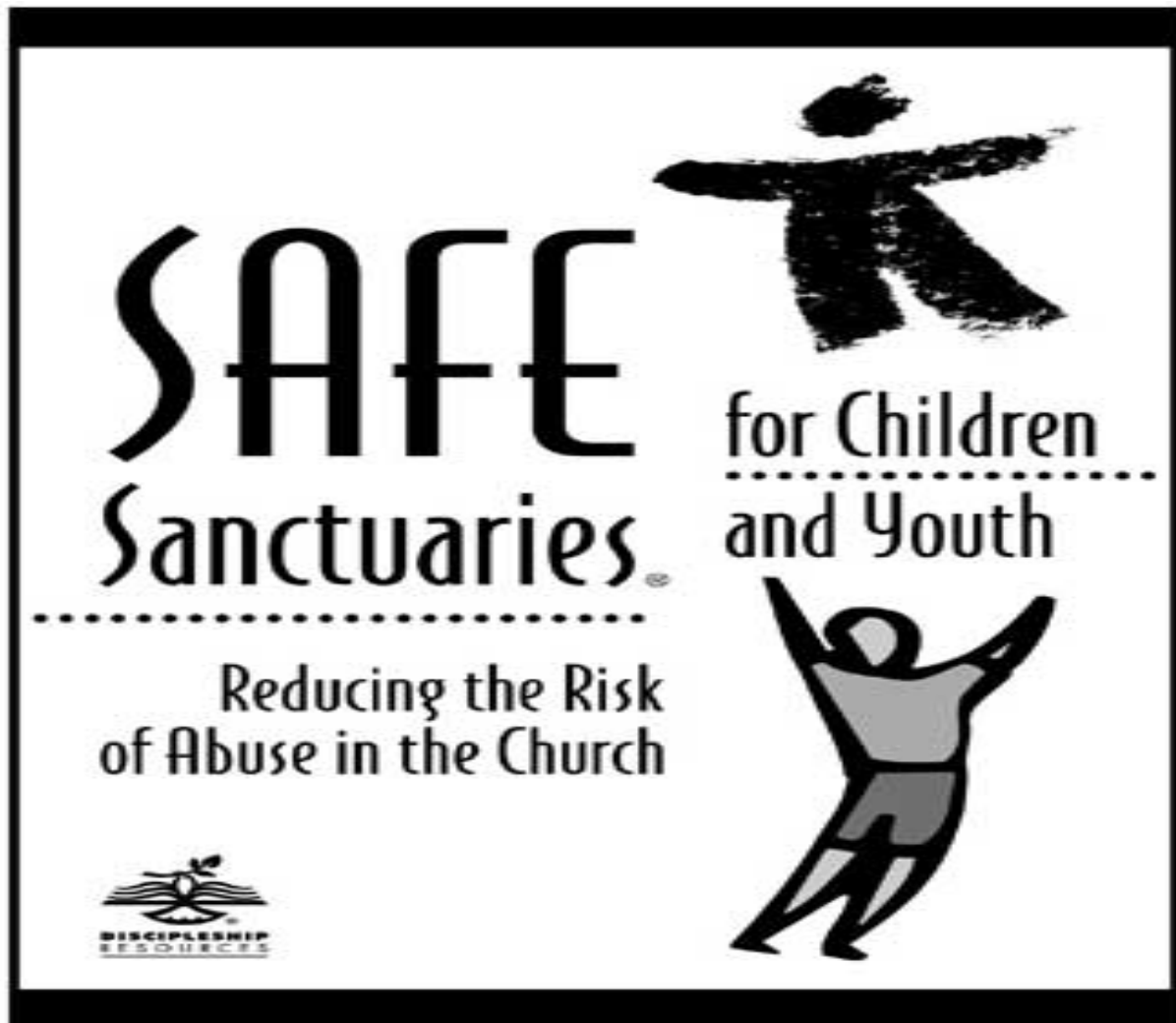


# Pleasant View United Methodist Church

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God calls us to make our Churches safe places, protecting children and youth from abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and youth grow safe and strong.

## **Purpose**

Pleasant View United Methodist Church's purpose is to protect the vulnerable among us. We also want to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

## **Statement of Covenant**

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a congregation of the United Methodist Church, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the Gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as those who work in those areas of ministry.

- We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers.
- We will implement operational procedures in all our ministries.
- We will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the policies, use of the facilities, discipline and basic first aid.
- We will have clearly defined procedures for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law.
- We will be prepared to respond, if an incident occurs.

## **Conclusion**

In all of our ministries with children and youth the congregation of Pleasant View United Methodist Church is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be surrounded by steadfast love, established in the faith and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.

## **Protection Procedures**

In an effort to create the safest possible environment, Pleasant View United Methodist Church will screen potential employees and volunteers for child abuse convictions or impingements. Training will be provided to volunteers on child

# Pleasant View United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuaries Policy

abuse issues and standards for appropriate supervision and discipline of children and youth.

## **Safe Sanctuary Task Force**

The task force was established by the Church Council and is responsible for the following:

- Reviewing the Safe Sanctuaries policy and recommending any necessary changes to Church Council for approval
- Ensuring that interviews and orientation/training is conducted by the appropriate ministry leaders and that the proper forms are completed for all employees and volunteers who work with children and youth
- Ensuring that up-to-date lists of all approved individuals are maintained and available
- Ensuring that screening and reference interview forms will be made available only to the pastoral staff
- Ensuring that all information is kept confidential and kept in a safe, secure location

The task force is comprised of a representative of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), Children's Ministries, and the Youth Council. Also serving on this committee are the positions of Sunday School Superintendent and the Youth Minister when filled. No one member of this committee is to represent more than one committee or position.

## **Definitions**

**Employee** – Any person who is hired and paid compensation for services rendered to Pleasant View United Methodist Church.

**Volunteer** – Any person assigned a position of responsibility for children/youth activities. These individuals do not receive compensation for their efforts.

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**Guests** – Those that assist or lend their talents to a children/youth activity. They are unpaid and never left alone with children/youth. These individuals do not have primary responsibility for the activity in which they are participating.

**Child** – Any person under the age of 18 fits this term. The word youth is also used and is usually referring to those over the age of 12.

**Physical Abuse** – Any action that is non-accidental physical trauma or injury inflicted by a parent or caretaker on a child may be termed physical abuse. It also includes a parent's or a caretaker's failure to protect a child from another person who may perpetrate physical abuse on a child. In its most severe form, physical abuse is likely to cause great bodily harm or death.

**Physical Neglect** – Action or inaction that fails to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child's health or safety. This may include, but is not limited to abandonment, lack of supervision, life endangering physical hygiene, lack of adequate nutrition that places the child below the normal growth curve, lack of shelter, lack of medical or dental treatment that results in health threatening conditions and the inability to meet basic clothing needs of a child. In its most severe form, physical neglect may result in great body harm or death.

**Sexual Abuse** – Any action that includes penetration or external touching of a child's intimate parts, oral sex with a child, indecent exposure or any other sexual act performed in a child's presence for sexual gratification, sexual use of a child for prostitution and the manufacturing of child pornography. Child sexual abuse is also the willful failure of the parent or the child's caretaker to make a reasonable effort to stop child sexual abuse by another person.

**Emotional Abuse** – Actions that includes verbal assaults, ignoring and indifference or constant family conflict. Such degradation may lead the child to establish a poor self image.

## Providing a Safe Environment

- Volunteers/Guest should be in good standing with Pleasant View United Methodist Church.
- All Volunteers will complete a volunteer application form and sign the Volunteer Covenant Form.
- Anyone who has a child abuse conviction or impingement, as well as anyone refusing to sign the application or covenant will not be permitted to work with children or youth.
- We will maintain a safe and clean facility to the best of our ability.
- Pleasant View United Methodist Church reserves the right to turn away any person for volunteer or paid service with children or youth.
- All volunteers will be provided with instructions on disaster preparedness, safety procedures and basic first aid.
- There must be two adults present when working with children or youth. When there is only one adult present in the classroom, doors should have windows in them or be left open. A hall monitor will be assigned during the times with that only one adult is present.
- A signed parental/guardian permission slip is required for all events that are held off site. These are to be renewed on a yearly basis.
- Those who supervise children and youth should be at least five years older than those they are serving and no one under the age of 21 years of age will be given primary responsibility for the care or supervision of children and youth.
- All access to computers with internet capabilities must have parental controls enabled.
- When traveling off site and/or overnight, male and female adults must be present if male and female youth are involved.
- Youth and adults may not share the same rooms. Unless there is an open floor plan such as gym, where all are in the same space.
- Male and female youth must be in separate rooms. Unless open floor plan is provided and then the participants will be segregated.

## **Classroom/Event Discipline**

- If a child or youth is behaving inappropriately, the teacher/volunteer will tell the child or youth specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is.
- If that measure is not effective, the child/youth will be guided to another activity.
- If the disruptive behavior continues after these steps, the child/youth will be taken out and returned to parent and/or guardians.
- NO physical punishment or verbal abuse/ridicule is to be used at any time. If disruptive behavior requires the removal of the child from activities the situation will be discussed with the child's parents or guardians as soon as possible.

## **Child abuse reporting and response**

Child abuse can happen anywhere; in poor, middle class or well to do homes, in rural and urban areas, in schools and churches.

According to Tennessee law, all persons (including doctors, mental health professionals, child care providers, dentists, family members and friends) must report suspected cases of child abuse or neglect. Failure to report child abuse or neglect is a violation of the law.

If you believe a child has been abused or neglected YOU must report it.

1. 1-877-237-0004 Child Abuse Hotline
2. <http://www.reportabuse.state.tn.us> Make report online.

## **What happens in an investigation?**

The process of investigation can include talking with the alleged child victim (or observing a young, nonverbal child), parents and/or alleged perpetrator. Child Protective Service workers will gather pertinent medical and psychological information and will work with their counterparts in the medical, psychological, judicial and law-enforcement fields. The investigations can also include interviews of neighbors or friends who have knowledge of the child's situation. The emphasis remains on constantly evaluating the risk to the alleged child victim during the entire investigative process.

In reports involving several child abuses, DCA will notify the local district attorney and law enforcement offices. These include reports that involve a child's death or serious injury or situations involving torture, malnutrition and child sexual abuse.

## **Information you may be asked to provide during a call to report child abuse**

- nature of the harm or specific incident(s) that precipitated the report
- specific allegation(s), date(s) and description(s) of the injuries or dangers
- identities of alleged perpetrator(s) and their relationship to the victim
- witnesses to the incident(s) and how to reach those witnesses
- details of any physical evidence available
- perpetrator's current access to the child
- current condition of the child (alone, in need of medical attention, etc.)
- location of the child and directions to get there
- any statements from the child
- parent's or perpetrator's explanation of the alleged child victim's condition or the incident
- parent's current emotional, physical or mental state, especially feelings about the child and reaction to the report

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- how the reporter came to know the information and the reporter's thoughts about the likelihood of further harm to the child

The report's identity is confidential, but a name should be given so the department could follow up with the reporter if necessary. The reporter is free from civil or criminal liability for reports of suspected child abuse or neglect made in good faith.

### **Steps in responding to a disclosure at Church**

- Insure the privacy and safety of the alleged victim.
- Treat the accused individual with respect.
- Immediately remove the accused individual from further involvement with children or youth.
- Notify the Pastoral staff as soon as possible.
- Notify parents (unless parents are accused) immediately.
- Call child abuse hotline or go online to make a report. Call law enforcement if child's life is in immediate danger. (Need names, address, phone numbers as much information you can give the hotline the better)
- If an incident occurs at the church or a church sponsored activity, the pastor as well as church's insurance company and the church's attorney must be notified. If it involves the pastor, the District Superintendent and the chairman of the SPRC should be added to the notification chain.