

## **Emanuel United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy**

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 2000, 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 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 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."

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, 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 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 member's 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. P. 384-386*)

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, The Emanuel 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 all the children and youth God has entrusted to our care.

### **Covenant Statement**

The Emanuel 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 all of our children and youth as well as all of our workers with children and youth. 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 and youth 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 Georgia law. We will put into practice the following policies whenever children or youth are present and under the supervision of our congregation.

### Staff **SELECTION** Policies

#### **All volunteer and paid staff who supervise children and youth at EUMC will be:**

- At least 18 years old.
- At least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth they will be supervising.
- Have been an active participant at EUMC for at least 6 months.

#### **All volunteer and paid staff who work with children and youth at EUMC will:**

- Complete and sign an application and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information.
- Provide the names and contact information of 3 personal references.
- Undergo a criminal background check at no expense if they will have supervisory program responsibility for children/youth. Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children or youth.

### Staff Supervision

#### **Whenever supervising activities involving children and youth at EUMC:**

- To meet the requirement of always having two adults that do not reside in the same household (spouses) supervising children and youth activities EUMC will utilize a third adult (floater). The Floater will be a roving monitor who makes random checks of the room(s) and activities where children and youth are participating.
- Children and youth will be checked into and out of a church sponsored activity by their parent or legal guardian or people previously authorized by parent/legal guardian.
- Staff will have access to a telephone, cell phone or pager or other device/method to summon assistance or report incidents when groups are at or away from the church facility

- One-on-one interactions with children and youth will be with an open door and visible at all times by another adult not residing in the same household.

**Whenever EUMC sponsors an activity involving children or youth:**

- Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of a child/youth that is participating in a EUMC event or activity may visit and observe the children's/youth activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time provided they are escorted by a member of the EUMC Children and Youth program staff that has successfully completed the required security screening and safe sanctuaries training.
- All classroom and office doors where children/youth activities are held will have a window providing visibility from outside the room or remain open while occupied.
- Windows for viewing the room for monitoring purposes will be kept free from adornment

**Whenever EUMC transports children or youth away from the church campus**

- All children's/youth activities and events requiring EUMC provided transportation must be pre-approved by the EUMC Church Council to ensure the church insurance policy guidelines are met. This pre-approval may be in the form of a schedule provided in advance to the Church Council for approval and included in the regular meeting minutes.
- No youth should drive to/from events.
- Adults should never transport a child/youth by self. No adult should be alone with any one individual child/youth. Should this occur unintentionally the adult and child/youth are to remain in public view as much as possible and contact the coordinator of the event and the appropriate EUMC leadership immediately or as soon as possible.
- Drivers will go through same screening process as all other paid/volunteer staff and are required to be trained on safe driving and listed with the church's auto insurance company.

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

- The groups using the church facility will follow EUMC's Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures.

Note: Groups not sponsored by EUMC hosting events / activities using EUMC facilities are required to sign a usage waiver prior to being allowed to use the facilities.

**If a suspected incident of child abuse or neglect occurs at or is revealed to a volunteer/paid staff person at a EUMC sponsored activity, the adult in charge of the activity will:**

- Insure the safety of the child or youth.
- Call the church pastor at 912-265-0948 (office) 912-265-3764 (parsonage) or other

designated congregational leader and inform him or her of the incident.

- Call the Glynn County Department of Family and Children's Services (DFACS) Office at 912-262-3200 and report the incident.
- Pastor, or other designated congregational leader in the pastor's absence, will notify District Superintendent at 912-283-5861 (office), 912-283-8536 (parsonage).
- District Superintendent will notify the South Georgia Conference Crisis Team at 888-266-7642, the Director of Connectional Ministries and the Director of Conference Communications.
- Pastor, or other designated congregational leader in the pastor's absence, will notify the church's insurance agency (Church Mutual) at 800 554-2642, as directed by the insurance companies guidelines for reporting abuse.

### Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child and youth will be "surrounded by steadfast love...established in the faith and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal." (Baptismal Covenant II, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, p.96).

|   |                           |  |                         |
|---|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| <u>Laura Wilder</u><br>Church Council Chair | <u>12/14/2008</u><br>Date | <u>John Davis</u><br>Safe Sanctuaries Certifying Officer | <u>12-14-08</u><br>Date |
| <u>Doug Wick</u><br>Lay Leader              | <u>12/14/2008</u><br>Date | <u>William H. Brawl</u><br>Board of Trustees President   | <u>12/24/08</u><br>Date |
| <u>William H. Brown III</u><br>Trustee      | <u>12/14/2008</u><br>Date | <u>Jean Hale</u><br>Trustee                              | <u>12-14-08</u><br>Date |
| <u>Jack Jones</u><br>Trustee                | <u>12/14/2008</u><br>Date | <u>Ronald S. Ferrell</u><br>Trustee                      | <u>12-14-08</u><br>Date |
| <u>Goy Brown</u><br>Trustee                 | <u>12/14/2008</u><br>Date | <u>Laura A. P. H.</u><br>Trustee                         | <u>12/14/08</u><br>Date |
| <u>OP O'Brien</u><br>Trustee                | <u>12/14/2008</u><br>Date | <u>Robert D. Harper</u><br>Trustee                       | <u>12/14/08</u><br>Date |
| <u>Col. B. Holt</u><br>Pastor               | <u>12/14/2008</u><br>Date |  |                         |