

Statement of Intent

Christ United Methodist Church Child Protection Policy and Statement

The children of Christ Church are a very important part of our congregation and we want to welcome them here, to introduce them to the love that God has for each of them and to help them grow in knowledge and faith to better serve Him as disciples of Jesus Christ.

When our children are baptized into the United Methodist Church we pledge to them the following:

“With God’s help we will so order our lives after the examples 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*, p.44).

“By our pledge, we commit to lead the child, by the example of our lives, into a life of Christian faith. By our pledge, we commit to support the parents in their efforts to lead their child into a life of Christian faith. By our pledge, we vow to keep our church a holy place in which all children may come to know God and experience the love of Jesus Christ.” (*Safe Sanctuaries*, p11). By making this promise we are called to prevent child abuse in our church. It is our intent to provide as safe an environment as possible for the children who come into this church. In an attempt to provide this environment we have put the following guidelines into effect. We will do our best to see that these suggested guidelines are followed.

1. We promise to give our best, to allow you to grow in God’s love.

- a. We will strive to provide the children with literature that best reflects God’s love for them and their great value to God. Our desire is to have teachers who love the Lord and have the Spiritual Gift of teaching to communicate these truths.
- b. We will always be willing to take the next step with our children to help them better understand God’s plan for their lives and His desire that they should come to Him through His son Jesus Christ.
- c. We will be very quick to assure each child that he was wonderfully made and is unique according to God’s plan. We will help them to seek God’s will for their individual lives.
- d. We promise to teach alongside the children’s parent(s) to reveal the abundant life available to Christ.

2. We promise to do our best to protect you from any possible harm.

- a. We have adopted protective measures that will help to identify any potential for harm.
 1. A personal interview will be conducted with anyone desiring to work with the children of Christ United Methodist Church.
 2. After August 1997, background checks are required on everyone desiring to work with the youth of Christ Church. Those working in youth ministry prior to that time were considered individually by the senior pastor and other church leadership and found to be members of the church in good standing and determined to be persons that had proved through past service to be capable, trustworthy, and deserving of the privilege of being approved as youth workers. This group of people have been *Grandfathered** onto the list of acceptable youth workers and a list is available.
- b. We will do our best to provide a safe building and environment.

3. We promise to love you and consider your welfare in all decisions for the church.

- a. We realize that the youth of our church are also the future of Christ’s Church in the world.

Christ United Methodist Church Child Safety Policy Overview

Specific Work Area Descriptions and Guidelines

Sunday School Teachers and Praise Time Leaders

Description: **Sunday School Teachers and Praise Time Leaders** are considered to be anyone who teaches the youth more than six Sundays per year. A person who teaches less often will be considered a **Lecturer** and will be accompanied or monitored by a person meeting the requirements of a teacher.

Requirements:

- A. Sunday School Teachers and Praise Time Leaders are to be aware of and in agreement with the Youth Ministry Application Covenant and agree to present well prepared lessons to the best of their ability to help make disciples.
- B. No one can be considered for a Sunday School and Praise Time Leader position with less than six months attendance at Christ Church or a letter of recommendation from their previous church where they had more than six months attendance and were active in Children's Ministry.
- C. In case of absence a teacher will notify the Christian Education Director prior to the Sunday School hour so someone can be in the room to greet the children. Each teacher will be provided with a list of acceptable substitute teachers so they can attempt to find a replacement.
- D. The minimum age of a Sunday School Teacher and Praise Time Leader is to be no less than 18 years of age.
- E. Sunday School and Praise Time Leaders must appear on one of the following lists that are kept on file in the office of the Christian Education Director and/or the Senior Pastor.
 - i. **Grandfathered List:** All persons working with the children of Christ Church, prior to August 1997, will be "Grandfathered" into the program. This list identifies people who have shown through past service to be safe and reliable caregivers for the children of the church.
 - ii. **Background checklist:** This list is comprised of persons who have come into the youth program after the August 1997 "Grandfathered List" was compiled. (Also, some of the people who were on the "Grandfathered List" have elected to have a background check completed on themselves.) Background checks are sent to the Indiana State Police for verification.
- F. All Sunday School and Praise Time Leaders are to attend annual Child Safety Training.

Nursery Workers/Childcare Providers

Description: **Nursery Workers/Childcare Providers** are considered to be anyone who appears on a Nursery or Childcare schedule with a frequency of six times per year or more.

Requirements:

- A. Nursery Workers/Childcare Providers should be aware of and in agreement with the Youth Ministry Application Covenant.
- B-F. All Nursery Workers/Childcare Providers are to be in compliance with the requirements listed under Sunday School Teacher/WOW and Praise Time Leaders. The words Sunday School Teacher/WOW and Praise Time Leaders is to be replaced with the words Nursery Workers/Childcare Providers. (Note: Item C says notify the "Christian Education Director;" please change that wording to "notify the Nursery/Childcare leader for your area or the Christian Education Director if the leader is unavailable.")

Occasional Caregivers/Lecturers

Description: **Occasional Caregivers/Lecturers** are people who work in Children's Ministry on an infrequent basis (less than 6 times per year) in any capacity, or a caregiver who has not yet met the above stated standards for Nursery Worker/Childcare Provider, but will do so at the next training session following six months attendance at Christ Church.

Requirements:

- A. Occasional Caregivers must always be accompanied or supervised by someone who has met the above stated guidelines for Nursery/Childcare Providers. An occasional Caregiver will not have solitary access to a child.
- B. The minimum age for an Occasional Caregiver is to be no less than 18 years of age.

Youth working with Younger Youth

Description: **Youth working with younger youth** includes anyone working in Children's Ministry under the age of 18.

Requirements:

- A. **Ages 13-18 years of age** may work in Children's Ministry using the following guidelines:
 - 1. Documentation of training that would qualify them to provide care to younger children, if documentation is available.
 - 2. A letter signed by a parent or guardian stating that they understand that their child has asked for a position of responsibility in Children's Ministry/Nursery/Caregivers Ministry.
 - 3. The youth are to attend the annual Child Safety Training provided by the Church and any other training sessions required for youth caregivers.
 - 4. A Youth must always work under the supervision and direction of an adult and should always make the adult caregiver aware of decisions they make to provide care for younger children (ex. Changing diapers, giving food/drinks, etc.)
 - 5. A Youth assigned to any room as a caregiver cannot leave the area until the next hour begins unless a parent has requested them to do so or the adult caregiver has approved of any special circumstances that require them to leave.
- B. **Ages 11-13** may work in Children's Ministry using the following guidelines:
 - 1. Documentation of training that would qualify them to provide care to younger children if documentation is available.
 - 2. A letter signed by a parent or guardian stating that they understand that their child is requesting a position in the Children's Ministry/Nursery/Caregivers Ministry.
 - 3. The youth are to attend the annual Child Safety Training provided by the Church and any other training sessions required for youth caregivers.
 - 4. Youth must always work under the close supervision and direction of an adult. The younger youth are not to make any decisions such as changing diapers or feeding the children. They may make these suggestions however not implement them.
 - 5. Younger youth caregivers may not pick up a younger child.
 - 6. A younger youth assigned to any room as a caregiver cannot leave the area until the next hour begins unless a parent has requested them to do so or the adult caregiver has approved of any special circumstances that require them to leave.
- C. **Under age 11** are only allowed in a nursery/caregivers area with a parent or an adult who has specifically requested that this youth be with them and will take responsibility for assuring that they exhibit good conduct and safe play habits. These children must adhere to the guideline stated above for ages 11-13.

All Nursery Caregivers are to abide by any posted or verbal Nursery Guidelines to provide the most loving and safest possible atmosphere for the children.

Youth Group Counselor/Leaders

Description: Youth Group Counselors/Leaders are people who work in the area of ministry to older youth.

Requirements:

- A. Anyone working in this area of ministry is to be at least 18 years of age and 5 years older than the oldest youth in the group under the age of 18. (i.e. Youth 14-18/Advisor 23 minimum age, Youth 9-13/Advisor 18 minimum age.)
- B. Be aware of and be in agreement with the Youth Ministry Application Covenant.
- C. Comply with the Sunday School/WOW Praise Time Leaders guidelines B-F.
Change the words Sunday School Teacher/WOW and Praise Time Leaders to Youth Group Counselors/Leaders
- D. Follow any safety guidelines communicated for any event. (field trips/overnights, etc.).
- E. See Adults one on one with youth.

Preschool Teachers/ Aides/Fillers

Description: Preschool Teachers/Aides/Fillers are employed by CUMC in the Preschool Program. They will be consistent leaders throughout the school year.

Requirements:

- A. Preschool employees should be aware of and in agreement with the Youth Ministry Application Covenant.
- B. No one can be considered for a Preschool position without being currently active in a church.
- C. In case of absence a teacher will notify the Preschool Director so someone can be called in as a substitute. The Preschool Director will have a list of acceptable substitutes so that they may find a replacement.
- D. The minimum age for a Preschool Teacher/Aide is to be no less than 18 years of age.
- E. Preschool Teachers/Aide must appear on either the Background Checklist or the "Grandfathered" List which are kept on file in the office of the Christian Education Director and/or Senior Pastor.
- F. Preschool employees will adhere to the general Child Safety Guidelines as well as any other guidelines set forth by the Preschool Director.
- G. Preschool Director is responsible for seeing that the above requirements are met and enforced.

Adults One on One With Youth

United Methodist doctrine advises to completely avoid all one on one confrontation with youth or vulnerable adult.

Definition: Adults One on One With Youth may be considered but not limited to any of the following situations: youth or vulnerable adult meeting with a counselor, music lessons, or any other situation which may arise.

Requirements:

- A. In all cases if possible a second adult should be acquired to sit in on the lesson or discussion or to monitor from the hallway.
- B. If A cannot be met then a form must be on file in the Christian Education Director's and/or Senior Pastor's office stating that the parent/guardian has been given prior knowledge that their child will be engaging in an activity where their child will be one on one with an adult.
- C. All private instructors must be aware of and in agreement of the Youth Ministry Application Covenant.
- D. All instructors' names must appear on either the "Grandfathered" List or the Background Checklist.

Church Sponsored Groups

Description: Church Sponsored Groups (Boy/Girl/Cub Scouts) are groups sponsored by Christ United Methodist Church, but not directly supervised by the Church.

Requirements:

- A. The director of each group will submit to the Christian Education Director a list of any group leaders, teachers or assistants and provide a copy of completed Background Checks on each person involved in the program.
- B. The director is responsible for annual Child Safety Training and will provide the church, through the Christian Education Director, a format of the training and a record of attendance. If the director would prefer the church to provide the training the Christian Education Director is to be notified.

- C. No one is permitted to be with children, youth, or vulnerable adults, who has not completed a Background Check and scheduled Child Safety Training.
- D. The director is responsible for seeing that these requirements are met and enforced.

Other Groups Providing Services to Youth

Description: Other Groups Providing Services to Youth (example: Caterpillar Kids, Kumon Math Classes, etc.) are groups renting the facilities or granted use of facilities on a case-by-case basis and have provided hold harmless forms and proof of insurance(e.g. other than CUMC sponsored groups-a community youth rally, a series of Chrysalis team formations, a service unit or Round Table meeting under it's own leadership or a group given overnight shelter on a cross-country trip, a social event using the church and all other groups) are not to be the responsibility of Christ United Methodist Church, unless Christ Church is significantly involved in the planning or supervision of their program; however, groups associated with and/or advertised by Christ United Methodist Church should be considered part of Christ United Methodist Church's ministry and need to be in compliance with the stated guidelines.

Church Activities Other Than Above

Description: Church Activities Other Than Above include some activities that include children, youth or vulnerable adults and are of such a general or open character (e.g. public worship, a church picnic or dinner) that the leaders need not meet screening or training requirements, unless local church policy addresses particular situations (see previously stated portion of the Child Safety Policy for listing of stated situations pertinent to Christ United Methodist Church.) Likewise, some activities designed for family participation where children, youth, or vulnerable adults attend as part of family groups of parent-child pairings (e.g. Breakfast with Jesus and Santa, Easter Egg Hunt, Walk Through Bethlehem, any parent/guardian/designated person-child events, etc.) need not have leaders who meet screening and training requirements, unless local church policy so specifies. However, all activities that include children, youth, or vulnerable adults need to be properly conducted according to local church guidelines.

General Guidelines

1. A minimum of two caregivers, or one caregiver and one monitor, are required at all times in any area of ministry to children at a church event or church sponsored event. (see Adults One on One with Youth)
2. Our youth education facility has connecting doors between classrooms. These or the hallway doors are to be kept open when classrooms are in use. This will allow for two caregivers in one common area at all times. When two caregivers are in both rooms then the doors may be closed.
3. All doors directly opening to any areas where childcare is provided are either half doors or equipped with windows for observation by the monitor for the protection of the teachers and children.
4. Monitors will randomly check all areas during Sunday school and other times that childcare is provided to insure the safety and protection of the teachers and children.
 - A. Monitors are specifically the Sunday School Superintendent and assistants, the Christian Education Director and occasionally the nursery supervisors, during Sunday School and Church hours.
 - B. During preschool hours, monitors shall be the Preschool Director, the Assistant Preschool Director, aides, and fillers.
5. The infant nursery (Caterpillars) is equipped with a pager system for notifying individual parents when they are needed in the nursery.
6. A caregiver should not leave the nursery without notifying either the Nursery Supervisor or the Christian Education Director in advance so that a replacement may be secured.
7. A child should not be removed from the room they have been placed in by their parent/guardian/responsible party, without that persons consent.
8. If a child is not picked up from Praise Time/Nursery/Sunday School, contact the Christian Education Director who will make the decision on how to reunite the child with the responsible adult.

Two adults must accompany the children at all times to areas outside of the classroom, (playroom, lunchroom, playground, sanctuary, or bathrooms). Bathrooms are located between every two classrooms. These are to be utilized when ever possible. All trips to the hallway bathrooms require two adults.

Guidelines/Definitions & Signs of Abuse

Sexual Abuse is any sexual contact or interaction (i.e. indecent exposure and liberties, communication for immoral purposes, fondling, rape, etc.) between an adult or significantly older youth and a child youth or vulnerable adult. Force, threats, bribery, dissemination of pornography, misrepresenting right and wrong are some of the ways this crime is perpetrated. Even if a child, youth or vulnerable adult, out of ignorance, innocence or fear does not resist, it is still abuse.

Possible church related signs:

- Unusual nervousness or anxiety about being left in the nursery or Sunday school class
- Reluctance to participate in church activities that were previously enthusiastically approached.
- Comments such as “I don’t want to be alone with _____” in reference to a childcare giver or teacher.
- Nightmares including a childcare worker or teacher as threatening character.
- Unexplained hostility toward a childcare worker or teacher

Physical Abuse is any physical force applied by an adult or older youth in a position of caregiver/authority figure to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Physical force (hitting, shaking, shoving, etc.) is not to be used by leaders in our programs.

Possible Signs of Physical Abuse:

- Hostile and aggressive behavior toward others
- Fearfulness of parents and / or other adults
- Destructive behavior toward self, others, and / or property
- Inexplicable fractures or bruises inappropriate for child’s developmental stage
- Burns, facial injuries, pattern of repetitious bruises.

Emotional Abuse is belittling, hateful, or angry words and/or actions directed toward a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Discipline by extreme humiliation is also emotional abuse. Emotional abuse allows the child to feel not only unloved but undeserving of love and care. It can send a message of worthlessness and badness. Very difficult to prove but very devastating to the victim.

Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse:

- Exhibits severe depression and/or withdrawal
- Exhibits severe lack of self-esteem
- Failure to thrive
- Threatens or attempts suicide
- Speech and/or eating disorders
- Goes to extremes to seek adult approval
- Extreme passive/aggressive behavior patterns

Neglect of basic needs is a form of abuse. Denial of food, water, cleanliness, clothing and sleep are not appropriate forms of discipline. Included in this may also be denial of education, affection, and affirmation.

Possible Signs of Neglect:

- Failure to thrive
- Pattern of inappropriate dress for climate
- Begs or steals food; chronic hunger
- Depression
- Untreated medical conditions
- Poor Hygiene

Ritual Abuse is abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child's welfare. The culprit may appeal to a higher authority to help justify the abuse. Abuse may not be limited to the child it may also include repeated threats of harm to the child.

Possible Signs of Ritual Abuse:

- Disruptions of memory or consciousness
- Unexplained mistrust and mood swings
- Flashbacks
- Eating Disorders
- Fear of the dark, especially at sundown or a full moon
- Agitation or despair that seems to occur in cycles
- Fear of ministers, priests, or others wearing robes or uniforms
- Nightmares or sleep disorders
- Any of the symptoms of sexual abuse

These signs have all been taken from the book, "Safe Sanctuaries Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church" by Joy Thornburg Melton. She is an ordained deacon in the North Georgia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. She is also a Christian educator as well as a lawyer.

Reporting Procedures

When an incident of child abuse is reported to, or suspected by, a caregiver it is to be reported immediately to the Child Welfare office in the county of the child's residence.

- All reasonable effort is to be made to protect the child from any further possible abuse until the authorities arrive.
- Reports of any incidents of abuse are to be reported to the Senior Pastor immediately.
- The Senior Pastor will have the responsibility for handling, or delegating, all facets of the reporting process.
- The Senior Pastor will work with the authorities and document the reported incident fully.
- The Senior Pastor will work with the bishop, or the appointed person within the conference, to provide information.
- The Senior Pastor will be responsible for investigating the allegations of improper conduct, and where necessary, recommending removal of persons from leadership. Proper documentation is important in all cases.
- The Senior Pastor will serve as spokesperson in all instances. (Media, Law Authorities, Church Authorities, Legal Counsel, etc.) No one else is delegated to do this. In the absence of the Senior Pastor, the Associate Pastor will fulfill these responsibilities.