

LEXINGTON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
POLICY for SAFE SANCTUARY MINISTRY
with CHILDREN, YOUTH and VULNERABLE ADULTS

Preamble

Because we care deeply about the welfare and safety of every child, youth and vulnerable adult who participates in the programs and ministries of the Lexington United Methodist Church, we take seriously our responsibility to do everything we can to see that no physical, emotional or sexual abuse occurs in any ministry setting sponsored by the church. We recognize every person as a child of God who is created in the image of likeness of God. Therefore, we have a strong commitment to make the church a safe place for all children, youth and vulnerable adults. We also have a responsibility of protecting our staff and volunteers as they work with our children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Background and Intent

The Missouri Annual Conference requires all local churches to develop both a Safe Sanctuary Policy which addresses overarching questions of “who, what and why” as well as written procedures which provide local guidelines for step by step implementation of the Safe Sanctuary Policy as to “when, where and how” to carry out that policy. In adopting our policy and procedures, our intent is to fulfill our obligations at the local level in ways which are consistent with and within the spirit and intent of the Conference Policy.

It is our further intent to encourage and maintain a core number of Conference Safe Sanctuary certified church members to support the participation of our children and youth at district and conference events who will also be then available as resources to lead local church activities for children, youth and vulnerable adults with the aid and assistance of Local Church Certified volunteer workers.

Purpose Statement

Our congregation’s purpose for establishing this Policy for Safe Sanctuary Ministry with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults and the accompanying Procedures is to demonstrate and fulfill our deep and continuing commitment to God’s call to create communities of faith where those of all ages can participate in ministry and spiritual growth in a safe and secure environment which provides for protection from and prevention of abuse in our church activities.

Statement of Covenant

As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we adopt this policy for the protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults in our church activities. 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 those volunteers and employees who work with them. Our procedures will include reasonable and practicable guidelines which address:

- a) Reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of both employees and volunteer workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults;
- b) Educating said workers of policy and procedures along with ongoing monitoring so that compliance is maintained and, using age appropriate languages, educating children, youth, and vulnerable adults of definitions of abuse and procedures for reporting;
- c) Reporting incidents of child abuse and abuse of vulnerable adults in accordance with the State Laws of Missouri, the written guidelines of the Missouri Annual Conference, and the written guidelines of Lexington United Methodist Church;
- d) Providing for sufficient liability coverage;
- e) Dealing with the safety, protection, and ongoing emotional support of those who may have been victimized;
- f) Active communication with family members, the congregation, and the public media;
- g) Ensuring a copy of our current policy is placed on file in the church’s District Office;

h) While our Local Certification Authority will be the primary point of contact for these measures, our Administration Team shall have overall responsibility for implementing and monitoring our policy and the accompanying procedures.

Conclusion and Adoption of Policy

In all our ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adults, our congregation is committed to fostering the love of Jesus Christ so that each 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.) Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the protection of children, youth and vulnerable adults and prevention of their abuse in our church.

This Policy and accompanying implementation procedures is adopted by the Administration Team of the Lexington United Methodist Church this 21day of March, with the same to be reviewed annually by the Local Certification Authority with any proposed revisions to then be presented to this Ad Team for approval.

James Powers Alder
Chairman, Administration Team

ATTEST:

Approved by the Lexington UMC Administration Team March 21, 2016 (date)

Cheryl Cooley
Secretary, Administration Team

LEXINGTON UNITED METHODIST CHURCH PROCEDURES for SAFE SANCTUARY MINISTRY with CHILDREN, YOUTH and VULNERABLE ADULTS

Introduction The following are the Procedures written to supplement the Safe Sanctuary Policy of Lexington United Methodist Church as adopted March 21, 2016 (date), and contain sections on the following areas:

- A. Basic Procedures for Safe Ministries,
- B. Basic Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Abuse/Reasonably Suspected Incidents of Abuse,
- C. Screening and Qualification of Church Employees and Volunteer Workers,
- D. Training and Education of Employees and Volunteers,
- E. Definitions, and
- F. Miscellaneous Provisions including Local Forms.

A. Basic Procedures for Safe Ministries

1. Our goal will be to have at least two adult workers present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children or youth. In situations where multiple youth groups are meeting at a 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” which means the second adult may be within sight or sound of the activity.
2. When two adult workers are not available in a room during church-sponsored programs involving children or youth, doors to rooms used for such activities should remain open or be visible through windows in the door.
3. Youth under the age of 19, and at least 15, must serve under the supervision of one or more certified adults who are 22 years of age or older. All staff/volunteers must be at least four years older than the oldest participants with whom they work.
4. New persons may not have unsupervised access to children and youth until they have been active participants in the ministries of the LUMC for at least six months; however, those who are required to register as a sexual offender under Missouri law shall never knowingly be allowed to have such access.
5. Parents or guardians of children or youth will be required to complete a form containing appropriate general contact information for them as well as any other adult authorized to act in their stead on behalf of their children or youth in the event the parent or guardian cannot be immediately reached in the event of an accident or incident involving their child or youth. This form will be kept on file at the Church and provide other helpful information such as cell phone numbers and will include names of individuals permitted to transport the child from church activities in the event the parent is unavailable. It is a parental responsibility to ensure the information on the form is kept current. Parents or guardians may be asked to sign a general permission form for planned off-site activities that are part of regular programs in the event they do not accompany their child(ren.)
6. All computer equipment with internet access and used on church premises will be password protected to prevent any child or youth from inadvertently gaining access to inappropriate internet sites.

7. Adults responsible for programs or events involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults that use church property but are not sponsored by the church as a church activity will be required to sign a written covenant agreeing that they have read, understand, and will uphold these policies and procedures. Leaders of those groups will be given a reasonable time to complete a covenant after adoption of these procedures.

B. Basic Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Abuse/Reasonably Suspected Incidents of Abuse

General. Allegations of abuse or instances of reasonably suspected incidents of abuse are typically quite upsetting to all involved. The following guidelines are provided to cover the bases but are not intended to trump anyone's use of good common sense in the circumstances. The guidelines address who, when and how to deal with the various parties involved to include: the alleged victim, the family, the suspect, the authorities, church officials, the congregation and the media. Again, these procedural guidelines are not designed to cover every possible scenario, but should prove helpful in the event of a situation that all concerned pray will seldom, if ever, occur in our midst. Our role at such a time is to protect the safety and rights of all parties until appropriate officials can become involved and then stand back and cooperate with both law enforcement and district/conference church officials.

Reports of suspected abuse not involving church activities coming to the attention of employees or volunteer workers with our children, youth or vulnerable adults should be brought to the attention of the Pastor for further evaluation and reporting by him or her as required by state law as a mandated reporter.

Checklist for initial actions If a church employee or volunteer has reasonable cause to believe through a report or personal observation that an incident of abuse has occurred related to church activities, then the person in charge will take the following initial steps:

1. Take immediate measures to safeguard and protect the apparent victim from further harm to include segregating the apparent victim in a secure area under the supervision of two individuals (preferably both adults if available) who are not suspected in the incident until a parent or guardian arrives.
2. Seek medical attention if necessary.
3. Consult with a Safe Sanctuary conference certified church member if readily available on the premises.
4. Locate the parental contact information and attempt to notify the parents or guardian as soon as possible.
5. Notify the Pastor (or others if Pastor is unavailable—see below).
6. Secure the area where any alleged abuse occurred until law enforcement officials or investigators from the Division of Family Services have determined the area is no longer needed for investigatory purposes.
7. Complete an Accident/Incident Report form as soon as practicable.

8. Do not, repeat, **DO NOT** make any comments or statements to the media or other church members not involved—do your part by notifying the parents, seeking medical help if warranted and alerting the pastor as outlined above.

Follow-on Steps involving the Pastor As mentioned above, the pastor will be notified immediately of the abuse allegation and in turn, the pastor will be responsible for notifying local church leadership, the appropriate authorities of the district and conference as well as the church's insurance agent and the church's attorney.

The person receiving the initial allegation of child abuse will complete the "Incident Report Form" form and provide it to the Pastor who will notify the Family Services Child Abuse Hotline within 24 hours of receiving the abuse report. (The Pastor is clearly a mandatory reporter under current state law.) The Pastor will share other required information with appropriate Division of Family Service, law enforcement, and annual conference representatives to support the investigation of the abuse incident. **(All sensitive information such as completed forms and reports will be kept in a locked file in the church office.)**

The Pastor will inform the alleged abuser of the allegation as soon as possible. This person will be removed from further participation in church-sponsored programs that involve children and youth pending the final outcome of the allegations.

All involved will avoid making any statement of any representative of the news media. The pastor or designated media spokesperson will make any necessary statements or responses to the news media. The identities of the child who is the alleged victim, the child's parents, and the alleged abuser will be kept confidential. (A copy of the suggested generic media statement is included in the supplements to these procedures.)

The pastor, perhaps with the assistance of the district superintendent or a representative from the conference, will prepare a brief statement about the allegation of abuse to share with the congregation. This statement will inform the congregation that an allegation of child abuse has been made without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, or revealing the identities of the child, the child's parents, or the alleged abuser.

Until such time as he/she should be advised by counsel on behalf of the church's insurance carrier to refrain from doing so, the Pastor should maintain open communications with the alleged victim and parents and also make any further evaluations or recommendations within his or her expertise, for example, what types of ongoing emotional support, professional counseling or other measures would be appropriate or helpful.

Note: If the Pastor is unavailable, or if the allegations should involve the Pastor, then the Chairperson of the Pastor Parish Relations Committee or Administration Team (if the PPR Chairperson is unavailable) will have the responsibility to work with Heartland District or Missouri Conference officials to perform the duties of the Pastor outlined above.

C. Screening and Qualification of Church Employees and Volunteers

All employees or volunteer workers who care for or have the responsibility for children, youth or vulnerable adults at Lexington United Methodist Church (LUMC) sponsored activities shall be Local or Conference Safe Sanctuary Certified as follows:

1. Employees and volunteers will:
 - a) Complete an online application with references as required;
 - b) Complete an online request for an official background check and payment of the required fee (if the applicant is unable to pay the required fee, then LUMC will consider paying the fee from Church funds;)

- c) Complete certification requirements and local refresher and awareness training when offered; and
 - d) Be familiar with local and conference Safe Sanctuary policy and procedures and enter a written covenant agreement to abide with them.
2. Conference Certification is required in order to attend District or Conference events because there are additional requirements for supervision at these events. Youth Leaders shall be required to complete Conference Certification. Local Church Certification shall be required of persons serving as Sunday School teachers, working in the church nursery, serving at Vacation Bible School, providing computer technical support, or serving as a cook or van driver for a local church event involving a gathering of children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
 3. No person who is required to register as a sex offender under Missouri law or whose background check reveals that he or she has pleaded guilty to, been found guilty of or convicted of any criminal and inappropriate contact with a child shall knowingly be allowed to have personal contact with our children, youth or vulnerable adults. (Note: if the pastor is made aware of this type of information involving an individual or other at risk behaviors, then the pastor should discourage the participation of that individual in children or youth related activities. No further explanation should be required of the pastor so that the pastor/parishioner relationship can be protected while fulfilling the paramount goal of protecting the safety of our children, youth and vulnerable adults.)
 4. Church property usage by an outside/non-church organization may be screened and no usages will be permitted which knowingly place any child, youth or vulnerable adult at risk in violation of our Safe Sanctuary policy and procedures.

D. Training and Education of Employees and Volunteers

1. The LUMC Certification Authority will make certification decisions. The Authority will consist of the following: 1) Local Certification Associate, 2) Coordinator of Youth/Children Ministries, 3) Youth Leader, and 4) Pastor.
2. Applicants for Local Church or Conference Certification must be approved or authorized to complete the online certification application process by the Local Church Certification Authority.
3. Local Church or Conference Certification requires on-line completion of Safe Sanctuaries training, an application form, payment of a fee, authorizing of a National Screen and any other requirements mandated by the Conference Certification Authority.
4. Local refresher training may be provided to Certified Employees and Volunteers in the case of updates or changes in local church or conference Safe Sanctuary policy or procedures, in state law or to outline appropriate subjects designed to enhance vigilance of those charged with the primary care of children, youth and vulnerable adults.

E. Definitions.

1. **Physical Abuse** is any deliberate act that inflicts bodily harm to a person.
2. **Sexual Abuse** is any sexual contact or sexually explicit language or gesture by a staff person or volunteers with or directed to a participant.
3. **Neglect** is failure to provide nutrition or medical, surgical, or any other care necessary for the well being of the child or youth.

4. **Staff** means any clergy person, and any paid employee of the local church, conference or a district who has the care/supervision of a participant at an event.
5. **Volunteer** is any unpaid non-clergy, lay worker who has the care/supervision of a participant at an event.
6. **Local Certification Authority** consists of the Local Certification Associate, Coordinator of Youth/Children Ministries, Youth Leader, and the Pastor of the Lexington United Methodist Church.
7. **Participants** are children and youth under 18 years of age who are registered, enrolled, attending or otherwise participating in an event or activity sponsored by the Church, annual conference or a district. Participants are also persons 18 years of age or over who are not able to fully protect themselves due to physical, mental, and/or developmental disabilities.
8. **Vulnerable adults** are persons 18 years of age or over with physical, mental and /or developmental disabilities.
9. **Children** are persons 0-11 years of age.
10. **Youth** are 12-18 years of age.

E. Miscellaneous Provisions

1. Annually the Local Certification Authority will:
 - a. Review the local Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures and make recommendations for any changes to the Administration Team for its approval;
 - b. Complete the local church Safe Sanctuary self evaluation form;
 - c. Review and revise any locally used Safe Sanctuary forms; and
 - d. Determine the content and timing for local Safe Sanctuary refresher training as necessary.
2. A supply of blank forms will be made available at a convenient location for use by any church employee or volunteer worker. When completed all forms mentioned in these procedures, with the exception of the parental consent/information forms will be considered confidential personal information and kept secured in the church office by the Pastor or his or her administrative assistant.
3. A copy of the current Lexington United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures will be posted on the church bulletin board adjacent to the sanctuary, in Hicklin Hall and on the church website. The Pastor shall be responsible for ensuring copies are also filed in the District Office.
4. Forms mentioned in the above procedures include the following which are attached:
 - a. Incident/Accident Report Form A
 - b. Parental Info/Contact/Consent Information Form B
 - c. Media Response Form C

d. Local Volunteer Application and Covenant Agreement Form D

e. Non-church/outside organization Safe Sanctuary Agreement Form E

f. Annual LUMC Safe Sanctuary self-evaluation Form F

(Note: Application for local and/or conference Safe Sanctuary certification will be available through the LCA
“Local Church Safe Sanctuaries Associate”)

LEXINGTON UMC ACCIDENT/INCIDENT REPORT Form A

(please print all information)

Name of Person Completing Form: _____

Date and Time of Incident: _____

Location of accident/incident: _____

Person(s) Injured: _____

Other Person(s) Involved: _____

How did you learn of it? _____

Description of accident/incident: (attach additional paper if necessary)

Action Taken: (attach additional paper if necessary)

Witnesses of the accident/incident: _____

Person filling out report: _____

(Please complete back of form also)

REMINDER/CHECKLIST

- If this involved an allegation of abuse, was the child/youth put in a safe place under adult supervision but not in the company of the alleged abuser?
Yes___ No __
- Was a parent or legal guardian contacted as soon as possible?
Yes ___ No ___
- Did you contact the Pastor or PPR Chairperson?
Yes ___ No ___
- If the Pastor was not available did you discuss what you should have done with anyone else (such as a conference certified church member)?
Yes ___ No ___
- Did you contact law enforcement authorities?
Yes ___ No ___
(If yes, who/when contacted? _____)
- Did immediate medical attention appear necessary?
Yes ___ No ___
(If so, who/when contacted? _____)
- Did you remind all those involved and present not to talk with the Media but to allow other Church officials to do so?
Yes ___ No ___

IMPORTANT REMINDER:

Once this form is partially or fully completed, it will be turned over to Church Officials to be kept confidential.

(Signature of Person Completing Form)

(Date/Time)

LEXINGTON UMC PARENTAL INFO/CONTACT/CONSENT Form B

This form must be completed by a parent or legal guardian of any child, youth, or vulnerable adult who participates in a Church sponsored activity. Please read this carefully and note that unless you specify otherwise, the adult in charge of the activity is authorized to use his or her best judgment in many instances. You are responsible for insuring that the form on file with the Church is always updated with any new information.

Contact information for person completing form:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Number: (home) _____

(work) _____

(cell) _____

Email address: _____

Information for Emergency contact if you cannot be reached:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone Numbers: (home) _____

(work) _____

(cell) _____

This form is for the below individual(s):

Name(s)

Date(s) of Birth

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

1. I certify that I have legal responsibility for the above listed individual(s) and the authority to complete this form.
2. I have reviewed and am familiar with the Lexington UMC Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures.
3. I understand that by completing this form, I am giving permission to the adult in charge of any LUMC activity in which the individual(s) listed above participate, to use his or her best judgment in the circumstances in making decisions in my behalf on routine matters such as transportation or to whom an individual may be released to leave from a Church sponsored activity, such as friends, neighbors, or relatives.

4. In the event of an emergency, such as injury, illness, or other situations covered under the Church Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures, reasonable efforts will be made to contact me or my spouse for instructions, but if I/We cannot be reached then I authorize the person in charge of the activity to use his/her best judgment in the circumstances until I am notified.

5. If any of the above individual(s) has any physical, emotional, or medical condition which might place them at risk in activities where you are not in attendance **OR** if there are issues with a non-custodial parent which church workers should be made aware, then please describe below and give any special instructions:

I have read and understand the above and the information is correct to the best of my ability. I understand that it will be relied on by LUMC employees and volunteers as needed and that I am responsible for keeping the information updated and current.

(Print name)

(Signature)

(Date)

LUMC MEDIA RESPONSE FORM C

Should the media make contact regarding an alleged incident of abuse involving our church then all inquiries should be referred to the Pastor regardless of how insistent any news reporter should become. Then the Pastor or designated representative in his or her absence should limit responses to the following:

“We are saddened by the allegations that have surfaced. We at Lexington United Methodist Church have attempted to create an environment here that is both welcoming and safe—a place where all persons might learn of the Good News in Jesus Christ.

Local law enforcement officials and our church leadership have been notified and we are fully cooperating with their pending investigations. If you wish more information, we will help you get in touch with our District Superintendent in Independence, MO.”

This is all anyone should say to the media. They will continue to press for more comment. (BEAR IN MIND THAT THE MEDIA CAN BE RELENTLESS IN THEIR PERSISTENCE AND QUESTIONING.) This is NOT the time for anyone to think they can outfox a reporter who can “cut and paste” clips of statements.

If you feel compelled to say something else, repeat the above paragraph; then add this:

“When more information becomes available, it will be shared with you.”

THEN WALK AWAY IF NECESSARY.

LUMC LOCAL VOLUNTEER APPLICATION/COVENANT AGREEMENT
Form D

APPLICANT INFORMATION

Name (including maiden name): _____

Date of Birth: _____

Address: _____

Telephone Numbers: (home) _____

(work) _____

(cell) _____

Regular attendee of LUMC since: _____

COVENANT AGREEMENT

1. I have read and understand the current LUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures.
2. Should I become a volunteer worker at LUMC I agree to follow the Church's Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures and while acting as a volunteer worker will abide by their terms, including completing on-line training and annual refresher training.
3. If I wish to participate as a volunteer in district or conference events or work with the Youth Group, I understand that I will need to be conference certified.
4. I certify the above information is true and correct and that I will notify LUMC of any changes. I also understand that the information may be released to any law enforcement officials as required.

(Signature)

(Date)

LUMC NON-CHURCH/OUTSIDE ORGANIZATION AGREEMENT Form E

1. This form must be completed by the responsible adult seeking to use the property of LUMC for conducting non-church related activities involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

2. Name of Organization: _____

3. Information on responsible party making application to use LUMC Church property:

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Telephone Numbers: (home) _____

(work) _____

(cell) _____

4. Type of Activity: _____

5. Are any of the organization's local leaders, children, or youth members of LUMC?

Yes _____ No _____ Unknown _____

6. Does your organization (local or otherwise) maintain insurance coverage in the event it is alleged to be responsible for neglect or abuse of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult?

Yes _____ No _____ Unsure _____

7. Have you been provided a copy of the LUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures?

Yes _____ No _____

8. Do you and your organization promise and agree to follow and be bound by the terms of their Policy and Procedures related to your organization's proposed use of LUMC church property?

(Signature of Applicant)

(Date)

ANNUAL LUMC SAFE SANCTUARY FORM F—Self Evaluation

- Yes ___ No ___ 1. We screen and check references for all paid employees, including clergy, who have significant contact with children or youth.
- Yes ___ No ___ 2. We screen all volunteer workers for any position involving work with children or youth.
- Yes ___ No ___ 3. Our workers are kept informed of state law requirements regarding child abuse and their responsibility for reporting incidents.
- Yes ___ No ___ 4. We have a clear reporting procedure for a suspected incident of child abuse that follows the requirements of our state law.
- Yes ___ No ___ 5. We have insurance coverage available in case a child abuse complaint occurs.
- Yes ___ No ___ 6. We have a clearly defined building usage strategy as a component of our child abuse prevention plan.
- Yes ___ No ___ 7. We require a covenant from outside organizations using Church property in activities involving children, youth or vulnerable adults to be familiar with and abide by our Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures when using our property.
- Yes ___ No ___ 8. We have a clearly defined response plan to be implemented in case an allegation of child abuse is made against someone involving our church.
- Yes ___ No ___ 9. We offer at least annual educational opportunities to parents of children and youth about how to recognize and how to reduce risk of child abuse.
- Yes ___ No ___ 10. We take our policies to prevent child abuse seriously, and we are committed to their enforcement for the safety and security of all of our children.
- Yes ___ No ___ 11. We review our Policy, Procedures and related Forms annually for compliance with local needs, state law and conference policy and update them as required.

This Annual Safe Sanctuary Review was completed _____ (date), and the results and any recommendations for updates forwarded to the LUMC Administration Team for further direction.

Local Church Associate (for the Local Church Authority)