

Safe Sanctuaries
Child and Youth Protection Policy
Cary United Methodist Church
Cary, Illinois

Introduction:

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church in 1996 adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. The adopted resolution, continued in 2000, includes the following statement:

Jesus said, "Whoever 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 in 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 you 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 state that "children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation, and abuse."

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse (ritual abuse refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults) occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

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. (From the *Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church* – 2000, pp 180-181).

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, Cary United Methodist Church in Cary, Illinois adopts this policy for the prevention of child abuse, and the abuse of youth, in our church.

Purpose:

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Child and Youth Protection Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth, and to reduce the risk of abuse occurring in our church.

Statement of Covenant:

We pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel as a Christian community of faith, and a United Methodist congregation, to assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth, as well as the safety and spiritual growth of those persons who work with children and youth.

- We follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers.
- We implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events.
- We educate our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods, including first aid and methods of discipline.

- We have clearly defined procedures for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law. Our volunteers and paid staff are instructed to report all suspected incidents of abuse.
- We are prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.
- We inform parents of our policies, and provide training for our teachers regarding our policies.

Conclusion:

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ through the provision of a safe and sacred place where children may learn and grow in faith.

PROCEDURES

- 1. Response of a teacher or leader who witnesses or has suspicions of an incident of child abuse:**
 - a. Ensure the safety of the child. Do not confront the accused abuser with anger and hostility, but immediately remove him/her from further involvement with the child or youth.
 - b. Immediately report your knowledge to the Lead Pastor and/or Associate Pastor.
 - c. If a paid staff member is involved in the incident, report it immediately to the chair of the Staff Parish committee.

- 2. Church response to a report of child abuse against a volunteer or staff member of the church:**
 - a. If the accused is a volunteer, the primary person to respond to any such allegation shall be the Lead Pastor and/or Associate Pastor.
 - b. If the accused is a staff member, the primary person to respond to any such allegation shall be the chair of the Staff Parish Committee working in concert with the District Superintendent and/or the Lead Pastor unless the allegation is made against the Lead Pastor.
 - c. If the allegation of abuse is against the chair of the Staff Parish Committee, the chair of the Church Council shall be the primary response person working in concert with the District Superintendent and/or Lead Pastor.
 - d. If the allegation of abuse is against the pastor, the District Superintendent, or other designee of the Bishop, is the primary response person.

- 3. Primary Response will be:**
 - a. The safety of the alleged victim is the church's primary concern.
 - b. Notification of the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the alleged victim.
 - c. Ensure the child's safety until the parent(s) or guardian(s) arrive.
 - d. Treat the accused with dignity, but immediately remove him/her from future involvement with the child or youth. The accused abuser should not be confronted "in the moment."
 - e. Notify the Lead Pastor, proper law enforcement authorities, and/or child protective service agencies. (Telephone – 911; Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) 1-800-25ABUSE)
 - f. Notify the District Superintendent and Bishop, the church's insurance agent, and the church's attorney. See Appendix A for names and phone numbers.
 - g. Keep a written record of all actions taken by the church in response to the allegation (see reporting form in Appendix B).

- h. Call the chair of the Staff Parish Committee or the Lead Pastor to make any necessary statements or response to the media.
- i. A designated spokesperson will prepare a brief, honest statement that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with victim's or violating confidentiality concerns.
- j. Be prepared to interface (using appropriate protocol) with law enforcement officials, child protective services, and authorities of the church.
- k. A spokesperson for the congregation shall be named in consultation with the Lead Pastor and District Superintendent who shall work with and coordinate efforts with the media relations person(s) for the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church. The spokesperson for the congregation is the only person who may speak to the media on behalf of the congregation and will be authorized to answer questions. The congregational spokesperson will answer questions honestly without adding extra or unnecessary information. The congregational spokesperson may answer questions saying "We do not know at this time."

Confidentiality:

An allegation against a person may or may not be true. A person is innocent until proven guilty. Therefore, the details to the allegations should be kept confidential until such time as the allegations are proven and released to the media, or church officials. A public statement that an alleged incident has occurred, naming the offense but not naming the alleged victim or accused should be immediately formulated after the alleged victim's have been cared for and the details of the incident are recorded. Children's names should never be released.

The following are types of information that is confidential:

- Application forms for volunteers and staff
- Reference checks and the results of background checks
- Interviews with paid staff, phone interviews with volunteers
- Disclosure forms signed by all workers, paid and unpaid, concerning past offenses against children
- Incident reports

Current Safety Procedures:

1. Two Adult Rule: Two adults must be present at all times during any church sponsored program, event or ministry involving children or youth. It is preferred that the adults not be related. If two adults are not available for all classes, a roamer must be used to move in and out of rooms on a regular basis.
2. Open-Door Policy: Doors are to be left open when counseling with a child or a youth preferably with another adult in the building; windows in classroom doors are to remain unobstructed.
3. Sign-in/Sign-out: For nursery age children, a parent or guardian must sign the child in and sign the child out from the nursery. Sign-in/Sign-out sheets should be kept for a period of one year.
4. Parents or guardians must pick-up children in Preschool-2nd grade classrooms unless the parent or guardian has made specific arrangements (i.e. spoken to the teacher(s) in person, sent a verifiable note with the child, etc.) have been made beforehand.
5. Six Month Rule: A volunteer must be a member of Cary United Methodist Church for at least six months before working with children or youth in a leadership capacity except for paid staff of the Cary Methodist Preschool. The Cary Methodist Preschool follows DCFS regulations.

6. Youth Volunteers: No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least five years older than the oldest student. To protect the youth and the volunteers, no volunteer under the age of eighteen will be given the full responsibility for either the nursery or a Sunday School class or group. We welcome those eighteen and under as assistants and helpers in any area needed.
7. CPR and First Aid training is available for teachers, other volunteers, and staff. The church will offer a CPR/First Aid training course once every year open to the entire congregation.
8. Evacuation procedures are posted, clear, and practiced.
9. To keep our children and youth as safe as possible, we will not publish the photograph(s) of children on a unsecure website. Photographs may be placed in secure areas of the church website only available to members. Photographs of children may be used in classrooms, in written church publicity, on church displays (i.e. bulletin boards), and occasionally in the newsletter. Photographs published in a photographic directory shall be considered "written church publicity."
10. Volunteer Application and Background Checks: Volunteers will be asked to complete a volunteer application and "Authorization For Background Check." All volunteers shall be asked to complete a "Participation Covenant Statement."
11. Employment Application and Background Checks: All employees will complete an employment application and "Authorization For Background Check." All employees will be asked to complete a "Participation Covenant Statement."
12. Clergy appointed to Cary United Methodist Church will be asked to review this policy statement with their immediate predecessor of the Staff Parish Committee and complete a "Participation Covenant Statement." This congregation assumes the Northern Illinois Conference, through the cabinet, Bishop's Office and/or Conference Board of Ordained Ministry has appropriately screened, and provided, or will provide, appropriate training to, all personnel appointed to Cary United Methodist Church.

Screening Process:

- The Lead Pastor and/or a representative from the Staff Parish Committee will be responsible for screening all paid staff employees and handling all criminal record checks.
- The Christian Education Director, Lead Pastor, and chairperson of the Education Committee or an appointed representative will be responsible for screening all Sunday School and Children's Programs volunteers.
- The Youth Leader, Lead Pastor, Associate Pastor and Chairperson of the Youth Committee or appointed representative will be responsible for all volunteers within the Youth programming area.
- Outside groups will not be screened by Cary United Methodist Church but are responsible for ensuring compliance with our Safe Sanctuary policy while using our facility.

Amending this Policy:

This policy may be amended editorially (e.g.: for spelling errors, correction of telephone number and addresses, punctuation, etc.) without action of the Church Council. When the policy is amended editorially, the revised document shall be given to the Church Council at their next regularly scheduled meeting with the corrections or updates noted.

The Church Council, at a duly called meeting, may make substantive amendments of this policy. Substantive changes in this policy will be reported at the next regularly called session of Church Conference, and immediately upon completion of the change in policy to the District Office and/or other appropriate person in the Northern Illinois Conference staff.

Adopted on the _____ day of _____, 2013 by Church Council of Cary United Methodist Church in Cary, Illinois.

Lead Pastor Date _____

Associate Pastor Date _____

Church Council Chair Date _____

Recording Secretary Date _____

Appendix A
Primary Response
Names & Phone Numbers

Lead Pastor

Mike Hickok
(h) 847-829-4620
(c) 630-781-5814

Associate Pastor

Daniel Lee
(c) 847-208-8884

Bishop

Sally Dyck
312-346-9766 ext. 102

Elgin District Superintendent

Oscar Carrasco
847-931-0710 ext. 10

Brotherhood Mutual (Insurance)

630-379-0123
Policy# 12M5A0417412

Staff Parish Chair

Tom Swider
847-540-8478

EMERGENCY - 911

Cary Police Department (non-emergency)

847-639-2341

Cary Fire Department (non-emergency)

847-639-2121

Department of Children and Family Services

(DCFS)
1-800-25ABUSE

Appendix B
Report of Suspected Abuse

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of abuse: _____

2. Victim's name: _____
Victim's age/date of birth: _____

3. Date/place of initial conversation with /report from victim: _____

4. Victim's statement (give a detailed summary here): _____

5. Name of person accused of abuse: _____
Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other): _____

6. Reported to pastor: _____
Date/time: _____
Summary: _____

7. Call to victim's parent/guardian: _____

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

8. Call to local children and family service agency: _____

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

9. Call to local law enforcement agency: _____

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

10. Other contacts: _____

Name: _____

Date/time: _____

Summary: _____

Signature of Person Making the Report

Date

Participation Covenant Statement

The congregation of Cary United Methodist 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 holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) should volunteer to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.
2. All adult volunteers involved with children or youth of our church should have been members of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
3. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times so that no adult is ever alone with children or youth.
4. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
5. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth? YES or NO
2. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times? YES or NO
3. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to abide by the six-month rule before beginning a volunteer assignment? YES or NO
4. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor? YES or NO
5. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to inform a pastor of this congregation if you have ever been convicted of child abuse? YES or NO

I have read this Participation Covenant, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Signature of Applicant

Date

Print Full Name