

Safe Sanctuaries



Inviting God into our Conversation



- Transition into idea that Safe Sanctuaries is a “Kingdom” issue – how we are being a faithful church by being mindful of how we do ministry.
- Pray, to include:
 - Thanks for the time to gather in Christian Community for accountability and growth
 - Acknowledging that time seems to control our lives, but that seeking clarity on how to serve God’s children, all God’s children, most sensitively is what should drive us.
 - Lay all other concerns aside.
 - Focus on the issue of being a “Safe” haven, a “Safe Sanctuary” for those who are lost, broken, seeking, or hurt.



Small Group Activity – come up with a definition

WHAT IS SAFE SANCTUARIES?



We welcome everyone in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ – the hurt, the lost, the lonely, the sick.

- We are called to open our doors to everyone – strangers whom we have never met – don't know backgrounds/histories, where they've been, what they've done.
- We are called to be church to everyone!

Baptismal Covenant

Members of the household of faith, I commend to your love and care these children (persons), whom we this day recognize as members of the family of God. Will you endeavor so to live that these children (persons) may grow in the knowledge and love of God, through our Savior Jesus Christ?

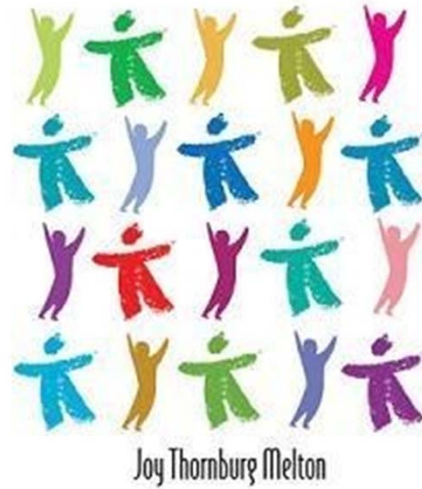


Congregational Response: With God's help, we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that these children (persons), surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.

**Not just a
policy!**

**A way of
doing
ministry as
United
Methodists**

SAFE SANCTUARIES
Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth



- Finish the exercise by stressing that Safe Sanctuaries is NOT a policy.
- Named after the book by Joy Melton who is teaching congregations safe practices in a time when much abuse was occurring in the life of some churches, to the demise of some of these congregations.
- Social principles paragraph from the book of Discipline obligates us
- Stress that Safe Sanctuaries is a WAY of doing ministry,
 - A lens through which we should see everything a church does,
 - Especially in light of the fact that we, as United Methodist, strive to do the best we can in all that we do.

Unpacking the essentials and making sense of them:

- 1. Protecting the children/youth/vulnerable adults in ALL ministry areas**
- 2. Protecting our volunteers**
- 3. Reducing the liability for our church**

Pick up the newspaper just any day and you will see a report of abuse or neglect. No longer can it be said that this doesn't happen in churches. Helping churches understand the problem and providing information lays the groundwork in being a safe sanctuaries church. In your groups, find one or more cards with components of Safe Sanctuaries and place them either under PROTECTING CHILDREN/YOUTH/VULNERABLE ADULTS, PROTECTING OUR VOLUNTEERS, OR REDUCING THE LIABILITY FOR OUR CHURCH. BLANK CARDS ARE FOR ADDITIONAL COMPONENTS YOU MAY THINK OF. This slide up for 10 minutes during this activity.

Types of Abuse

- Physical abuse
 - deliberate, intentional bodily harm
- Emotional abuse
 - Spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty
- Neglect
 - Endangerment of health, safety, welfare through negligence
- Sexual abuse
 - Sexual contact without consent
- Ritual abuse
 - Physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child which are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way. May include animal abuse or threats

Types of Abuse

- Spiritual abuse/neglect (older adult)
 - Failure of church to provide for the spiritual well being, particularly of those who are homebound or living in nursing homes
- Financial abuse and exploitation (older adult)
 - Illegal and improper use of an older adult's funds, property, or assets

Protect the Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults

- Vigilance
- Check bathrooms and stalls
- When transitioning, count children
- Communicate any room changes or off-campus trips (when taking children off campus, need a permission slip) with parents

Educating the congregation about protecting children, youth, and vulnerable adults is very important. They need to feel ownership in the process. Some of the basic procedures include: 1. KNOW YOUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH – know who they are and where they are . This may include when going on a trip, give the parents advance notice and full information regarding the event. They need permission slips- when transitioning from one place to another – count the children and youth to make sure you have everyone.

- Have a tracking mechanism in place to be sure only approved adults pick up children
- Internet protection if children/youth go online during ministry times
- CPR/First Aid training for all leaders
- Train teachers/leaders in safe practices – ALL ministry areas –
- Sign-in/out with allergy info and emergency contact info

Make sure you have a Check-In/Check-Out Procedure for children's programs. This procedure ensures children are picked up by authorized persons and teacher/worker has adequate information such as allergies and emergency contacts, to provide the child with proper care. Providing CPR/First Aid training for church workers with children/youth is a basic step to assure the safety of children and youth.

All workers with children and youth whether paid, volunteer, part time full time should be required to attend a training that outlines the church's safe sanctuaries policy.

- Vigilance – employ the Sex Offenders Registry and pay attention what background checks say
- Educate the congregation about Safe Sanctuaries
- Visit, and listen, to homebound members
- Listen, really listen, to what children, youth, and vulnerable adults are saying
- Be aware of abrupt changes in behavior

- Be aware of evidence of abuse
 - Physical signs—bruises, unexplainable injuries, destructive behavior toward self
 - Emotional signs—depression or withdrawal, lack of self-esteem
 - Neglect—inappropriate dress, poor physical hygiene, unsanitary living conditions
 - Sexual abuse—unusual vocabulary, promiscuous behavior, difficulty walking or sitting, torn or stained underwear

- Spiritual abuse/neglect—being ignored by the pastor and/or members of the church
- Financial abuse—cashing checks, forging signature, improper use of guardianship, conservatorship, or power of attorney

Protect the Volunteers

- 2- adult rule—even with vulnerable adults
- Teach/model transparency
- Implement a reporting system for volunteers
- Training, training, training
 - Not just on Safe Sanctuaries, but on how ministries are done in a “Safe Sanctuaries way”

The 2 adult rule requires no fewer than 2 adults present at all times during any church-sponsored program or event involving youth and children. A church can reduce the possibility of an incident of abuse if this rule is followed. It should never become a he said/she said. Even small churches can abide by this rule by having an adult volunteer who go from room to room checking to make sure everything is OK. All workers with youth or children should attend an annual orientation in which they are informed of church policies, procedures, steps for reporting an incident, details of the state laws regarding definitions of child/youth abuse and requirements when it is discovered. Training volunteers, paid staff, part time or full time is very important, not just on Safe Sanctuaries, but how ministries can be done in a Safe Sanctuaries way.

Protect Your Church

- Safe environment – windows in doors, Dutch doors
- Safe Equipment/Vehicles
- Annual training of all teachers/leaders
- Insurance - is coverage sufficient?
- Know your volunteers
 - Volunteer forms
 - Background checks
 - Know who is in ministry – employ the 6-month rule

Each room should have a door with a window in it or a half door. A half door offers protection against children wandering outside and allows for visual access. Our youth need to be able to meet with one another to worship, study and fellowship in safety. Using areas that are visually accessible makes safe meetings by preventing would be abusers from isolating an intended victim in a hidden or secret place. On page 54 of Joy Melton's Safe Sanctuaries book, it states that "every local church must have adequate property and liability insurance for the scope of its ministry. The Book of Discipline of the UMC requires the trustees to secure adequate insurance. No matter what ages your ministry includes – children-youth –senior adults, YOU CANNOT AFFORD TO DO WITHOUT ADEQUATE INSURANCE." KNOW YOUR VOLUNTEERS – There are sample volunteer forms in the back of the book that you can modify to meet your church's needs. BACKGROUND CHECKS are being used more and more for adults who go on youth mission trips, adults who help with our camps persons who volunteer to staff our conference youth events, , and it is one of the most often objected to doing. A Sunday School teacher may feel that it is an invasion of their privacy. Even though it is only one part of knowing your volunteers, it has become a standard screening tool in churches .THE SIXTH MONTH hospitality policy which invites all members to take part in the ministries of the church for 6 months and then make a decision about where the member would like to get involved as a volunteer leader.

- Safety in technology:
 - Photo release forms?
 - Cell phone use guidelines?
 - Photo-posting guidelines?
 - Use of FaceBook – posting/tagging photos?
 - Website – use of photos, names, etc? Protect photos on website?

I want to refer you to Joy Melton's Book Pages 74-85 which outlines Safety Tips for children, teens using the internet, parents, and ministers. The bottom line is if you take pictures of persons, you need permission to use them on the internet. You do not attach the names of the children/youth, have them with nametags on or even a shirt that reflects what school they go to. - such as a elementary, middle or high school. If you post any photos of yourself, family members or friends, alter the picture so the identifying information cannot be seen. If you join a social network site page, only accept online friends who are actually your friends in person. NEVER RESPOND TO E-MAILS, IM'S OR TEXT MESSAGES FROM STRANGERS. Never put anything online that you would be embarrassed for others to see.

I want to say one last thing – No 2 churches are alike. You need to take what information you receive today and adapt it to your own church. What a large membership church does may not suit your needs. You know your church and you know what will work for your congregation.

HOW DOES SAFE SANCTUARIES WORK BEST?



**When everyone in the
congregation knows
about it!**

Educate, Educate, Educate the Congregation

SAFE SANCTUARIES

Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth



What do we do first?

BEGINNING THE SAFE SANCTUARIES PROCESS

Develop a Safe Sanctuaries Team

Team members can include: Trustees, S/PPR, Children's Coord., Youth Coord., any other ministry area that involves exposure to vulnerable populations (older adult coord., missions coord., staff members in any of the areas specified, other – lawyers and law enforcement professionals)



Evaluate Current Practices

A great evaluation tool is found in Joy Melton's Safe Sanctuaries book on page 153.



Develop New Policies and Guidelines

- To include:
 - Recruitment and screening practices
 - Applications (p. 146-147)
 - References (p. 148)
 - Disclosure forms
 - Background checks/consent forms (p. 145)
 - Covenant statements (p. 149)
 - Use of appropriate facilities for ministries with vulnerable populations
 - Appropriate types of discipline for children and youth



(Taken directly from Joy Melton's Book, Safe Sanctuaries, pages 120-121; pages on which sample forms can be found are notated in parenthesis behind each form)



Develop a Response Plan

If (When) Suspicion of Abuse Arises

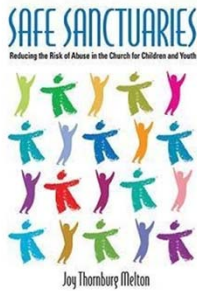
Immediately complete an Abuse
Reporting form with date and
description of witnessed abuse.

Copies of the forms can be found in

Joy Melton's book,

Safe Sanctuaries,

on pages 150-152.



If alleged abuser is in a leadership position, immediately remove him/her from that position during the investigation.

What Happens If (When)



Suspected Abuse is by...

- a staff person other than the senior pastor
- a church member

Report to the Senior Pastor

Remember to have documented allegation on file from observer/original reporter.

The pastor will report immediately to:



The District Superintendent (**M-F, 8-5: 800-849-4433**)

Outside business hours: 919-779-9435 or 888-661-4941)

- Dir. of Communications at the Conference Office (800-849-4433)
- Trustees Chairperson
- Department of Social Services (find local phone # and publish for your congregation)
or the Sherriff's Department (find local phone # and publish for your congregation)
(NC is a mandatory reporting state)
- If a minor, contact the parents/guardians
- Church's insurance company

What Happens If (When)



Suspected Abuse is by...

- the senior pastor

Report to the District Superintendent

M-F, 8-5: 800-849-4433

Outside business hours: 919-779-9435 or 888-661-4941

Remember to have documented allegation on file from observer/original reporter.



The DS will report immediately to:

- Dir. of Communications at the Conference Office (800-849-4433)
- SPRC of Church
- Department of Social Services (of the county where the church is located) or the Sherriff's Department (of the county where the church is located)
 - ***(NC is a mandatory reporting state)***
- If a minor, contact the parents/guardians
- Church's insurance company

Documentation!

*Remember to have documented
allegation on file from
observer/original reporter and to
continue to document each
additional action.*



Allow officials to investigate
allegations.

***THE CHURCH DOES NOT
INVESTIGATE THE ALLEGATIONS!***



***Only a Trustees'
spokesperson will speak on
behalf of the church .
This person will work in
cooperation with Dir. of
Communications at the NC
Conference office.***

Protect the alleged victim and
alleged abuser from public
speculation –
be pastoral;
be church.
Confidentiality is
critical.



If a registered sex-offender attends worship at your church, you could confidentially assign a “mentor.” Make sure, through the Sherriff’ s office, that the offender does not have a restraining order against him/her.

Handling the Safe Sanctuaries Screening Process



It is recommended to begin this process at the beginning of each ministry cycle.



1 - Recruit

- Remember to have job descriptions clearly laid out
- Remember the 6-month rule



2 – Determine who needs to complete which forms

- Those who are new to the ministries of your church must complete all forms:
 - Samples of recommended forms can be found in the book **Safe Sanctuaries** by Joy Melton:
 - Volunteer Application
 - Remember to check references and document findings
 - Covenant Form
 - Background Search Release Form
- Forms should be renewed every three years

3a - What to do with the forms

- Read over the applications. Complete the reference checks. Know your volunteers!!
- Fax or email the Background Search Release Form to the background search company of choice. The results will be emailed back to you.

3b - What to do with the forms

Background search considerations
when assessing results:

- Sex offense – do not allow to serve in ministry with children, youth or vulnerable adults
- DUI – for current or multiple offenses, do not allow to drive for church ministries
- Credit issues – do not allow to handle church monies

3c - What to do with the forms

- The completed forms must be kept in a locked cabinet with access only to those managing the files. Be sure that sensitive information is safe from misuse that can lead to identity theft or other problems.
- If file has been inactive (ie: no longer a volunteer, resigned, moved, died) for over three years, the records must be properly and safely disposed (shredding is suggested).

4 – Train All Workers

- Train each worker every year within each ministry area. This is NOT just a “Safe Sanctuaries” training, but a training on how your particular ministry works in a **Safe Sanctuaries way**.
 - Things change from year to year. Changes must be incorporated into each year’s training.





Covenant Prayer



I am no longer my own, but yours.
Put me to what you will, rank me with whom you will;
put me to doing, put me to suffering;
let me be employed for you or laid aside for you,
exalted for you or brought low for you;
let me be full, let me be empty;
let me have all things, let me have nothing;
I freely and wholeheartedly yield all things to your pleasure and disposal.
And now, glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
you are mine and I am yours. So be it.
And the covenant now made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.

Resources

- **Safe Sanctuaries** Book – available at www.Cokesbury.com
- NCCUMC website – www.nccumc.com
- Sex Offender Registry – www.nsopw.gov
- Contact NCCUMC Safe Sanctuaries Team