



Safe Gatherings Policy and Procedures

Revised: 8/2021

Acknowledgment

The signatures below indicate acknowledgment and concurrence with the contents of the Faith United Methodist Church "Safe Gatherings" document. The contents of this document define the policies and procedures related to child, youth, and vulnerable adult safety and providing a safe environment in which our entire congregation may enjoy.

Reverend Allison Mark, Senior Pastor Date

Minister Ainise Isama'u, Church Life Coordinator Date

Pastor Becky Hirata, Nihongobu Pastor Date

Stanley Pang, Administrative Council – Chair Date

Derek Taira, SPRC – Chair Date

Tam Kobayashi, BOT - Safe Gatherings Coordinator Date

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INTRODUCTION

In April 1996, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child and youth abuse in the church. In response, Faith United Methodist Church (“FUMC”) created a written “Safe Sanctuaries” Policy, now in 2017 known as “Safe Gathering”. This policy was created to ensure that our church is a holy place of safety and sanctuary and a loving community of faith in which children, youth and vulnerable adults can enjoy the wonderful freedom, joy and fullness.

PURPOSE

It is an important purpose of the members and staff of Faith United Methodist Church (“FUMC”) to provide a safe and secure environment for preschoolers, children, youth, vulnerable adults and the mentally challenged persons entrusted to our care. We do this to encourage those preschoolers, children, youth and vulnerable adults and their families to grow in their relationship with God and one another.

A safe and secure environment includes a formal, written policy to help prevent the occurrence of child abuse. The following policy and procedures are for the protection of our preschoolers, children, youth, vulnerable adults, employees, volunteers and our entire church family at FUMC.

SCOPE

This policy shall apply to all current and future workers, compensated and/or volunteer, who will have the responsibility of supervising, directing, coordinating, teaching and/or assisting the activities of preschoolers, children, youth, vulnerable adults and the mentally challenged persons.

STATEMENT OF CONVENANT

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth and vulnerable adults, as well as all of the staff/volunteers working with children, youth and vulnerable adults. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all staff/volunteers working with children, youth and vulnerable adults regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including First Aid, CPR, Positive Discipline and Child Abuse Prevention); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs. All media inquiries will be referred to the Director of Communication at the District Conference.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this policy the following definitions shall apply:

1. "Preschooler," "child," "children," "youth," and "minor" shall be defined as any individual *under* the age of eighteen (18) (or whose mental capacity is that of a minor).
2. "Vulnerable Adult" shall be defined as a person over the age of eighteen (18) who is at risk of harm or who lacks the absolute most basic human life skills.
3. "Adult" shall be defined as any individual at least eighteen (18) years of age.
4. "Worker" shall be defined as any adult who serves as a volunteer and/or paid person given the responsibility of working with and/or caring for minors.
5. "Employee" for purposes of this policy shall be all persons who are paid by FUMC, whether full or part time, and whether employee or independent contractor, and all unpaid volunteers who work with children and youth in a supervisory (staff) capacity such as Sunday School Staff and Youth Program Coordinators, Administrators or Superintendents, and the chairperson(s) of FUMC committee(s) that oversee those programs.
6. "Teenage Worker" shall be defined as any worker at least sixteen (16) years old or older, but under the age of eighteen (18) enlisted to assist with the care of minors.
7. "Child Abuse" shall be defined as verbal, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a preschooler, child, youth, or minor. For a legal definition, see Child Abuse Prevention Reporting instruction sheet.
8. Safe Gatherings online training is one of the educational tools used to provide staff and volunteers working with preschoolers, children, youth and vulnerable adults, with the necessary knowledge and training to provide a safe and secure environment for all.
9. "Criminal Background Check" (CBC) is the process used to perform a national background check of adult employees and volunteer workers for criminal activity using Live Scan, or another national criminal records search service recommended by the Conference.

WHAT IS CHILD ABUSE?

“Child abuse is any sexual, verbal, or physical activity with a child – whether in the home by a caretaker, in a church, a day care situation, a foster/residential setting, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child.”

Definitions:

- VII. **Child:** a person under the age of 18 years.
- VIII. **Child Abuse:** includes neglect, physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of a child.
- XI. **Physical Abuse:** includes deliberate and intentional physical abuse causing bodily harm. Examples may include slapping, striking, hitting, spanking, violent battery with a weapon (knife, belt, strap), burning, shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing bones, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries.
- X. **Emotional Abuse:** includes intentional or reckless behaviors such as:
- Exposing a child to intimidation, humiliation, threats, bullying or belittling.
 - Infliction of emotional cruelty such as sending a message to the child of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but underserving of love and care.
- XI. **Sexual Abuse:** Abuse in which inappropriate or non-consenting contact between a child and an adult (or other older and more powerful youth or child) occurs. Sexual abuse includes behavior that communicates inappropriate sexual interest and/or content including but not limited to the following:
- Displaying sexually suggestive visual material.
 - Making inappropriate or sexual comments or innuendos about one’s own or another person’s body.
 - Touching another person’s body, hair, or clothing in a manner that can reasonable be understood as provocative or uncomfortable or overly intimate.
 - Kissing (inappropriate, non-consenting intimate kissing)
 - Sexual contact including intercourse or oral sex.
- XII. **Activity:** church sponsored or supervised class, field trip, or event involving children/youth where the children’s/youth’s parents or legal guardians have given consent but are not present.

ACCOUNTABILITY

1. The Board of Trustees has the responsibility for the appointments to the Safe Gatherings Committee. The Safe Gatherings Committee has the responsibility of on-going maintenance of the policy statement.
2. The Safe Gatherings Committee shall evaluate the effectiveness of the Safe Gatherings Policy Statement.
3. The evaluation of this program shall be in writing and presented to the Administrative Council for reporting to Annual Charge Conference. The Committee's evaluation would include recommendations to improve compliance with the policy. Administrative Board would then vote accept, modify, or continue evaluating the Safe Gatherings Program, Policy and Procedures.
4. Safe Gatherings Committee shall complete an evaluation of compliance to this policy on a formal basis at least once per year. This written report shall include an assessment, which will serve as the basis for continuous improvement of compliance with these policies and respective procedures.

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1. Administrator: Responsible for administering the consistent recruiting procedures, along with SPRC, for both staff and volunteer positions including compliance with the Safe Gatherings Policy.
2. Pastor: Responsible for compliance of the Safe Gatherings Policy.
3. Safe Gatherings Committee: Responsible for the written policy and evaluates compliance through annual audits of the program. The committee is also responsible for preparing reports and providing information to organizations within the church, as needed. Committee members are appointed on a rotation basis by the Board of Trustees, which should include representation from the following ministries:
 - Garden Ministry
 - Child Care Ministry
 - TGIF/MYF (Youth Ministry)
 - Music Ministry
 - Scouting (Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and Cub Scouts)
 - Clergy Representation (Youth and Family pastor preferred)

RECRUITING AND SCREENING PROCESS

FUMC's purpose for establishing a Safe Gatherings Policy is to establish our unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth for our preschoolers, children, youth and vulnerable adults.

- As a measure to reduce the legal liability of FUMC if an incident occurs, FUMC has implemented a comprehensive recruiting, screening and hiring strategy that includes reasonable actions to protect said groups. These actions include the development of processes for hiring staff and appointing volunteers who work with preschoolers, children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- If the pastor is aware of a prior abuse conviction or other at-risk behavior, he/she should discourage the participation of that individual in children and youth activities with no explanation required to the group recruiting that person. This would protect the confidentiality of the Pastor/parishioner relationship as well as protect the safety of the children.
- The Recruiting and Screening process requires applicants for employment or volunteer to declare personal information. FUMC, its Pastors and Administrators will take measure to ensure the protection of a person's privacy to the extent possible and practical. Any personal information obtained through the screening process shall remain confidential to the extent possible. The records will be kept in a locked file in the church office.
- The measures (which are present in the order of occurrence in the screening process) and accompanying forms have been designed to collect essential information for background check. The effectiveness of these measures is dependent on the ability of the church to make employment and appointment decisions without regard to the individual's standing within the congregation or community.

Definitions:

1. Background Check: A report obtained through a consumer reporting agency which outlines findings in the following areas:
 - Social Security Search
 - County Criminal Search
 - California Sex Offender Search

- National Criminal Database Search
2. Applicant: Any person completing an employment application for a staff position at FUMC
 3. Volunteer: Any person interested in donating his/her time and service to a program at FUMC where he/she will regularly interact with children, youth or vulnerable adults.

RECRUITING & SCREENING PROCESS OVERVIEW

All applicants and prospective volunteers are to participate in the Recruiting & Screening process as outlined below:

	APPLICANT	VOLUNTEER	COMPLETED <i>Initials/Date</i>
Must be at least 18 years old	X		
Demonstrate regular church attendance for at least six (6) months		X	
Complete and return Applicant Packet to SPRC: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FUMC Employment Application • Notice and Consent Concerning Investigative Consumer Reports • Authorization to Obtain Reference Check Information • Code of Conduct • Specific Acts Violation of Child & Youth Protection Policy • Read and sign Basic Procedure for Safe Ministries 	X		
Complete and return Volunteer Packet to Program Leadership <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FUMC Volunteer Application • Notice and Consent Concerning Investigative Consumer Reports • Authorization to Obtain Reference Check Information • Code of Conduct • Specific Acts Violation of Child & Youth Protection Policy • Read and sign Basic Procedure for Safe Ministries 		X	
Interview	X (Formal)	X {Informal, if necessary}	
Verification of References	X	X	
Background Check	X	X	
Selection Decision	X	X	

<i>Complete the Safe Gatherings Online Training program</i>	<i>x</i>	<i>x</i>	
<i>Staff within 90 days from hire</i> <i>Volunteers within 6 months from hire</i>			

EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION

1. The Applicant/Volunteer Packets are available from the FUMC church office and will be given to all interested applicants and prospective volunteers.
2. The completed packet must be returned to FUMC to indicate interest in position (either staff or volunteer). This step begins the Recruiting & Screening process.
3. The Applicant Packet includes the following:
 - ✓ Instructions for completion
 - ✓ Employment/Volunteer Application
 - ✓ Recruiting and Screening Checklist
 - ✓ Notice and Consent Concerning Investigative Consumer Reports Form
 - ✓ Authorization to Obtain Background Information for Employment Purposes
 - ✓ Summary of Rights under the Fair Credit and Reporting Act (FCRA)
 - ✓ Safe Gatherings Policy and Procedures
 - ✓ Code of Conduct for All Church Employees/Volunteers.

STAFF TRAINING

Each new staff will be given the legal definition of child abuse in writing which are contained in the Child Abuse Prevention Reporting instruction sheet with their Employment Application. All staff will read and sign the Code of Conduct and the Basic Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth. New staff will also be required to participate in Safe Gatherings Online Training within 90 days of hire date and read the written materials made available on this subject to help them gain an appreciation for the reality of the concern. Each staff will be given the Safe Gatherings Policies and Procedures to read and sign.

BACKGROUND CHECK AND EVALUATION

1. To further consider an applicant/volunteer a background check is to be conducted. To do so, applicant/volunteer must participate in the Faith UMC Finger printing Process as designated by the Safe Gatherings Administrator.
2. Timing of the fingerprint clearance is to be as follows:
 - Applicants: once the final candidate is identified, yet prior to formal offer of employment
 - Volunteers: prior to the appointment as a volunteer
3. Once complete, the results of the background check are to be reviewed and assessed by the designated Administrator or FUMC Senior Pastor on staff.
 - If t h e background check provides no negative results, convictions, or conflicting information, the background check is to be designated as "clear" and the Recruiting & Screening process may progress.
 - If t h e background check returns negative results, convictions, or conflicting information, a determination will be made by the Senior Pastor regarding whether, or not, we may move forward in the Recruiting & Screening process. The evaluation process shall consider the following factors:
 - a. The age of the conviction and the circumstances surrounding it.
 - b. The nature and seriousness of the conviction.
 - c. The age of the individual when the crime was committed and the time that has elapsed since the person's last criminal activity.
 - d. The likelihood that the individual has continued the type of behavior leading to the crime.
 - e. The relationship of the crime to the purpose of the church.
 - f. The individual's demonstrated commitment to rehabilitation.
 - g. Disclosure of information on the application form.
4. I f t h e decision is made not to move forward with an offer of employment or appointing a volunteer based on information within the background check, the formal notification process that complies with the Fair Credit and Reporting Act (FCRA) is to be followed
 - FUMC Senior Pastor and SPRC Representative may verbally notify the individual as appropriate.
 - The Pre Adverse Action notification {letter, copy of the finger print results, summary of the rights under the FCRA) is to be sent to the individual).
 - Three (3) days later the Adverse Action Letter is to be sent.
5. Information gained during the background check process is to be handled with the highest level of sensitivity. All precautions to maintain confidentiality are to be taken. All background check results will be stored in a locked file cabinet with access available only to the Safe Gatherings Administrator.

6. Internal Guidelines Regarding the Background Check

- All staff and volunteers, who regularly work with children, are required to undergo a criminal background check. Positions include, but are not limited to:
 - All staff members (Full time or Part time)
 - Sunday School Teacher
 - Volunteers
 - Nursery Care Volunteers
 - Nihongobu Sunday School Teachers and Volunteers
 - UMYF Staff
 - TGIF Staff
 - Music Ministry Instructors
 - Day Camp Volunteers working with children
 - Any Groups affiliated w/FUMC or using FUMC's facility.

- The designated Administrator will be responsible for administration and completion of the background check process.

- The Administrator, in consultation with the FUMC Senior Pastor on staff, as needed, are responsible for evaluating the results of the background check and making the decision to move forward with a hiring decision or appointing of a volunteer. Conference resources will generally be consulted on any exceptions to employment decisions if adverse information is received from a background check.

WORKER DISQUALIFICATION

Whether disclosed voluntarily or by result of the security background check, the following items will automatically disqualify a staff/volunteer from participating in the leadership, sponsorship or supervision of any activities or programs with minors:

Any conviction for:

- Criminal homicide;
- Aggravated assault;
- Crimes related to the possession, use or sale of drugs or controlled substances;
- Sexual abuse;
- Sexual assault (rape);
- Aggravated sexual assault;
- Injury to a child;
- Incest;
- Indecency with a child;
- Inducing sexual conduct or sexual performance of a child;
- Possession or promotion of child pornography;
- The sale, distribution, or display of harmful material to a minor;
- Employment harmful to children;
- Abandonment or endangerment of a child;
- Kidnapping or unlawful restraint;
- Public lewdness or indecent exposure;
- Enticing a child.

All charges for these crimes or convictions for any other crimes not listed above will be reviewed by the designated Administrator and/or FUMC Pastor, on staff, who shall be trained for reviewing and interpreting criminal history record transcripts and approved by FUMC for reviewing applicant transcripts. Only qualified persons (as stated above) may view information obtained on the criminal history record transcript, and Faith United Methodist Church's Privacy Statement shall be faithfully followed.

SPECIFIC ACTS AND OMISSIONS IN VIOLATIONS OF CHILD AND YOUTH PROTECTION POLICY

The following acts and omissions are violations of this Policy and will not be tolerated or accepted during any activity or program and are to be immediately reported to the designated program staff after the safety of the child, children, youth, or minor involved has been secured. Violations can lead up to, and including, immediate dismissal.

- Any direct observations or evidence of sexual activity in the presence of or in association with a minor.
- Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of abusive conduct towards a minor.
- Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any person and a minor.
- Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor.
- Physical neglect of a minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of the FUMC.
- Mental or emotional injury to a minor including but not limited to abusive and demoralizing language.
- The presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of the FUMC.
- The presence, possession, consumption of or being under the influence of any illegal or illicit drugs or alcohol while leading or participating in a function for minors at FUMC.

Staff/Volunteer - Print Name

Date

Signature

Date

Safe Gatherings Chair - Signature

Date

***KEEP IN FILE IN OFFICE**

BASIC PROCEDURES FOR SAFE MINISTRIES

Faith UMC will follow the Basic Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth as they shall be adopted and amended from time to time. In particular, FUMC will follow:

1. At least two trained adult workers will be present at all times during any church sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children under 11 years of age. For children and youth 11 years and older, only one adult may be present as long as there are two or more youth present. At no time should a child or youth be alone with an adult. In situations where multiple youth groups are meeting at the church at the same time (e.g. Sunday School), the second adult may rotate among the different youth groups to ensure that two adults are present.
2. When two adult workers are not available at all times in a room during church sponsored programs involving children, doors to rooms used for such activities shall remain open.
3. A door without windows shall remain open at all times.
4. The adult worker who will be present and assume primary responsibility for a church-sponsored program involving children shall be at least 18 years of age. For church sponsored programs involving teenagers, the adult worker who will be present and assume primary responsibility shall be at least 5 years older than the oldest teen participant in the program.
5. Church-sponsored programs involving infants, children, and youth will provide documentation of current certification in Basic First Aid and CPR (infant/Child) (Staff at event **must** be certified)
6. An identification system shall be adopted for all Elementary children and youth 11 and under (TGIF included), so that the adults who drop off a child are the same adults who pick up the child. Permission slips will be available for adults to sign, authorizing the release of the child(ren) to other adults. Additionally, a Medical/Emergency Form shall

be on file for above age group.

7. Adult workers in child and youth programs in the Church will participate in an annual orientation conducted by the Board of Trustees (BOT). This orientation will include a review of these policies and procedures and a written covenant signed by all participants to uphold these policies and procedures. All signed covenant forms shall be filed with the Safe Gatherings Committee.
8. The parents of children and youth participating in church-sponsored programs will be given advance notice of all expected activities for those programs. Parents will be provided with advance notice of variations in usual schedules and activities. Parents of children under age 12 will be asked to sign a general permission form for planned offsite activities that are part of regular program.
9. In counseling sessions with minors, parent or guardian shall be present prior to minister meeting privately with a minor, or the two adult rule shall be used in that instance. Prior permission may be granted by parents to cover a particular time period (i.e. school year) for their child to receive counseling from a particular minister.
10. Each year, the congregation will be informed through the Church newsletter of updates in these policies and procedures. In addition, the newsletter will annually publish information about recognizing signs of child abuse by Safe Gatherings Committee (Board of Trustees)
11. Programs or events involving children which use church property but are not sponsored by the church, will be asked to sign a written covenant agreeing to uphold these policies and procedures. All signed covenant forms shall be filed with the Safe Gatherings Committee.
12. Educate all volunteers and paid workers working with minors as to Faith UMC's policies and procedures concerning this matter **prior to** participation with children and youth.
13. Teenagers under eighteen (18) wanting to serve as teen workers in any capacity with activities, studies, or programs for preschoolers or children will need to fill in a Teen Volunteer Information Form and go through the Child and Youth Abuse Prevention training. The only step in the process they are exempt from is finger printing background check. Teenagers must be assigned in accordance with the Five-Years Older Rule (see Basic Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth and be partnered with an adult mentor).

Staff/Volunteer- Print Name and Program

Date

Signature

Date

Safe Gatherings Chair - Signature

Date

OCCASIONAL VOLUNTEER WORKERS

1. Those who only volunteer occasionally must go through the entire volunteer screening process. There are to be no exceptions for anyone to not go through the complete process.

2. Teenagers under eighteen (18) wanting to serve as teen workers in any capacity with activities, studies, or programs for preschoolers or children will need to fill in a Teen Volunteer Information Form and go through the Child and Youth Abuse Prevention training. The only step in the process they are exempt from is finger printing background check. Teenagers must be assigned in accordance with the Five-Years Older Rule (see Basic Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth and be partnered with an adult mentor).

BASIC POLICY STATEMENT ON SEXUAL AND GENDER HARASSMENT AND MISCONDUCT OF A SEXUAL NATURE

The United Methodist Church affirms *The 2004 Book of Resolutions*, Sexual Abuse Within the Ministerial Relationship and Sexual Harassment Within the Church, which states the sexual harassment within the church as incompatible with biblical teachings of hospitality, justice and healing. In accordance with *The 2004 Book of Discipline*, 1J 161 F, all human beings, both male and female, are created in the image of God, and thus have been made equal in Christ. As the promise of Galatians 3:26-29 states, all are one in Christ, we support equality among all persons without regard to ethnicity, situation, or gender.

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership lay or clergy (pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader or other position of leadership) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, co-worker or volunteer.

Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical, which is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment or intimidating or coercive behavior that threatens or results in a tangible employment action (*The 2004 Book of Discipline* 1J 161.I).

Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on a basis of gender (*The 2004 Book of Discipline* 1J 161).

Gender harassment is behavior that is harassing in nature against a woman because she is a woman and against a man because he is a man.

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship involves a betrayal of sacred trust, a violation of the ministerial role and exploitation of those who are vulnerable. Similarly, gender or sexual harassment are usually understood as exploitations of power relationships rather than as exclusively sexual or gender basis.

Sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse and misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church interfere with its moral mission. The United Methodist Church prohibits and will not tolerate these behaviors, which are sinful, demeaning, abusive and wrong. The United Methodist Church commits itself to fair and expedient investigation of any complaint of sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse or misconduct of a sexual nature within the church and to take action deemed appropriate and in compliance with *The 2004 Book of Discipline*. Further, The United Methodist Church bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female,

which is free of these sins and encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ.

Some instances of harassment can be resolved informally by conversation between parties or facilitated mediation. Documentation of incident, details and resolution must be recorded and filed and senior pastor made aware of. In all other instances, the conduct must be reported immediately to the chair or another member of the Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee and the pastor in charge. If the conduct involves the pastor in charge or another clergy person, it must be reported to the pastor's supervisor, district superintendent or the bishop.

The United Methodist Church will not retaliate against any person who brings forward a complaint. All staff leaders and members are expected to immediately report any knowledge of harassment, abuse, or misconduct to any one of the persons listed above. Prompt and appropriate investigation and corrective action will be taken, including discipline. Persons who make false accusations will be disciplined.

While The United Methodist Church cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, it will make every reasonable effort to maintain confidentiality by disclosing information about the complaint only on a "need to know" basis.

Anyone who has any questions or concerns about this policy, or the issues addressed is encouraged to air those questions or concerns to the SPRC or Chairperson of the Safe Gatherings Committee.

COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

[Adapted from Administrative and Judicial Procedures Handbook]

When pastors are accused of violating the sacred trust granted to them, their credentials and conference membership shall be subject to review. The bishop and district superintendent are authorized to initiate or receive written complaints about the performance or character of a conference member.

The continuing goal of the process is to provide reconciliation and resolution.

1. The performance or character of a pastor is brought into question and this questioning is communicated to the district superintendent. The bishop is notified of the contact.
2. The superintendent meets with the complainants to receive an initial written complaint specifying as many facts as are available, including date, place and events alleged to have occurred.
3. Consultation with bishop and cabinet occurs to determine response. Supervisory options include:
 - a. Discussion of issues with pastor
 - b. Consultation with staff pastor parish relations committee
 - c. Meeting with complainants and informing them of the nature of a complaint and process for resolution
 - d. Bringing parties together to facilitate justice and reconciliation
 - e. Inviting a mediator or mediation team, if all parties agree, to bring about justice and reconciliation
4. The complaint may be dismissed if:
 - a. No one is willing to put the complaint in writing and it is the judgment of the cabinet that the complaint is without sufficient evidence of merit to proceed further

- b. The bishop believes the complaint to be groundless
 - c. The supervisory process leads to reconciliation between parties and no additional action is necessary.
- 5. If a matter related to chargeable offenses cannot be resolved through supervisory options chosen, the matter is referred by the bishop to the counsel for the Church who drafts and forwards a judicial complaint to the committee on investigation. A judicial complaint may be forwarded as charges by the committee to the trial court, and upon conviction, may result in termination of clergy membership.
- 6. When a pastor is accused of an offense, he or she may be suspended from all clergy responsibilities, but not from appointment, for a period of time not to exceed sixty (60) days. During the suspension, salary, housing and benefits are continued at a level no less than on the date of suspension. The person so suspended shall retain all rights and privileges as stated in T325 , The 2004 Book of Discipline.

Suspension requires:

- a. Recommendation of bishop or cabinet
 - b. Approval of executive committee of board of ordained ministry
 - c. Action of bishop based upon decision of executive committee of the board of ordained ministry
- 7. Possible remedial actions may be chosen or recommended by the board to bring about a just resolution of a complaint, with regular oversight and annual review by the board. These may include:
 - a. Program of continuing education
 - b. Leave of absence, voluntary or involuntary
 - c. Early retirement or involuntary retirement
 - d. Sabbatical leave
 - e. Honorable location

CHILD AND YOUTH ABUSE PREVENTION REPORTING

Faith UMC is committed to a safe environment for its children and youth. To honor that commitment the church shall abide by the following process of faithfully reporting and responding to an alleged abuse, cooperating fully with investigative and law enforcement agencies, maintaining the confidentiality of those involved and providing appropriate pastoral care for those involved.

A. DEFINITIONS

1. California Law (P.C. 11165): defines the requirements for mandatory and non mandatory reporters of child abuse. Faith UMC shall instruct staff and volunteers to report suspected child abuse to a staff pastor. (Clergy members and employees of a licensed child day care facility are examples of mandated reporters who are required by law to report incidents of child abuse.)

2. Mandated Reporter: A person who is mandated by law to report child abuse because of their position with an organization that cares for children. These persons include child-care custodians and clergy members.
 - a. Childcare custodian: Specific examples are an administrator or employee of a public or private youth center, youth recreation program or youth organization; an administrator or employee of a public or private organization whose duties require direct contact and supervision of children; an employee of a licensed community care or child day care facility.
 - b. Clergy Member: Specific examples area priest, minister, rabbi, religious practitioner.

3. Non-mandated Reporter: All other persons associated with children that do not meet the criteria of a childcare custodian or clergy.

B. DOCUMENTATION

1. The administrator shall maintain a dated, comprehensive record of all persons involved and the steps taken by the church to report and respond to the abuse allegation.
2. The following forms shall be included in the initial reporting of a suspected or alleged incident of abuse:
 - Faith UMC's Report of Suspected Incident of Child/Youth Abuse Documentation Form
 - Child Abuse Report (BCIA 8572)
3. Written records of the actions taken shall be maintained throughout the process. All documentation about an alleged incident shall be filed in a confidential file

drawer, located in a designated office. Access to this file shall be limited to the administrator, pastor(s) on staff and church designated legal counsel. As staff, pastoral and legal counsel interactions continue with the victim, the victim's family, and the alleged abuser, written documentation shall be kept confidential maintained in appropriate file.

C. PROCESS

1. Report of Alleged Abuse Is Made

An individual notifies a staff or volunteer person of the church that they, a person related to them, or a person they have observed has experienced one or more forms of abuse. The abuse may have been by a staff person or volunteer of the church, by a family member, or by an individual other than a family member. It is imperative that this initial contact person understand the high level of confidentiality and delicacy the situation demands and be instructed as such.

- a. Role of the Non-Mandated Reporter
 - Immediately notify one of the pastors on staff, giving all details of the allegation.
 - Remain present until authorities are called and the written report is complete.
 - Be available to meet with authorities, as needed.
- b. Role of the Mandated Reporter (Childcare custodians)
 - Immediately notify one of the pastors on staff, giving all details of the allegation.

- Remain present until authorities are called and the written report is complete.
 - Be available to meet with authorities as needed.
- c. Role of the Mandated Reporter (Senior/Associate/Assistant Pastor, other clergy)
- Listens to the allegation, taking notes as appropriate, and writes an initial report.
 - Determines to whom this person has spoken about situation.
 - Once it is determined that the allegation is probable, the Mandated Reporter shall report the incident to the proper authorities immediately.
2. Mandated Reporter (Pastor) reports incident to proper authorities immediately
- a. If the alleged abuse involved a staff person or volunteer:
- Call the Torrance Police Department (310-328-3456). Explain the Incident. If they determine that the incident is well-founded, they will send an investigator to the church. Cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by the law enforcement or child protective services officials.
 - Immediate action shall be taken to remove the alleged offender in order to protect the child(ren) or youth, while being sensitive to the need for maintaining confidentiality. Treat the individual with dignity and without anger or hostility, maintaining a calm, factual approach.
 - Notify the parents of the allegation. If the child is still on campus, do whatever is necessary to assure the child's safety and comfort until the parents arrive. The safety of the victim is the church's primary concern.
 - Complete the Suspected Child Abuse Report, Form BCIA 8572.
 - The Chair of the Safe Gatherings Committee shall be notified of the alleged incident and at the same time be made fully aware of the absolute necessity that the confidentiality of the victim and alleged abuser be protected.
- b. If the alleged abuse involved a family member:
- Call the National Child Abuse Hot Line (800-422-4453). Explain the incident. If they determine that the incident is well-founded, they will send

an investigator to the church. Cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by the law enforcement or child protective services officials.

- Complete the Suspected Child Abuse Report, Form BCIA 8572.
 - The Chair of the Safe Gatherings Committee shall be notified of the alleged incident and at the same time be made fully aware of the absolute necessity that the confidentiality of the victim and alleged abuser be protected.
- c. If the alleged abuse involved a non family member (non staff person):
- Call the Torrance Police Department (310-328-3456). Explain the incident. If they determine that the incident is well-founded, they will send an investigator to the church. Cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by the law enforcement or child protective services officials.
 - Notify the parents of the allegation. If the child is still on campus, do whatever is necessary to assure the child's safety and comfort until the parents arrive. The safety of the victim is the church's primary concern.
- Complete the Suspected Child Abuse Report, Form BCIA 8572.
 - The Chair of the Safe Gatherings Committee shall be notified of the alleged incident and at the same time be made fully aware of the absolute necessity that the confidentiality of the victim and alleged abuser be protected.

3. Identify a spokesperson:

- a. As advised by Guide One Insurance: "Seek the advice of legal counsel before responding to media inquiries or releasing information to the congregation. All media responses should be well prepared and given by a designated spokesperson.
- b. The designated spokesperson shall be the only person authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the congregation. If a statement or response to the news media is deemed necessary, the spokesperson's statement shall include the church's policy for the prevention of child abuse, the church's concern for the safety of the victim and all children and youth, and the procedures of the church has followed to reduce the risk of the abuse to children and youth.

Answers to questions should be honest without adding extra or unnecessary information.

- c. The spokesperson should never make any statements indicating that the church fails to take this allegation seriously.
- d. The spokesperson shall prepare a brief and honest statement that can be made to the congregation at a time deemed appropriate by the Chair of the Safe Gatherings Committee and the pastor(s) on staff.
- e. The following persons or entities shall be notified and at the same time be made fully aware of the absolute necessity that the confidentiality of the victim and alleged abuser be protected. These persons or entities will be kept aware of the church's actions throughout the process up to and including resolution:
 - Annual Conference authorities (District Superintendent and Office of the Bishop)
 - Insurance agent
 - Chair, Safe Gatherings Committee
- f. As determined by the pastor(s) on staff, the following persons may need to be notified of the incident:
 - Church's spokesperson
 - Chair, Administrative Council
 - Chair, Staff Parish Relations Committee (if alleged abuser is a staff member)

4. The church's relationship with the victim and family:

Pastors on staff shall be proactive in care for those involved in an incident of child or youth abuse, including, but not limited to, the following:

- Victim
- Family members of victim
- Co-workers

5. The church's relationship with the alleged abuser:

- Acknowledge that he or she is a person of sacred worth
- Provide access to resources for counseling
- Remove the alleged abuser from his or her position as a worker with children and youth until the allegations are fully investigated and the allegations resolved or

- dismissed.
- The senior pastor or designee shall determine the appropriate future relationship with the accused and shall take into consideration the needs of the alleged victim as well as the accused.

INSURANCE

The Church shall obtain a sufficient level of liability insurance coverage that are available and would cover child abuse and sexual misconduct claims. If available, the Church should have the levels of coverage which are required for limited immunity.

CONCLUSION

In all our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be "*...surrounded by steadfast love, established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to eternal life.*" (Baptismal Covenant II, UMH p.44) When we seriously consider the promise we make in the baptismal service, we can only conclude that we are truly called to prevent child and youth abuse in our churches.

Our Church desires to be a "Safe Gatherings" for children and youth through the implementation of the above policy. Adoption of these provisions will enable the Church to provide a more safe and secure environment for each individual of our Church family and its guest.

The Board of Trustees (BOT) and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) will review this policy and the accompanying procedures annually. Revisions will be presented to the Administrative Council for Approval.

**CHECKLIST FOR RESPONSE TO ALLEGATION OF SEXUAL ABUSE
TO BE COMPLETED BY
CLERGY/PROFESSIONAL STAFF PERSONS**

In the case of an allegation of child/youth sexual abuse, the volunteer or clergy staff person who observes or to whom the information is given is required by the Church and by the state law to complete the tasks listed below. Date and initial as each step is completed.

Note: If allegation is against the Senior Minister, the report should go to the chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the District Superintendent.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	1. For clergy and paid professional staff: remove the accused from the situation and suspend the accused from duties involving children/youth.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	2. For volunteers: Remove the accused from the situation and immediately notify the closest available clergy/professional staff person who will suspend the accused. If the clergy/professional staff person to whom the allegation is reported is not the direct supervisor of the accused, the person reporting will inform the supervisor immediately .
Date: _____	Initial: _____	3. Make written documentation of everything done and said. If the person reporting the allegation is a volunteer, both the volunteer and the clergy/professional staff to whom the volunteer has reported will document the procedures taken.

The procedures after this point will be administered by **ministerial staff persons only**.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	4. Immediately notify the parents/guardians of the alleged victim and respond to their questions and concerns.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	5. Determine whether the incident requires immediately notification of state authorities.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	6. Immediately notify the minister in charge.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	7. Make written documentation of persons contacted and action taken to this point.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	8. The clergy/professional staff person will immediately establish a small response team to being the internal and pastoral care process.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	a. Notify the insurance carrier of the incident immediately and comply with its investigation, if any;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	b. Cooperate with legal and state authorities in their investigations, if any;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	c. Prepare a written statement and designate a spokesperson to respond to media inquiries;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	d. Provide assistance to the alleged victim and his/her family in obtaining counseling or referral to a mental health professional, if needed; determine whether the alleged victim's counseling expenses can be reimbursed by the Church or the insurance carrier;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	e. Respond to the needs of the families of the alleged victim and the accused to seek a redemptive solution for all involved;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	f. Inform the affected volunteer(s) and paid staff members of the need for confidentiality, and;
Date: _____	Initial: _____	9. Consider and respond to the concerns of other parents.

Date: _____	Initial: _____	10. The director of the affected ministerial area will respond to the pastoral care concerns of persons within the department.
Date: _____	Initial: _____	11. Make written documentation of persons contacted and action taken.



SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD/YOUTH ABUSE DOCUMENTATION FORM

(Documentation may require more space, please attach all necessary documentation)

Reason for report _____

Date of incident _____ Class/Program _____

Reported by _____ Title _____

Name(s) and Age(s) of Minor(s) _____

Quote the child's first words verbatim

Briefly describe what happened: (or what you observed)

What action did you take?

Has the incident been resolved? ____ Yes ____ No Explain: _____

Were there any witnesses? ____ Yes ____ No Names: _____

Signatures of witnesses (if possible): _____

Documentation Form submitted to Pastor: _____ Date submitted: _____



CHILD & YOUTH ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY

While everyone should report suspected child abuse and neglect, the California Penal Code provides that certain professionals and lay persons must report suspected abuse to the proper authorities. The mandated reporters include:

- Any Child Care Custodian (teachers, licensed day care workers, foster parents, social workers).
 - a. Child care custodian: Specific examples are an administrator or employee of a public or private youth center, youth recreation program or youth organization; an administrator or employee of a public or private organization whose duties require direct contact and supervision of children; an employee of a licensed community care or child day care facility.
 - b. Clergy Member: Specific examples area priest, minister, rabbi, religious practitioner.
- Medical Practitioners (physicians, dentists, psychologists, nurses).
- Non-Medical Practitioners (public health employees, counselors, religious practitioners who treat children).
- Employees of a child protective agency (sheriff, probation officers, county welfare department employees).

Failure to report suspected abuse by a mandated reporter (listed above) within 36 hours is a misdemeanor punishable by up to 6 months in county jail, a fine of not more than \$1,000 or both.

At Faith UMC, our role is not to investigate or assign blame. We function as a support for the children, youth and families of the Church, and any report is strictly confidential.

Faith UMC has established comprehensive policies aimed at reducing the risk of child/youth abuse in the church. Child/Youth abuse prevention and risk reduction policies and procedures are essential for every congregation, not only for the protection and safety of our children and youth (all those under the age of eighteen), but also for our volunteer and employed workers with children and youth. Refer to *SAFE GATHERINGS POLICY AND PROCEDURES* under separate cover.

Staff/Volunteer Name	Date
Signature	Date
Safe Gatherings Chair – Signature	Date

Faith United Methodist Church Code of Conduct for Staff/Volunteers

In support of Faith UMC’s Safe Gatherings Policy the following Code of Conduct has been established to ensure a safe haven for all children/youth. As children of God we want our children/youth to learn about respect, love, compassion and grace. We expect our leaders to

be positive Christian role models to our children/youth.

The following code of conduct will be encouraged and expected:

1. Inappropriate or abusive language shall not be tolerated (which includes but not limited to foul language, intimidation, belittling, degrading, teasing)
2. Smoking, use of alcohol or drugs in the presence of children/youth shall not be tolerated
3. Shall teach and model respect, responsibility, fairness and caring in all that we do
4. Shall treat everyone with respect and compassion (respecting differences: emotional, physical, cultural, perspective) Hazing and bullying are NOT acceptable behavior
5. Shall value everyone for who they are as a Child of God
6. Shall use the life and teachings of Jesus Christ as your role model
7. Shall respond with the best interest of Faith UMC in mind

I have read and understand the above Code of Conduct and willingly agree to abide and uphold the above Code of Conduct.

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Program: _____

Receipt of Safe Gatherings Policy and Procedures

In accordance with Faith UMC Safe Gatherings Policy to ensure that our church is a holy place of safety and sanctuary and a loving community of faith in which children, youth and vulnerable adults can enjoy wonderful freedom, joy and fullness; I have read and received a copy of Faith UMC's Safe Gatherings Policy and Procedures.

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature: _____

FOR OFFICE USE:

For Staff – file in employee file

For Volunteers – file with Safe Gatherings Chair