

Bethel United Methodist Church
Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedure
Adopted 9/2017; revised 5/2023

Jesus the Good Shepherd

John 10: “Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. ²The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. ³The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. ⁴When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. ⁵They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers.” ⁶Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

⁷So again Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. ⁸All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. ⁹I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved and will come in and go out and find pasture. ¹⁰The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.

As Christians, the words from John 10: 1-10 provide a Biblical mandate for the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

In April 1996, The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, adopted a resolution aimed at eliminating any potential for child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution 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 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 your 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." (para. 162C)

Child 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, or pretend to be) occur in churches, both large and small, urban, and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and it is 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 abuse. Incidents of abuse 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. . 384-386)

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, The Bethel United Methodist Church adopts this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

Purpose:

Our purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. This most recent revision also seeks to protect the volunteers and staff members who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults and to protect the ministry that is provided. We seek to protect all from bodily harm, emotional damage, and spiritual destruction.

Covenant Statement:

The Bethel United Methodist Church hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults as well as our workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of Pennsylvania law.

Notwithstanding anything contained in this policy, it is the responsibility of every church in the conference to ensure that it complies with all aspects of the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (63 PA. C.S.A. 6301). If the law conflicts with this policy, the law shall control.

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Definitions

Adult: Anyone who has reached the age of legal majority and has finished high school.

Child: In the United States, this term is commonly used to identify anyone age eleven or younger.

Emotional abuse: A pattern of intentional conduct that crushes a child's/youth's/other vulnerable person's spirit and attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.

Ministry supervisor: A screened individual, staff, or volunteer, responsible for a particular ministry with oversight of the leaders in that ministry.

Neglect: When a person with responsibility for a child, youth, or other vulnerable person fails to care for that individual's physical and/or emotional needs.

Paid staff person: Someone paid by the church, overseen by the staff/pastor parish relations committee, and screened according to the church's Safe Sanctuary policy and any additional required personnel screening.

PA Mandated reporter: A mandated reporter is a person who is required by law to report concerns of child abuse or neglect. Mandated reporters typically have frequent contact with children. At BUMC, all paid employees are mandated reporters due to the presence of the nursery school.

Physical abuse: Violent, non-accidental contact that results in injury. This includes, but is not limited to, striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns.

Roamer: A Safe Sanctuaries trained/screened adult who meets the minimum age requirements as defined in this policy and moves throughout the facility to provide additional oversight and supervision during activities.

Sexual abuse: Any form of sexual activity with a child/youth/other vulnerable person, whether at the church, at home, or any other setting. The abuser may be an adult or another minor.

Screened adult: A volunteer who has gone through the screening process involving a criminal background check and who has been known to church members for more than 6 months. These people may or may not be members, but they must be regular attendees and active in the church for at least six months.

Unscreened adult: Someone who has not been screened. The individual may work in a room with a screened adult or screened paid staff person. He or she should never be alone with

children, youth, or other vulnerable people. Unscreened adults may or may not be church members, but they must be regular attendees and active in the church for at least six months. Use of unscreened adults should be an exception rather than normal practice. Rare exceptions may be made in consultation with the pastor in charge in special situations.

Volunteer reporter: Voluntary reporters are also referred to as “permissive reporters.” A permissive reporter is any person who reports concerns of child abuse—regardless of their profession. Permissive reports are allowed in all states to protect children from suspected child abuse and neglect. In most cases, your identity can remain confidential, and most states provide toll-free phone numbers for receiving reports of abuse or neglect.

Vulnerable person: A person whose ability to protect himself/herself from violence, abuse, or neglect is significantly impaired through social, physical, or mental disability or illness.

Youth: Anyone not a “child” and under the age of eighteen (age of legal majority).

Youth helpers: People under the age of eighteen who are assisting with child or youth activities. They can assist with activities but should not be considered adult volunteers and should always be supervised. Youth helpers should be at least three years older than the children or youth they are helping. A youth helper will normally be considered “unscreened.”

Selection and Screening of Church Staff and Adult Volunteers

All volunteers and paid staff who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults at BUMC will:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Be at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth they will be supervising.
- All adult volunteers shall have an active relationship with BUMC for at least six months before being allowed to supervise activities for children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- Staff must provide three letters of reference and be interviewed by members of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and the Pastor.
- Obtain clearances, required by law, at the person's own expense every five years for all BUMC staff and adult volunteers working with children/youth/vulnerable adults. Copies of clearances are to be submitted to the church office.
 - **Criminal history from the Pennsylvania State Police (PSP).** The Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Record Check can be obtained online at [“Pennsylvania Access To](#)

[Criminal History,” \(PATCH\)](#). Requests for volunteer purposes are free. Requests for employment purposes have a fee.

- **Child Abuse History Clearance from the Department of Human Services.** The Pennsylvania Child Abuse History clearance can be obtained online at [Child Welfare Information Solution \(CWIS\)](#) self-service portal. Requests for volunteer purposes are free. Requests for employment purposes have a fee.
- **Fingerprint based federal criminal history** submitted through the Pennsylvania State Police or its authorized agent (FBI). Requests for volunteer and employment purposes have a fee. Adult volunteers who have been a continuous resident of Pennsylvania for the past 10 years and swear or affirm in writing that they are not disqualified from service based upon a conviction of an offense under §6344 are exempt from the fingerprinting based federal criminal history.

Notes:

1. Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work or volunteer in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
2. All employees and volunteers of the preschool center operated within BUMC shall obtain all clearances required for their certificate of compliance by the Department of Education or Department of Welfare.

Training

- BUMC volunteers and paid staff will be given the opportunity to attend training about Safe Sanctuaries policies, procedures, and child abuse issues on a regular basis.
 - Paid staff will complete 3 hours of training every 3 years. Training may be by in-person seminar or online by organizations accredited by the Pennsylvania Department of Welfare.
 - Volunteers will complete initial training. Periodic updates may also be required at the discretion of the Pastor and/or the Safe Sanctuaries coordinator.
- Training opportunities
 - <https://pafsa.org/mandated-reporter-training/>
 - www.reportabusepa.pitt.edu

Supervision Guidelines

General

- No child will be left unsupervised while participating in a ministry activity/event.
- All activities involving children, youth, and other vulnerable people will be supervised by at least two unrelated, non-co-habiting adult volunteers or staff persons, at least one of which must be a screened adult. A designated roamer shall monitor the room when it is not possible to have two adult volunteers present or when one adult volunteer is not screened. If using a roamer, keep doors open.
- When reasonably feasible, each room set aside for children/youth should have a door with a window. (Windows in doors tend to remove the opportunities for secrecy and isolation, conditions every child abuser seeks.) Half doors or baby gates should be considered for toddlers to second-grade children to keep them from wandering outside the classroom. Windows should remain free from obstruction; avoid covering them. If there are no windows in the door, the door should remain open.
- Adult volunteers will have access to a telephone, cell phone or pager when groups are at or away from the church facility.
- Recommended paid staff/volunteer to children, youth, or vulnerable adults ratio:
 1. 1:3 preschool
 2. 1:5 elementary
 3. 1:7 junior high
 4. 1:8 senior high

Note: If it is not possible to meet the above ratio, another screened church member will circulate among the classrooms throughout the activity. Classroom doors should remain open. If young children tend to wander from their classrooms when doors are open, a “baby gate” that covers less than ½ of the height of the door may be used.

Classroom Activities

- **Infant- Grade K:** At least one screened adult and a second adult will be present for all classroom activities. Two screened adults are preferred; and when the two adults are family members, it is preferable that a third adult be present. In addition, a designated roamer should check each classroom on a regular basis. Children should be escorted to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the adults or by a designated roamer who checks on all classrooms. When a child is using

the restroom, the main bathroom door should be open. Children who are not potty-trained will have their diaper changed by one of their parents/legal guardians.

- **Grades 1 - 6:** At least one screened adult and a second adult volunteer will be present for all classroom activities. Two screened adults are preferred. In addition, a designated roamer should check each classroom on a regular basis. Where two adults are not available, the classroom doors are to remain open, and a designated roamer should visit the classroom regularly. Children should be escorted to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the adults or by a designated roamer who checks on all classrooms. When a child is using the restroom, the main bathroom door should be open.
- **Grades 7–12:** At least one screened adult with at least two adults present. A designated roamer shall monitor the room when it is not possible to have two adults present or if one adult is not screened.

Open Door Policy

Parents, volunteers, or staff of the church will be permitted, as reasonableness dictates, to visit and observe all programs and classrooms at any time.

Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure

- Children 11 years old and under will be checked in to and out of a church sponsored activity by their parent or legal guardian or people authorized by parent/legal guardian.
- a child's care and information records will be completed by parent/legal guardian and updated annually. This will include authorized persons allowed to sign out a child. Older siblings, parents, and other adults may be authorized to pick up children.
- Avoid nonauthorized adults picking up children. This record of authorized adults with pick up privileges should be updated annually.
- Adult volunteers will have access to a telephone, cell phone or pager when groups are at or away from the church facility.

Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities

At least two screened adults will be present for all non-classroom activities involving children, youth, and/or other vulnerable people. Any meetings held in an individual's home will be supervised by at least one screened adult, with two adults present who are not members of the same family. Meetings held in an individual's home must be pre-approved by the child's/youth's/vulnerable person's parent or guardian.

Time Following Group Events

It is inevitable that occasionally a child's/youth's/or other vulnerable person's transportation arrives after all other participants have departed.

- Two screened adults should be scheduled to be present until all participants have been picked up. In some circumstances, one screened adult may unavoidably supervise a child/youth/ other vulnerable person. When this occurs, the screened adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the participant's well-being as well as his/her own. Example—Have the parents on the phone with you until they arrive.
- One-on-one interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be with an open door and visibility to all.

Counseling of Youth, Children, and Other Vulnerable People

- In instances where circumstances dictate that counseling would be most effective on a one-on-one basis, an appropriate paid church staff person may meet individually for one-on-one conversations with the knowledge of at least one other paid staff member and with permission of a parent or guardian.
- During any one-on-one conversation with children, youth, or other vulnerable people, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session, unless there is glass in the door or wall that gives a clear view into the room.
- If another adult is not in the building when the counseling occurs, the session should be moved to a public place, such as a restaurant or outside where other people are present.

NOTE

1. At the initial meeting, the adult should first determine if he/she is qualified to address the child's/youth's/other vulnerable person's needs effectively. Counseling should be limited to no more than three sessions. Referral to another more qualified counselor should always be considered.
2. This section is not meant to govern a licensed professional counselor in a paid counseling relationship with a child, youth, or other vulnerable person.

Transportation

General Rules

Transporting children, youth, and other vulnerable people is an important concern. Their safety can be at risk in a variety of ways. Therefore, certain discretion must be used depending

upon the event attended, the locale of the event, and the age group participating. This policy includes both requirements and guidelines. When feasible, there should be adherence to the recommendations and the guidelines. It is expected that the requirements will always be followed.

Requirements

- Drivers must be known to the designated screened adult leader of the event.
- When a child/youth/other vulnerable person is transported in any vehicle, the driver must be either the child's/youth's/other vulnerable person's parent/guardian, a screened adult, or a paid staff person who is at least 21 years old.
- When a child/youth/other vulnerable person is transported in a church-owned vehicle, the driver must be at least 25 years of age; an exception is made when the driver is a paid staff member who is at least 18 years of age and for whom a motor vehicle record search has been made and the record has been found to be satisfactory by the pastor in charge or his/her designee. (This is subject to other church policy, state law, and insurance regulations.)
- Drivers must have a valid driver's license for the vehicle being operated. For example, if driving a church bus, a commercial driver's license is required. A copy of the driver's license should be on file in the church office.
- Drivers must require that passengers wear seat belts; the number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts.
- Drivers should be advised of a designated route and should not deviate from it except in cases of emergency or road detours.
- Drivers should not use cell phones unless required for communication with other drivers. Any use should be hands-free and in accordance with state law. Drivers should not text/message while driving.
- Youth must not transport other youth to events, meetings, etc. unless said youth are siblings of the same family with parental approval
- When a trip is planned and the destination is expected to be 100 miles or more from the point of departure, drivers are to be listed on an "approved driver list" maintained in the church office.
- People who regularly drive church-owned vehicles are to be listed on an "approved driver list" maintained in the church office.
- To be listed on the "approved driver list," a motor vehicle record search must have been conducted, and the pastor in charge or his/her designee must determine if the record is satisfactory.

- Drivers will read and sign an acknowledgement form indicating that the Child, Youth, and Other Vulnerable People Protection Policy has been read and will be followed.

Guidelines

- An adult driver must never be in a vehicle alone with a child/youth/other vulnerable person and should always number two or more while in the vehicle.
- Drivers should receive training for any church-owned vehicle being operated.
- Youth who drive their own vehicles should be reminded regularly of the importance of vehicle safety.
- Any use of a ride-share service should be scheduled by a parent or guardian and drop-off/pickup confirmed by the parent/guardian with the adult in charge of a specific event or activity.

Trips and Retreats

General

Trip and retreat settings can call for different child/youth/other vulnerable people protection requirements, depending on the circumstances. What follows are the requirements and guidelines of this policy. The requirements should always be implemented. Depending on the circumstances of the setting, who is in attendance, etc., some or all of the guidelines should be implemented as needed. Those in charge of the trip or retreat should be mindful of both requirements and guidelines, in addition to applying their own wisdom to the needs of a given occasion.

Requirements

- There will be at least two screened adults present for all trips, retreats, and other events where the children, youth, and /or other vulnerable people gather overnight at, or away from, the church campus.
- There will be at least one screened adult for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two screened adults present shall be of the same gender as the children/youth/other vulnerable people who are present.
- The person in charge of youth/children/other vulnerable people for each overnight trip and/or retreat shall carry parental permission forms, including permission for emergency medical care.

Guidelines in a Hotel Type Setting; Rooms Should Be Assigned as Follows:

- Separate rooms for adults and child/youth/other vulnerable people (where applicable) should be assigned with at least two participants per room except where specific situations dictate a different arrangement.
- Assignments should be made so that an adult room is between two children's/youth's/other vulnerable person's rooms when possible.
- Adults should make random monitoring hall trips and room checks at night. This should be done by two adults of the same gender as those being checked.
- A hotel should be selected where the rooms open to the interior of the building (i.e., do not open to the outside).

Hosting Events

Whenever BUMC hosts an activity involving children or youth from another church or community organization:

- The groups using the church facility will follow BUMC's Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures and/or must present their own policy that is at least as comprehensive as this policy. Programs and ministries in the church that are licensed or accredited by a licensing or accreditation body or that have formally adopted supervision procedures, and that receive pre-approval from the Board of Trustees shall follow their established requirements for the supervision children.

Social and Digital Communication

As an ever-increasing number of people use and prefer digital communication over other forms, it is essential that the church be present in this mission field. Social networking sites, on-the-spot communication devices and email can enhance communication, faith sharing and deepen relationships.

The following recommended practices and guidelines apply principles of healthy boundaries and safe church to the virtual world of digital networking and communication. They are intended to raise awareness of issues and open doors of conversations with ministry teams. We encourage all ministry teams to discern together the following guidelines, considering the nature of your ministry and being mindful that our calling is to meet children and youth where they are; model healthy boundaries; and love and care for them safely. Adults engaged in ministry to youth and children should consider their relationship with the youth or child when

interacting with them using digital media and should conduct themselves in a manner that would be acceptable on church grounds.

Connecting on Social Networking Sites

General

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

- Adults should not submit 'friend' requests to children or youth. Minors may feel like they are not able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between them and adults. As additional social media sites gain popularity, the Safe Sanctuaries Committee reserves the right to apply this approach to the various methods of digital communication.
- Adults should not respond to "friend" requests from children or youth. If a child, youth, or other vulnerable person initiates a connection, that individual's parent or guardian as well as the volunteer or staff member's supervisor shall be notified.
- If an adult receives a private text from a child, youth, or vulnerable person that seems questionable, the adult should immediately end the conversation in the virtual space and offer opportunities to have the conversation in person and in compliance with the earlier guidelines for one-on-one conversations. The ministry supervisor and/or parent/guardian should be made aware of the incident immediately. Note: If an in-person meeting is not possible, those involved will determine the most reasonable alternative in compliance with the earlier guidelines for one-on-one conversations
- All in-person protection policies apply to online platform meetings like Zoom, Skype, Messenger, and so on. (For example, two unrelated adults should be present in the virtual room just as they would be in a physical room.)
- All online activities should be an official church account, not a personal account.
- Communication about online meetings should be shared with parents/guardians as well as with children, youth, and other vulnerable people.
- Adult leaders and participants should use their real names as usernames.
- Attendance of online meetings should be documented.
- All electronic communications shall be documented and retained.

Maintaining Boundaries

- All church leaders and adult volunteers engaged in ministry with children and youth are strongly encouraged to set strict privacy settings on any personal social networking profile, making every effort to prevent youth and children from being introduced to objectionable content. Privacy settings on personal pages and information should be thoroughly scrutinized on a regular basis to prevent this information from being available to minors. If a church leader or adult volunteer does not feel that they can set the proper privacy settings and/or regularly check their personal pages (2-3 times per day) for inappropriate material that might have been posted by others, they are asked to completely restrict child/youth access to their pages.
- For the sake of their own privacy and the well-being of the child/youth participants, church leaders and adult volunteers should not add or invite children or youth to any groups, events, pages, chat rooms, etc. that are not solely dedicated to activities directly related to the children or youth ministries or ministry activities.
- Given the continuing evolution of privacy settings and capabilities on many social networking sites, church leaders and adult volunteers must be willing to continue to educate themselves on what settings are needed to support the above recommendations.
- The church's Audio/Visual Team should be consulted.
- Additionally, the child and youth ministry programs should establish education for adult volunteers who wish to use social media as part of their ministry efforts.

Digital Communication

Social media is an excellent way to quickly share both good and sad moments in a person's life with many people. However, as with all forms of communication, users should be respectful of the privacy of others. This is particularly the case with youth and children's ministry leaders.

- Leaders should be especially mindful of how information is presented in such a permanent medium,
- Adult volunteers should never share news about another person without their express prior consent.
- Adult volunteers should use prudent judgment in the time they contact youth and children through social media, e-mail, or other forms of digital communication.

- The "home phone rule" is a basic rule of thumb to use – normally do not text or chat with youth at a time when you would not normally call their home phone line, i.e., before 9:00 AM or after 9:00 PM.
 - Exceptions to this rule are as follows:
 - In emergency situations or when children or youth reach out to a church leader or adult volunteer with issues that they feel that they need to discuss immediately.
 - During weekends, vacation times, and other times when children or youth may have parental permission to stay up later than normal, adult leaders may respond to youth-initiated communications outside of these hours, at their discretion.
 - In all of the exception situations, adults should use good judgment in deciding when discussions should continue or be picked up at a more appropriate time, in order to support and demonstrate good boundaries with their personal time.

Cautions:

- Church leaders and adult volunteers should avoid relationships with children/youth via Social Networking sites, unless an actual relationship (ministry, family friendship, etc.) already exists between them.
- All communication sent digitally (email, social networking sites, notes, or posts, etc.) may be shared or reposted to others. Adults should be mindful that comments sent to a youth may be shared by that youth in several ways and that misinterpretation of those comments may occur.
- All church leaders and adult volunteers engaged in ministry with children and youth should consider the content and nature of any posts that will be seen or read by others. Your voice is often considered the voice of the church.
- 'One on one' video or chat room interaction is not appropriate between adults and minors. Such communications should only be engaged in where no face-to-face communication is possible, such as where the youth is away for the summer in a foreign country but regularly communicates with the adult in person.
- When the content of received communications raises concerns or questions, it should be shared with a member of the Pastoral team, and law enforcement, where appropriate.
- Email is not an appropriate communication method for matters that are pastorally sensitive, emotionally charged, or that require extensive conversation.

- Email may be more appropriate where matters are deemed legally sensitive.
- Due to the greater potential for misinterpretation, inappropriate discussions, and inadvertent exposure of youth to inappropriate content, personal pages should be maintained appropriately.
- Humor and sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted and should be used only where appropriate.
- Phone conversations and face-to-face meetings are the preferred mode of communication, when responding to emotionally driven communication or pastoral emergencies, and should be used, when possible, to provide the appropriate level of support.

Identity Protection

We seek to protect the privacy and identity of all minors as they use social media. We also seek to safeguard the privacy of adults worshipping and working within BUMC.

- All church leaders and adult volunteers engaged in ministry with minors must obtain written consent from a parent or legal guardian before posting photos or video that identify children or youth on any online site or printed publication.
- Even with the written consent from a parent or legal guardian, pictures should be posted to either the BUMC Youth closed group or on personal pages, where the privacy settings restrict viewing to only those associated with the youth ministry.
- Adults in youth and children's ministry should closely monitor the privacy settings of any posted youth images to ensure that they are not accessible to individuals who do not have permission to view them.
- When posting pictures and videos containing minors, PHOTOS MUST NOT BE TAGGED with names or location indicators. When "checking-in" with any location tagging social media, only the adult should check-in.
- All photos must be appropriate and in keeping with the spirit of the ministry event. We strongly encourage the respect and dignity of every person depicted in an image. Only pictures depicting youth in an appropriate light should be posted. "Appropriate" pictures may include goofy pictures that the youth's parents are comfortable being posted. If a picture would make the youth feel self-conscious, vulnerable, or would subject the youth to ridicule, the picture should not be posted.

Administration of Official BUMC Social Media Groups

- Each church related social media site, group, or page must have a minimum of two unrelated administrators, who are either church leaders or adult volunteers engaged in the ministry.
- Last names are omitted, and initials are used in their place on all sites, including, but not limited to, the broadcasts of worship services and prayer sites/emails.
- Any inappropriate material posted to a church related social media site, group, or page must be deleted and addressed
- When the Bethel Office receives a prayer request, the person making the request will be asked if they approve the broadcast of their name. The Office Manager will comply with their wishes and notify the administrators of other sites.
- Individuals requesting prayer who do not wish to have their names published will be referred to the Prayer Chain.
- There is no expectation of privacy in the broadcast of services. Individuals will not be identified by name unless those individuals grant specific permission.
- Sites must be monitored frequently by adults and/or the AV Team to allow for quick responses in the event urgent or crisis concerns are posted.
- Site administrators should review the access to any BUMC Youth 'Closed' group account to remove:
 - Adults who no longer actively participate in the youth program
 - Former youth members, and their parents, who no longer actively participate in the youth program.
- Active participation in the youth group may include:
 - Former youth who:
 - Have a sibling who remains in the youth group
 - Have several younger friends who participate in the youth group
 - Regularly attend as a counselor or participant on summer mission trips, but not participating on a weekly or monthly basis
 - Former adult volunteers who:
 - Regularly attend as a counselor or participant on summer mission trips, but not participating on a weekly or monthly basis
 - Have an established mentor/mentee role with an older youth
 - Family relationships that establish the adult in an older sibling or parental role with an active youth

- Would remain involved in the lives of the youth but for their geographic distance from BUMC. Provided that the youngest youth the adult worked with have not matriculated out of the youth group

Reporting of Allegations of Abuse

Reporting alleged abuse regarding vulnerable adults. Reports should be made to local police and an investigation should be conducted by local police.

Reporting alleged abuse regarding a child or youth. Reporting of any allegation of child abuse shall be done in accordance with the laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania currently in force and as enacted and amended in the future from time to time.

Pennsylvania Child Protective Law

<https://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/LI/consCheck.cfm?txtType=HTM&ttl=23&div=0&chpt=63>

All employees and volunteers who have contact with children in a manner that, under Pennsylvania law currently in force and as enacted and amended in the future, defines them as a mandated reporter, have legal responsibility under the law to **make a report directly to public child welfare officials any time they have reasonable cause to suspect abuse has occurred.** Failure to comply with this requirement can lead to civil and/or criminal penalties for the employee or volunteer.

There are two types of reporters: Mandated reporters and Volunteer (Permissive) Reporters. See DEFINITIONS.

What To Do

If a suspected incident of child abuse or neglect occurs at or is revealed to a volunteer/paid staff person at a BUMC sponsored activity, the adult who has witnessed or who has knowledge of the alleged abuse will:

1. **Ensure the safety of the child or youth**
2. **Make the report**

- **Volunteer Reporters: Everyone** is encouraged to make a report if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of abuse. **Everyone can make a report by calling ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313, this is available 24 hours/7 days a week.**

- **Mandated Reporters**: To fulfill the legal mandate, when a **mandated reporter** has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is being abused, they must immediately make a report. This can now be done in two ways:
 - **Call ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313**: ChildLine is available 24 hours/ 7 days a week. As a mandated reporter, you must provide your name and contact information when making the call. After making the call, mandated reporters must follow up with an electronic report or a written report completed on the [CY-47 form](#) within 48 hours of making the oral report. The form should be sent to the county agency where the alleged abuse will be investigated, and you should keep a copy for your own records in a separate confidential file. The written report can be made electronically using [ChildLine's Child Welfare Information Solutions Self- Service Portal](#).

OR

- **Submit the report electronically.**

The report is submitted directly to ChildLine via Child Welfare Information Solution portal. You will need to include your name, telephone number and email address. You also will need to include any other actions you have taken (see below). You will receive email confirmation that your report has been received; you should print and keep this confirmation for your records. The [CY-47 form](#) is not required if an electronic report is submitted.

<https://www.compass.state.pa.us/CWIS/Public/ReferralsLearnMore>

For technical issues regarding the Child Welfare

Information Solution Portal, please call the CWIS Support Center at 1-877-343-0494.

3. **Call the church pastor or designee.** After making the report to ChildLine, the mandated reporter must tell the person in charge of the organization or program (for example, a school principal or the director of a child-serving program, the head Little League coach, or a pastor). That person then is responsible for facilitating the organization's cooperation with any investigation and assists the mandated reporter with any concerns he may have.
4. **The UMC District Superintendent shall be notified.**
5. **Mandated reporters should complete any follow-up as PA law requires.**

Other Actions by Mandated Reporters. Mandated reporters may take certain other actions on behalf of a child suspected of being abused.

A mandated reporter **may** also:

- Take photographs of the child's injuries
- Have X-rays taken
- Have the child hospitalized
- Have the child placed into protective custody - according to the law
- Have a medical exam performed by a medical professional

Any photographs, X-rays and/or medical summaries then should be sent to the county agency where the report is investigated within 48 hours of an electronic report. The mandated reporter must give the county access to the actual photographs and X-rays.

Only a law enforcement officer, physician, or hospital administrator can take protective custody of a child without a court order. This action may be taken when it is immediately necessary to protect the child. When a child is taken into protective custody, that person (e.g., law enforcement, physician, etc.) must immediately notify the county agency.

A child cannot be held in this type of protective custody for more than 24 hours. However, if necessary, the county agency can obtain a court order permitting the child to remain in protective custody for a longer period of time. If a child is taken into emergency custody, the case must be brought before a judge within 72 hours.

No county agency worker (caseworker) may take custody of the child without a court order. In all cases, the county maintains written records of the investigation.

Pastoral Responses for Reports of Allegations of Abuse:

Any allegation of abuse requires a process to address responding to the victim, the alleged perpetrator, and the press. The response must be quick, compassionate, and unified. All allegations will be taken seriously.

Pastoral response is NOT an investigation of the alleged abuse. The investigation is the responsibility of public officials (child welfare and/or law enforcement). In all cases of reported abuse, there shall be cooperation with all official investigating agencies.

If a member of the clergy becomes aware of suspected child abuse because of confidential communication which is protected under 42 PA C.S. 5943 (relating to confidential

communications to clergymen), the conference legal counsel should immediately be consulted.

Response to Victims of Abuse:

In the instance of any allegation of abuse, there shall be a reaching out to the victim and the victim's family by the pastor. Pastoral resources shall be extended, and the conference I-Care Team can be contacted to assist in providing this service. The care and safety of the victim shall be considered the first priority. Response to the victim and the victim's family shall be done in a positive and supportive manner.

The parents of the victim shall be notified, and steps shall be taken to address the safety and well-being of the child until the parent(s) arrive. **NOTE:** If one or both parents is the alleged abuser, the direction of the child welfare authorities shall be followed concerning notification of others. *Volunteers and staff cannot withhold the victim from their guardians: if child welfare authorities request that staff or volunteers withhold the child, the local police should be called for assistance.*

Response to All Alleged Perpetrators of Abuse:

In the instance of an allegations of abuse there shall be a reaching out to the alleged perpetrator and the perpetrator's family by the pastor or designee. Pastoral resources shall be extended, and the conference I-Care Team can be contacted to assist in providing this service. Response to the alleged perpetrator and the perpetrator's family shall be done in a supportive way.

The alleged perpetrator shall immediately, yet with dignity and respect for their sacred worth, be removed from further involvement with children and advised that there has been an allegation of abuse. Details of the allegations of the abuse shall not be discussed with the alleged perpetrator at the time of removal. In any removal of a staff member or volunteer from any activity/ministry, care shall be taken to handle the removal in a discreet manner.

When it has been alleged that a member of the church staff or a volunteer, has committed an act of abuse, the staff member or volunteer shall be required to refrain from all ministry activities/events with children until the incident has been fully resolved by the appropriate state authorities and/or in accordance with the Book of Discipline.

At that time, a meeting shall be held with the employee or volunteer to discuss the incident(s) that led to the report being made. Even if the public agency determines the report to be unfounded, the church has the right to prohibit the volunteer or employee from resuming working in ministries with children based on the facts and circumstances available at that time.

Response to the Media:

In consultation with the presiding bishop, the District Superintendent, the Conference Director of Communications, and the pastor shall decide on a single spokesperson for contact with the public/media. All media requests for statements shall be directed to that spokesperson. Follow the Commonwealth's guidance regarding statements to the press.

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Bethel UMC Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedure

I have received a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedure. I agree to follow and abide by all procedures, rules, and policies that it contains.

I understand that the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedure is intended to cover the procedures, rules, and policies most often applied to day-to-day activities. These policies are subject to change at the discretion of the church council, Safe Sanctuary coordinator, and pastor. From time to time, I may receive updated information concerning changes in the policy. I am aware that I may ask questions about procedures, rules, and policies.

Volunteer's Name:

Signature:

Date: