signed off by a PGUMC staff member or Trustee chair.

If a DMV background check shows three (3) or more violations of any kind within three years (3) years and/or a DWI/DUI within three (3) years, if convicted or not, driving privileges will be revoked.

All volunteers who drive for PGUMC purposes must report to the Trustee chair any traffic violations that occur after the initial DMV background check was completed. The volunteer must make the report within five days after the volunteer receives notice of the charge or disposition. Failure to make a timely disclosure of a criminal arrest, charge or disposition may result in revocation of driving privileges. Any violations that occur while driving for PGUMC activities, and result in a fine/fee, must be paid for by the volunteer.

Revalidation of driving privileges will occur every three (3) years. **However, persons between the age of 75 and 80 require yearly revalidation of driving privileges and will only be able to drive if zero violations are reported through the DMV background check and approved by the Trustee chair.**

Driving Checklist and Important Info:

- Locate the travel log sheet in the logbook and enter all information requested before driving.
- If you purchase fuel, log info on “Fuel and Maintenance” log sheet. Expense reimbursement forms are in the church office. Please, include a copy of your receipt.
- The roof clearance of the church bus is approx. **10 feet**. Be cautious when driving under parking decks, gas station canopies, drive-thrus, banks, or any kind of overhangs you might encounter. If you are unsure of a clearance height, please do not take a chance.
- Upon returning the bus, walk through and do the following:
 - Fully close all windows
 - Pick up any trash or personal items left behind
 - Use the broom to sweep out the bus if needed
 - Place the seat belts on each seat (off the floor)
 - Fill in return info in the logbook

The above policy also applies to any individual/organization operating a PGUMC-owned vehicle for non-PGUMC purposes. The fee for the DMV check is the responsibility of that individual or organization.