

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

Introduction:

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

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child...welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God. Jesus also said, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around you neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state that "children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation, and abuse."

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

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

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (From the *Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church* – 2000, pp 180-181).

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

Purpose:

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

Statement of Covenant:

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

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

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

Conclusion:

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

PROCEDURES

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

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

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

- g. Keep a written record of all actions taken by the church in response to the allegation (see reporting form in Appendix B).
- h. Call the chair of the Staff Parish Committee or a Co-Pastor to make any necessary statements or response to the media.
- i. Designate a spokesperson to prepare a brief, honest statement that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, or interfering with the privacy and confidentiality of the victim and family.
- j. Prepare to work (using appropriate protocol) with law enforcement officials, child protective services, and authorities of the church.
- k. Designate a spokesperson for the congregation, in consultation with the Co-Pastors and District Superintendent, to work in coordination with the media relations person(s) for the Northern Illinois Conference of the United Methodist Church. The spokesperson for the congregation is the only person authorized to speak with the media or respond to inquiries on behalf of the congregation. The congregational spokesperson will respond to inquiries directly, honestly and without adding extra, unconfirmed or unnecessary information.

Confidentiality:

An allegation against a person may or may not be true. A person is innocent until proven guilty. Therefore, all details relating to the allegations should be kept confidential until they are confirmed and released to the media or appropriate church officials. A public statement that an allegation of abuse has occurred, omitting the names of all alleged victim(s) or accused should be prepared as soon as practicable **after** the safety of the alleged victim is ensured, and the details of the incident are fully recorded. The names of minors should never be released by the church or its spokesperson(s).

The following are types of information that is confidential:

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

Current Safety Procedures:

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

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

Screening Process:

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

Amending this Policy:

The form of this policy may be amended without action of the Church Council (including, e.g., grammar and syntax, title changes, etc.). Any amendments to form must be provided to the Church Council at its next regularly scheduled meeting with all corrections or updates specifically noted. The substance of this policy may only be amended by the Church Council, at a duly called meeting. Substantive changes to this policy will be reported at the next regularly called session of the Church Conference, and immediately upon approval submitted to the District Office and/or other appropriate person in the Northern Illinois Conference staff.

Adopted on the 26th day of February, 2008 by Church Council of Cary United Methodist Church in Cary, Illinois. Ammended February, 24, 2009.

Co-Pastor

Date _____

Co- Pastor

Date _____

Church Council Chair

Date _____

Recording Secretary

Date _____

Appendix A
Primary Response - People to Contact

Co-Pastor

David Lagos-Fonseca
Cell: 815-474-1870
Home: 847-462-0251

Co-Pastor

Shirley Pulgar-Hughes
Cell: 815-474-5540
Home: 847-462-0251

Bishop

Hee-Soo Jung
Work: 312-346-9766 ext. 101

Elgin District Superintendent

Oscar Carrasco
Work: 847-931-0710 ext. 10

Church's Attorney

The Northern Illinois Conference Chancellor
Samuel W Witwer, Jr.
Witwer & Waldron, LLC
847-562-2600

Church Mutual (Insurance)

1-800-554-2642
Account #0056835

Staff Parish Chair

Carolyn Swider
847-540-8478

EMERGENCY - 911

Cary Police Department

847-639-2341

Cary Fire Department

847-639-2121

Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS)

1-800-25ABUSE

Appendix B
Report of Suspected Abuse

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

2. Victim's name: _____

Victim's age/date of birth: _____

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

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

5. Name of person accused of abuse: _____

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other): _____

6. Reported to pastor: _____

Date/time: _____

Summary: _____

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

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

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

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

9. Call to local law enforcement agency: _____

Date/time: _____

Spoke with: _____

Summary: _____

10. Other contacts: _____

Name: _____

Date/time: _____

Summary: _____

Signature of Person Making the Report

Date

Participation Covenant Statement

The congregation of Cary United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

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

Please answer each of the following questions:

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

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

Signature of Applicant

Date

Print Full Name