

# **Greenville United Methodist Church**

## **Safe Sanctuary Policy**

### **Our Calling**

The congregation of Greenville United Methodist (GUMC) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and vulnerable persons who participate in the ministries and activities sponsored by the church. We are committed to preserving the 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.

### **Our Mandate**

According to the Tennessee Department of Human Services, more than 40,000 children per year in the State of Tennessee are reported to be abused or neglected. Approximately 50 percent of these children were alleged to be physically or sexually abused.

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reduction the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church has issued a mandate that all churches shall implement a plan to prevent child abuse.

### **Our Purpose**

The purpose of this document is to ensure that the members and staff of GUMC do all they can to provide a safe and secure environment for all persons entrusted to our care. The following policies and procedures are for the protection of our children, youth, vulnerable persons, employees, volunteers, visitors, and our entire church family at Greenville United Methodist Church in Joelton, Tennessee. By establishing these policies and procedures, we demonstrate our commitment to provide a safe environment for the aforementioned as they grow in their relationship with God. Although no one can completely prevent abuse in every circumstance, by following these procedures, we can greatly reduce the risk of abuse at GUMC and official church-related activities.

### **Our Covenant**

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the safety of our children, youth, and vulnerable persons as well as of the workers with children, youth and vulnerable persons. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudential operating procedures in our ministries; we will educate our worker with children, youth, and vulnerable persons regarding the use of appropriate procedures; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of the laws of the State of Tennessee; and we will prepared to respond to the media should such an incident occur.

In all our ministries with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Persons this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person will be “surrounded by steadfast

# **Greenville United Methodist Church**

## **Safe Sanctuary Policy**

love ... established in the faith ... and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (*Baptismal Covenant II, The United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44*)

### **Definitions**

Children – Persons Birth to Grade 6

Youth- Person attending Grades 7 – 12

Vulnerable Persons – Persons who are physically or mentally challenged.

Adults – Persons 18 years or older of age\*

\* To encourage adherence to the three-year rule GUMC Safe Sanctuary Process requires that

“adults” be 18 years or older of age.

### **General Policies**

1. GUMC Safe Sanctuary policy will be approved by the Administrative Board and available to all church members.
2. Staff and volunteers will receive a copy of GUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy.
3. Parents, legal guardians of the responsible parties of children and youth will receive a copy of the GUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy at their initial visit to the Nursery and/or Sunday School Class.
4. The GUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy will be available for pick-up in the church vestibule or online at [www.gumcj.org](http://www.gumcj.org).
5. The GUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy and Implementation Manual will be reviewed and evaluated bi-annually by a task force that will include but not limited to:
  - a. Pastor
  - b. Lay Leader
  - c. Administrative Board Chairperson
  - d. Council of Ministries Chairperson
  - e. Pastor Parish Relations Chairperson
  - f. Trustees Chairperson
  - g. Sunday School Superintendent
  - h. Parent Representative
6. Volunteers and class leaders of children and youth will be required to participate in orientation to the implementation of this policy, complete a background check and sign a Safe Sanctuary Participation Covenant . All background checks will be processed as follows:
  - a. Background checks will be paid for through the church budget.
  - b. Background checks will be limited to:
    - i. Social Security Verification (to verify identity)
    - ii. US Criminal Indicator (which included sexual offender records)
  - c. Background checks must be renewed every five years.
  - d. All background checks will be kept completely confidential. The Pastor will be the only individual to receive information from the background checks. After review by the pastor, the information will be shredded.

## **Greenville United Methodist Church**

### **Safe Sanctuary Policy**

- e. A list of persons with approved background checks will be kept on file. That information will only show name, background check reference number and date.
  - f. Should a background check indicate a potential issue with an individual, the Pastor will consult with the individual to determine if the person desires further investigation of the issue and to determine their ability to serve under the GUMC Safe Sanctuary guidelines.
7. All volunteers shall immediately report to the pastor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.
  8. All adult volunteers must be actively involved in the church for at least six months prior to serving as a volunteer.
  9. No fewer than two leaders will be present at all official children and youth events, on or off campus. At least one leader present will be an adult.
  10. In every children and youth classroom no fewer than two leaders will be present. At least one leader present will be an adult. When it is not feasible to have two leaders in every room a floater will check on each group.
  11. Volunteers who serve as teachers and leaders of children and youth will be at least three years older than the oldest person they are teaching or leading.
  12. A minimum ratio of 1:10 adult/volunteer workers to children/youth will be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of children and youth.
  13. Children/youth attending a church-sponsored event may not leave prior to the ending of that event without previous contact between the parents and the person in charge.
  14. Children/youth will only be released to persons other than parents if prior contact has occurred between the parent and the staff person in charge.
  15. There will be at least one adult of each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single-gender events there shall be at least two adults of the same gender as the participating children/youth. The minimum ratio outlined in #12 will also be followed.
  16. All outside use of the church facility or church grounds will adhere to the GUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy and the GUMC Building Use Policy.
  17. All exterior doors will be appropriately secured during church activities.
  18. All staff, leaders and other volunteers will know the location of emergency aid kits and have telephone access for emergency medical assistance.
  19. Liability insurance coverage shall be maintained with coverage of at least \$1,000,000 per event/\$3,000,000 aggregate for activities both on and off church property. Liability insurance should include at least \$300,000 coverage for sexual misconduct claims.

#### **Procedures Specific to Children**

1. Children will attend the appropriate grade/age level equivalent to the grade/age level they attend in school or preschool.
2. Children birth through Grade 1 will be signed into and out of any activity by an adult, preferably a parent. It is recommended that signing in and out occur five minutes prior to and five minutes after an event. If a child is not picked up within ten minutes of the close of

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

Sunday School, that child will be signed into the Nursery. They may not be released to a sibling less than 18 years of age without written parental permission.

3. Children not currently signed into a classroom or events are the responsibility of their parents and must be attended to by their parents. Children must be supervised at all times while on church property.
4. Parents are encouraged to remain on the property while their children are attending GUMC activities. Parent who leave the property while their children attending activities will provide emergency contact information.

### **Procedures for Reporting Incidents of Abuse**

1. According to the laws of the State of Tennessee, all persons are mandatory reporters of child abuse and are “legally required to report known or reasonably suspected cases of child abuse, and they face criminal penalties (normally a misdemeanor) for failing to do so.” If a person learns of or witnesses an instance of abuse, that person shall immediately report the alleged incident of abuse or suspected abuse to the appropriate county or state authorities. The telephone number for reporting incidents in the State of Tennessee is 1-877-237-004.
2. Incidents of abuse or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse of children, youth, or vulnerable persons will also be reported as soon as possible to the Pastor and to the Cumberland District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church.
3. If the allegation is against the Pastor, the person making the allegation should contact the Cumberland District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church.
4. The person reporting the incident will document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances and will also make a report that documents all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident using the appropriate forms.
5. The Pastor and/or staff member will document all actions taken in reporting the incident of abuse using the appropriate forms.

### **Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Abuse**

1. Every allegation will be taken seriously. Adequate care and respect must be offered to the alleged victims and alleged perpetrators.
2. The safety and security of the alleged victim must be safeguarded before the person accused of abuse is confronted.
3. The parents or guardians of the suspected victim will be notified immediately.
4. All procedures listed in the previous section on Reporting Incidents of Abuse will be strictly followed.
5. All records relating to the matter will be maintained in confidential files
6. The Pastor will notify the liability insurer regarding the alleged incident.
7. The Pastor will be the sole spokesperson for Greenville United Methodist Church and the District Superintendent will be the sole spokesperson for the district insofar as media inquiries are concerned following the guidelines outlined in the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church Media Procedures for church and conference staff.

**Greenville United Methodist Church**  
**Safe Sanctuary Policy**

8. Any accused person must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities, as circumstances dictate, until the allegations are cleared.