

**SAFE
SANCTUARY
GUIDELINES**

Munford
First United Methodist Church

Guidelines for all volunteers and paid staff who work with children and youth in the church.

Includes
Volunteer
Application

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY
Program for Reducing the Risk of Abuse to Children and Youth
 Munford First United Methodist Church
 Adopted: August 2011

Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of 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, 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 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 – 1996*. Copyright © 1996 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission. [pp. 384-386])

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

Purpose

Our congregation’s purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention 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.

Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, 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 all of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Statistics of Child Abuse

There are more than two million incidents of physical abuse and/or neglect per year in the United States. That amounts to 30 out of every 1,000 children. That equals an average of 5,479 children abused each day, or 228 children abused per hour; nearly 4 children abused per minute, or one child every 15 second. There are approximately 2,000 deaths attributable to child abuse and/or neglect each year in the United States.

It is estimated that 1 out of every 3 girls and 1 out of every 7 boys is sexually abused before the age of 18. These numbers are believed to be underestimated, because children are reluctant to report abuse. More than one-third of the reports are children five years or younger. Age six is the average age of onset, with an average duration of 1 – 4 years for the abuse to continue.

Who are the Abusers?

Abusers come from all segments of society. Abusers can be found in every racial, ethnic, economic and social group. When they are identified, they look ordinary and commonplace. Some are charismatic leaders, some are very sociable; some are very sympathetic to troubled children; some are married and have children; some are young (even as young as fourteen or fifteen) and some are older adults.

It is a myth that abusers are “weird, pathetic, violent older men who are alcoholic and can’t keep a job” and that molesters are “sexually depraved or homosexual and retarded or crazy.” The majority of sex offenders are heterosexual males who have access to sexual relationships with adults.

In churches, they may be Sunday school teachers, nursery workers, preschool teachers, scout leaders, children’s choir helpers, vacation Bible school leaders, camp counselors, youth group counselors, clergy or anyone else.

Adult abusers are rarely strangers. 85% - 90% of offenders are known and trusted by the child. Children have been molested by mothers, father, siblings, grandparents, adoptive and step-relatives, babysitters, neighbors, aunts, uncles, teachers, clergy and coaches. Any adult of older child may molest a child. Young sexual abusers may include siblings, step-siblings, cousins, school peers, strangers or a friend of a relative.

Types and Definitions of Child Abuse

Child abuse happens when a person exerts his or her power over a child in ways that harm and/or exploit the child. In other words, the abuser is powerful; the child is vulnerable. The abuser may gain power

over the child from one or more sources, including size, position, knowledge and money. Generally, child abuse is categorized in five primary forms:

Physical Abuse

Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child. This includes any physical act of undue force such as violent assault or battery with a knife, belt, strap or other implement; burning, fracturing bones, beating, pushing or throwing down, shaking, pinching, slapping, choking, kicking or unwanted touching, such as tickling, whether or not visible marks or injuries result.

Emotional Abuse

Abuse in which a person exposes a child to verbal assault, unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. This may include closed confinement in a small area, such as being locked in a closet, making racial remarks, excessive punishment, use of profanity, knowingly permitting or forcing drug or alcohol abuse, ignoring or encouraging peer abuse, and verbal demeaning. Emotional abuse is often very difficult to prove and is devastating to the victim.

Neglect

Abuse in which a person endangers a child's health, safety or welfare through negligence or intent. This includes not hearing or addressing a child's basic needs, thereby resulting in harm to the child. It can include failure to provide adequate food, shelter, clothing and education, as well as abandonment, refusal to seek or provide medical care or treatment for illness, inadequate supervision, health hazards in the home, school or church, ignoring a child's need for contact, affirmation, affection, stimulation and nurture. This is perhaps the most common form of abuse.

Sexual Abuse

Abuse in which sexual contact between a child and an adult (or another older and more powerful youth) occurs, or when a child is used for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older child. It is uniformly understood that any child under supervisory or custodial care is powerless either to consent or to resist such contact or sexual acts. Often the child is physically and psychologically dependent upon the abuser. Examples of sexual abuse include fondling, sexual intercourse, forced participation in sexual acts, incest, exploitation for the purpose of pornography or prostitution, and exposure to child pornography or adult sexual activity.

Ritual Abuse

Abuse in which physical, sexual or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentional, systematically and in a stylized way by a person or person responsible for the child's welfare. This may also include cruel treatment of animals or repeated threats of harm to the child, other persons and animals. Reports of ritual abuse are often extremely horrifying and may seem too grim to be true. Children making such reports must not be ignored.

Indicators of Child Abuse

Possible Signs of Physical Abuse

1. Hostile and aggressive behavior toward others
2. Fearfulness of parents and other adults
3. Destructive behavior toward self, others, and/or property
4. Inexplicable fractures or bruises inappropriate for child's developmental stage

Possible Signs of Emotional Abuse

1. Exhibits severe depression and/or withdrawal
2. Exhibits severe lack of self-esteem
3. Failure to thrive
4. Threatens or attempts suicide
5. Speech and/or eating disorders
6. Goes to extremes to seek adult approval
7. Extreme passive/aggressive behavior patterns

Possible Signs of Neglect

1. Failure to thrive
2. Patterns of inappropriate dress for climate
3. Beggars or steals food; chronic hunger
4. Depression
5. Untreated medical conditions
6. Poor hygiene

Possible Signs of Sexual Abuse

1. Unusually advanced sexual knowledge and/or behavior for child's age and development stage
2. Depression – cries for no apparent reason
3. Promiscuous behavior
4. Runs away from home and refuses to return
5. Difficulty walking or sitting
6. Bruised/bleeding in vaginal or anal areas
7. Exhibits frequent headaches, stomach aches, extreme fatigue
8. Sexually transmitted diseases

Additional Indicators for Church Environment

In addition to these indicators, children who have been sexually abused at church may exhibit:

1. Unusual nervousness or anxiety about being left in the nursery or Sunday school class
2. Reluctance to participate in church activities that were previously enthusiastically approached
3. Comments such as, "I don't want to be alone with _____" in reference to a childcare worker or Sunday school teacher
4. Nightmares including a childcare worker or teacher as a frightening character
5. Unexplained hostility toward a childcare worker or teacher

Possible Signs of Ritual Abuse

1. Disruptions of memory and consciousness
2. Unexplained mistrust and mood swings
3. Flashbacks
4. Eating disorders
5. Fear of the dark, especially at sundown or full moon
6. Agitation or despair that seems to occur in cycles
7. Fear of ministers, priests, or others wearing robes or uniforms
8. Nightmares or sleep disorders
9. Any of the symptoms of sexual abuse

Fundamental Assumptions Regarding Child Abuse

Child abuse is criminal behavior and is punished severely in every state. Child sexual abuse exploits and harms children by involving them in sexual behavior for which they are unprepared, to which they cannot consent, and from which they are unable to protect themselves.

1. The child victim is *never responsible* for causing the abuse.
2. The child victim is *never to be blamed* for the abuse.
3. The child victim is *never capable of consent to abusive behavior*, either legally or morally.
4. Child sexual abuse is *always* wrong and is solely the responsibility of the abuser.

Recruiting, Screening and Hiring Policies Paid and Volunteer Workers

As a congregation, Munford First United Methodist Church cannot afford, either ethically, morally, or financially to fail to implement strategies for the reduction and prevention of child sexual abuse. Rather than discontinue our congregations' ministries to children and youth, we must engage in these ministries with great rejoicing and with the knowledge that we are making every effort to provide ministry to our children and youth in ways that assure their safety while they grow in faith.

The following forms will be included in the recruitment/screening/hiring process for workers with youth and children:

- ✓ Personal reference form
- ✓ Consent to criminal background check form
- ✓ Personal interview summary form
- ✓ Participation Covenant

All employees and volunteers already working prior to the implementation date of this policy, will be required to complete the forms within 90 days of the implementation date. All new applicants will be required to complete the above-listed forms before being considered for a position.

If information from a background check reveals that an applicant was convicted of child abuse, child molestation, incest, or some other crime against a child, that applicant will not be considered for any work involving children or youth. If information indicates that charges were filed against an applicant but that there was no conviction, further investigation by the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is warranted to determine how the issue was resolved. The SPRC Chairperson will contact the local police department or prosecuting attorney's office where the incident took place to discover more details. The SPRC will then make a determination, based solely on the evidence discovered, as to the suitability of the applicant to work with children and youth.

The following procedures for recruiting, screening and hiring of all people who will work with our children and youth are adopted and will be adhered to.

Volunteers

Persons desiring to serve as volunteers as Munford First United Methodist Church will be required to complete a confidential Volunteer Service Application, which requires the provision of various biographical and background information, including personal references. The applicant must attest to the truthfulness of the information provided, agree to be bound by the policies and procedures of the Church, and consent to a background check.

The application will be reviewed by the Administrative Assistant. References provided by the applicant will be checked. The Administrative Assistant, Pastor and SPR Committee Chair will review the results of the reference checks. The applicant will either be accepted or declined for volunteer service. Agreement of all three is required for volunteer service.

Declining to answer one or more background questions or answering “yes” to any background question on the application does not automatically disqualify an applicant for volunteer service. In the event the applicant either declines to answer the background questions, answers “yes” to any background question or requests a pastoral meeting to discuss the answers, the candidate must meet with the SPRC or his designate, who will then recommend disapproval or conditional approval for the candidate. The applicant’s reference information will also be checked. When these circumstances occur, a background check will be required prior to final approval.

- All volunteers will be required to fill out Volunteer Application
- All new volunteers are subject to a random background check
- All volunteers will be required to go to an annual Safe Sanctuary training

All information obtained from applications, interviews, reference and background checks will be held in strict confidence. All paperwork related to volunteers will be maintained in a locked file under the supervision of the Administrative Assistant.

Occasional Workers

Due to the nature of volunteer work, and the strong possibility of needing “occasional workers,” a bank of potential occasional volunteers will be maintained. These volunteers will not be required to complete the package required of regular staff or volunteers. Rather, the following procedure will be implemented:

New workers will:

- ✓ complete Volunteer Application Form
- ✓ be provided with a written copy of the church’s policies and procedures for the prevention of child abuse
- ✓ sign the Participation Covenant, stating that he or she agrees to follow the church’s policies and procedures for the prevention of child abuse

Paid Staff Members

Paid staff members of Munford First United Methodist Church will undergo a rigorous screening and background investigation. In addition to a formal application for employment and a series of interviews, all paid staff members will routinely undergo a thorough background check.

Areas of investigation may include, depending on the area of work and job responsibilities, previous employment, previous residence, personal and professional reference, education and professional licenses, criminal and civil records, as well as other public record information, motor vehicle driving record, credit history and drug screen.

The Administrative Assistant is responsible for the initiation, completion and reporting of satisfactory or unsatisfactory findings of background checks for paid staff members. All information related to paid staff members will be maintained in a locked file in the church business office.

Supervision of Workers, Children and Youth (Minors)

Rules and Procedures

1. The “Minimum Age Rule” for Supervision of Children and youth
 - A. There will be a minimum difference of four years between the age of the youngest supervisor or counselor and the age of the oldest child in the group being supervised.
 - B. The minimum age for those supervising children and youth is eighteen. Younger teenagers may assist adults, but must work under the immediate, direct supervision of a qualified adult and may not independently supervise children and youth. The four-year minimum age separation rule must be followed. A child under the age of eighteen is not considered a second person for purposes of meeting the Two Adult Rule.

2. The “Two Adult Rule” for the Supervision of Children and Youth
 - A. No fewer than two adults shall be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event or ministry involving children. It is permissible to utilize adult “floaters” who periodically move in and out of open-door rooms. This is to not only prevent abuse, but to reduce the likelihood of false accusations.
 - B. It is preferred that two adults supervising children at the same event or in the same ministry not be related.

3. The “Open Door Rule” for Activities and Counseling
 - A. All activities involving children and youth should take place in open areas that are clearly visible. Classrooms shall either have windows or half-doors for continual visibility. Offices shall have windows or the door shall remain open while the office is in use.
 - B. All counseling sessions with children or youth shall take place in rooms or offices with sufficient windows so that visibility is unrestricted and continual.

4. The “Never Alone Rule” for the Supervision of Children and Youth
 - A. Supervisors and ministry leaders should take every precaution to never be alone with a child or youth in an inaccessible area. There should always be two adult/leaders for two or more children/youth. These circumstances include, but are not limited to:
 - ✓ Automobiles or vans, when picking children up or taking them home
 - ✓ Classrooms, offices or areas without windows or half-doors
 - ✓ Classrooms, offices or areas with locked doors
 - ✓ Cabins at camp, or tents or hotel rooms at overnight events
 - B. If specific circumstances ever create a situation requiring an adult or leader to be alone with a child, such as the need to take a child home or other place by personal automobile, parental notification must be given and permission received in advance before the trip takes place.

5. The “Advance Notice and Permission Rule” for Children and Youth Events
 - A. Parents/guardians are always to be given advance notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will be participating.
 - B. This shall specifically include notification regarding any event in which a worker or supervisor will be alone with a child.
 - C. Written permission must be given by the parent/guardian for their child’s participation.

6. The “Minimum Membership Rule” for Volunteers Supervisors of Youth and Children
 - A. Only members of Munford First United Methodist Church may serve as volunteers who supervise or have custody of minors.
 - B. A person desiring to volunteer must be a member of Munford First United Methodist Church for a minimum of six months before being eligible to serve as a volunteer having supervision or custody of minors.
 - C. Exceptions to this rule must be approved by the SPRC, with reasons for the exception documented and acknowledged by the Children’s Ministry Coordinator or Director of Youth Ministries, as appropriate.

7. Minimum Ratios for Chaperones and Supervisors for Youth Events and Trips
 - ✓ For overnight events, van and bus trips – 1:8 ratio, with chaperones spread throughout the bus and scattered at the event.
 - ✓ For large youth group activities on campus, such as concerts, fellowship and special speakers – 1:20 ratio, with chaperones spread throughout and around all areas of the event.
 - ✓ For all other events and activities – 1:12 ratio
 - ✓ Chaperones, counselors and supervisors shall remain present with and visible to those youth and children assigned to their care throughout the trip or event. When not specifically assigned, they should make every effort to be well distributed among the children and youth.

8. The “Overnight Rule” for Supervision of Children and Youth
 - ✓ For all overnight events, there shall be a sufficient number of same-sex supervisors to maintain applicable minimum ratios.
 - ✓ When on overnight trips or events, no child/youth is permitted to sleep in a room or tent of an adult other than his or her own parent or guardian. When groups sleep in a large room or common space, the chaperones will sleep in the same room with the youth to provide supervision with males and females segregated.
 - ✓ All other Safe Sanctuary regulations apply.

Standards of Conduct for Supervisors of Children and Youth

Verbal Communication

1. Verbal communication is to be instructional, respectful, encouraging and friendly. Even when verbal communication must be authoritative, raised voices are generally not necessary. Permissible uses of raised voices include.
 - ✓ Calling the names of children to get their attention, either outside or in a noisy environment.
 - ✓ Calling the names of children to determine their whereabouts.
 - ✓ Warnings of physical danger.
 - ✓ Giving instructions on a playing field or in a noisy environment.
 - ✓ Cheers of encouragement.
2. Name calling, making fun, yelling, screaming, threatening, frightening, harassing, or otherwise verbally demeaning or assaulting children are forbidden.
3. Profanity, cursing, degrading jokes, and the use of slang derogatory terms, or racial or sexual innuendoes are forbidden.
4. Adult supervisors, chaperones and counselors are to immediately intervene if negative verbal situations occur between and among youth, children and adults.

Physical Contact and Touching

1. Actions of physical affection toward children and youth shall only be in the light and in the presence of others, never in the dark and/or when alone. A good rule for hugging is to never initiate the hug, and always be the first to stop. Using good judgment, appropriate touching includes:
 - ✓ Brief hugs of greeting, congratulations, encouragement or consolation
 - ✓ Handshakes for greeting and congratulations
 - ✓ Walking hand-in-hand
 - ✓ Congratulatory and assuring pats on the back
 - ✓ An arm around the shoulder
2. All other forms of touching are to be avoided. Any touching that involves even the slightest possible sexual connotation is forbidden.
3. Touching in anger, disgust or aggression is forbidden, as is tickling, hitting, slapping or shaking a child or youth.
4. It is recognized that the physical needs and emotional nurturing of infants and toddlers require more touching and holding than would be appropriate for older children and youth.
5. Adults, supervisors and counselors shall immediately intervene when inappropriate physical activity occurs between and among children, youth and adults.

Training

1. All workers, both paid and volunteer, must undergo initial training upon acceptance and approval for service. Workers already in place at the time of implementation of this policy will be required to complete training within six months.
2. All workers, both paid and volunteer, must undergo annual refresher training each year thereafter while serving.
3. Training will include, but not be limited to:
 - A. Definitions and indications of abuse
 - B. Policies and procedures for supervision
 - C. Standards of conduct
 - D. Procedures and requirements for reporting suspected incidents

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 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 Hymnal*, p. 44).

SOURCES AND REFERENCES

- Rev. Gary Lawson. *How to Prevent Child Sexual Abuse in Church*. Conference Council on Ministries, Memphis Annual Conference, The United Methodist Church.
- Rev. Joy Thornburg Melton. *Safe Sanctuaries – Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*. General Board of Discipleship. Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN 1998
- Rev. Kitty Crain and Rev. Gary Lawson. *Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse*. 1998 Journal – Memphis Annual Conference, The United Methodist Church, June 1998
- Richard Hammar, Steven Klipowicz & James Cobble. *Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church*. Church Law & Tax Report, Matthews, NC, 1993.
- Toni G. Watson. *Reducing the Risk of Abuse to Children and Youth*. Christ United Methodist Church, Memphis, TN, 2000.

GUIDELINES FOR A SAFE SANCTUARY

In furtherance of the desire of Munford First United Methodist Church to be a Safe Sanctuary, the following policies and procedures will be adhered to by all employees, volunteers and members.

TWO-ADULT RULE

The Two-Adult Rule requires no fewer than two adults present at all time during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children or youth. Great preference is given to the two adults present not being related. Two adults should be present during all Sunday school classes, Bible studies and fellowship times for children and/or youth.

The significant of this rule cannot be overstated. Following this simple rule will drastically reduce the possibility of an incident of child abuse if this rule is followed. Furthermore, vigilant adherence to the “Two-Adult Rule” provides important protection to the church’s workers with children and youth. When it is not possible to have two adults in the same room, an adult “floater” will be assigned to move in and out of rooms at random.

FIRST AID/CPR TRAINING

All paid nursery attendants will be required to maintain current CPR certification. Paid nursery attendants should have first aid training. Volunteers assigned to children and youth are strongly encouraged to have first aid training and CPR certification. At least one person at an event with children and youth will be **required** to have the appropriate training.

ANNUAL TRAINING

The church will provided first aid and CPR training at least annually. All members are strongly encouraged to take part in this training. In addition, training will be provided to all paid, volunteer, part-time, full-time, clergy and lay members of the church on the following topics:

- ✓ Church’s policies for the prevention of child abuse
- ✓ Procedures to be used in all ministries with children and youth
- ✓ Appropriate steps to report an incident of child abuse
- ✓ Details of state laws regarding child abuse

PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS

Each room set aside for children and youth should have a door with a window in it or a half door. A window in every door removes the opportunity for secrecy and isolation, conditions every child abuser seeks. A half door offers protection against children wandering outside the classroom and allows for full visual access.

At any counseling sessions with children and youth, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session. Ideally, the session will be conducted at a time when others are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance. Counseling sessions conducted behind closed doors are a breeding ground for false allegations of abuse. Closed doors also make it too easy for the child abuser to have the privacy and isolation he or she needs.

Ministries with children and youth are carried out in an endless variety of settings and location: church sanctuaries, classrooms, camp cabins, playground, retreat centers, tour buses, parks, and homes. Reports of child abuse indicate that abuse happens in an equally large variety of settings. Leaders are expected to ensure that activities take place in the appropriate setting. For instance, Bible study done in an open-door classroom and in the presence of no fewer than two adults has a very low probability of an incident occurring. However, inadequate supervision of a youth choir at a hotel may increase the odds of an abuse incident. It is incumbent upon the leader of any event involving children and/or youth to think through, in advance, the advantages and disadvantages of the settings they are considering. In those situations where special equipment is used, workers should be well aware of how to safely operate whatever equipment is needed.

PARENTAL NOTICE

Parents of children and youth will **always** be given advance notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will be participating. Specifically, if a child will be alone with a worker, the parents must be fully informed and give their written consent. Before any event, written parental permission must be obtained before a child/youth is allowed to participate.

REPORTING PROCEDURES FOR A SAFE SANCTUARY

In furtherance of the desire of Munford First United Methodist Church to be a Safe Sanctuary, the following policies and procedures will be adhered to by all employees, volunteers and members.

Reports of child abuse shall be made promptly, thoroughly and taken seriously. The circumstances for possible child abuse will generally fall into one of two broad categories. Procedures for circumstances in each category are as follows:

INCIDENT OR OCCURRENCE OF ABUSE (KNOWN OR SUSPECTED) ASSOCIATED WITH A CHURCH-SPONSORED ACTIVITY OR EVENT

Possible circumstances would include:

- ✓ When a report or complaint is received from a child or parent
- ✓ When a paid or volunteer staff member becomes aware of a possible incident
- ✓ When a paid or volunteer staff member observes and act or incident

Procedures to follow if you are made aware of, suspect or observe an incident of child abuse:

- ✓ If you observe an act of abuse or exploitation, you should intervene on behalf of the child to stop the abuse, to the extent that you are not placed in physical danger.
- ✓ If a child voluntarily tells you of abuse, listen carefully. Write down everything, including all details, circumstances and witnesses.
- ✓ When you receive a report from a parent, listen carefully. Refer the parent to the pastor, or ministry coordinator to make a full report.
- ✓ Ensure the victim's comfort. Then notify the parents of the victim, taking any necessary steps to assure the child's safety prior to the parent's arrival.
- ✓ Do not confront the accused abuser with anger and hostility. Treat him or her with dignity, but immediately remove him or her from further involvement with children or youth.
- ✓ As a supervisor, notify the pastor and/or ministry coordinator immediately.

The pastor and/or ministry coordinator will:

- ✓ Complete an incident report with all essential information.
- ✓ Notify the proper law enforcement or child protective services agency.
- ✓ Notify the annual conference authorities, the church's insurance agent, and the church's attorney.
- ✓ Keep a written record of the steps taken by the church in response.
- ✓ Call upon the designated spokesperson to make any necessary statements or responses to the news media.
- ✓ Prepare a brief and honest statement that can be made to the congregation without unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim's privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns.

- ✓ Be prepared to cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.

KNOWN OR SUSPECTED ACTIVITY NOT ASSOCIATED WITH A CHURCH-SPONSORED EVENTS OR ACTIVITY

This would be when a paid or volunteer staff member suspects abuse is occurring elsewhere, such as at home or school. Discernment and discretion are important, as is the safety of the child. False accusations can be as devastating to families and individuals as the discovery of actual abuse.

If you know or suspect that child abuse is occurring elsewhere:

- ✓ If you are made aware of abuse by the voluntary statements of the child, listen very carefully. Contact the pastor/ministry coordinator immediately so that a full report can be taken.
- ✓ The pastor/ministry coordinator will take the appropriate action, contacting law enforcement officials and following up.

The Church's Commitment

The church's commitment to the prevention of child abuse requires that its workers with children and youth make reports of abuse according to the requirements of state law. However, our obligations to respond to allegation go beyond the requirements of state law. As Christians, we must also be prepared to respond to others regarding allegations of child abuse. We must be prepared to respond to the victim and his or her family, to the news media, to our church's insurance agent, to the annual conference, and possibly to the abuser.

First and foremost, all allegations will be taken seriously and the privacy of the victim will remain paramount. Sympathetic concern will be provided to the victim and the victim's family. This faithful response does not condone blaming the victim or implying that the victim was in any way responsible for causing the abuse.

Conference authorities, via the district superintendent, will be notified as soon as allegations of abuse are received. Conference authorities must be kept aware of the congregation's actions throughout the process up to resolution. It is also necessary to notify the church's insurance agent if an allegation of child abuse is made.

One designated representative of the church should handle contact with the media. Depending on availability, that person will first be the pastor, followed in succession as necessary by the head of the SPR committee, the lay leader, the head of the trustees and then the church's attorney. If the designated spokesperson is unavailable or is the subject of the allegation, the responsibility for media contact will fall to the next available person in succession. The representative should answer questions honestly without adding extra or unnecessary information. The representative will maintain the confidentiality of the victim and his or her family at all times. No one other than the designated spokesperson should speak to the media on behalf of the congregation.

AFTER THE ABUSE

When the abuse of a child or youth occurs in a church, there are many victims in addition to the one who has been physically harmed, and all are in need of healing ministry. The other victims may include the

- ✓ family members of the child who was harmed
- ✓ peers of the child
- ✓ peers of the child's parents
- ✓ remaining workers with youth and children
- ✓ congregation as a community of faith
- ✓ family of the accused abuser

Each victim will need to be included in a ministry of comfort and healing. Failure to address the issues of anger, fear, and grief that occur within the church after abuse can have far-reaching and devastating consequences for everyone.

The first step in ministry with victims of child abuse in a congregation must be truth telling. This means engaging in honest communication about what has happened. Truth telling does not mean engaging in gossip or speculation. Above all, truth telling does not mean blaming the child victim in any way.

A specifically planned, well-prepared congregational meeting should be called. Advance notice should be given so that congregants can choose whether to attend. In most cases, the leader of such a meeting will be the pastor, unless he is the accused abuser. In addition to a leader, lay leaders should be present as well as representatives from the annual conference. The lay leader will provide information about steps taken thus far. Additionally, qualified counselors should be present. It may be best to have a counselor who is not necessarily a member of the congregation. The presence of a counselor will allow those who experience immediate strong feelings to be assisted through those feelings, instead of putting them off or minimizing their feelings.

The elements of a congregational meeting should include:

- ✓ fact sharing
- ✓ small group sharing time
- ✓ closing moments of reflection and worship

Fact sharing should include an accurate description of what has happened, what actions have been taken, and what actions will be taken. Questions should be answered as accurately as possible without jeopardizing any ongoing investigation by the church or local law enforcement agencies. Protect the identities of the victim(s), especially if the family has requested as much privacy as possible. Do not be afraid to answer questions with, "We don't know the answer to that yet." It is better to admit not knowing than to speculate about the incident or the outcome.

Divide the total group into small groups of five or six. Lay leaders and/or staff should be designated as facilitators. The facilitator will begin by letting everyone know it is permissible to express *any* feeling or emotion within the small group. All will be allowed time to share, and there will be no debate about the feelings and emotions expressed. The purpose of this segment of the meeting is to help people identify and verbalize their feelings about the incident. The purpose is not to strategize a response or to elicit premature forgiveness toward the abuser.

When it is apparent that the small groups are able to bring their time together to a close, reassemble the whole group. Acknowledge the reality of this painful situation and offer a prayer for the congregation as it seeks to achieve justice for all involved and healing for all who are suffering.

CONCLUSION

Justice and hospitality were essential elements of the covenant between the Hebrew people and God. Worship was the lifeblood of the covenant. Throughout the history of the Hebrew people, their practice of worshiping God in holy places is recorded. At times, the holy place was no more than a small tent or a pile of rocks made on the plains. At other times, the holy place was a beautifully ornate temple with many grand chambers. No matter what the place of worship looked like, the people treasured it as a holy place, a sanctuary, where they were able to worship in safety and harmony. Today, we must remember that our churches are holy places of sanctuary for the children of God. Our churches must continue to be places where people of all ages can come together for worship, study, and service, with the assurance that they are safe and secure in the community of faith.

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION
Munford First United Methodist Church

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____

Occupation: _____

Employer: _____

Current job responsibilities and schedule: _____

Previous work experience: _____

Previous volunteer experience: _____

Special interests, hobbies and skills: _____

How many hours per week are you available to volunteer? _____

_____ Days _____ Evenings _____ Weekends

Do you have your own transportation? _____

Do you have a valid driver's license? _____

Do you have liability insurance? (list policy limits and name of carrier) _____

Why would you like to volunteer as a worker with children and/or youth?

What qualities do you have that would help you work with children and/or youth?

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION
Munford First United Methodist Church, page 2 of 2

Have you ever been charged, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violations)? _____
Yes _____ No

If yes, please explain fully:

Have you ever been exposed to an incident of child abuse or neglect? _____ Yes _____ No

If yes, how did this incident affect you? _____

Would you be available for periodic training sessions? _____ Yes _____ No

References: Please list three personal references (people who are not related to you by blood or marriage) and provide complete address and phone information for each. References are confidential.

1. Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime phone: _____

Evening phone: _____

Relationship to reference: _____

2. Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime phone: _____

Evening phone: _____

Relationship to reference: _____

3. Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime phone: _____

Evening phone: _____

Relationship to reference: _____

Signature of Applicant

Date

PARTICIPATION COVENANT STATEMENT

Munford First United Methodist Church

The congregation of Munford First 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. Adult survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to volunteer in some capacity to work with children or youth is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with one of our church's ministers before accepting an assignment.
3. All adult volunteers involved with children or youth of our church must be a member and have regularly attended worship services with this church for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
4. 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.
5. 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.
6. 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 No
2. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times?
Yes No
3. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment? Yes No
4. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor? Yes No
5. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to discuss with a minister of this congregation your experience, if any, as a survivor of child abuse? Yes No

(Answering yes to this question does not automatically disqualify you from volunteering with children or youth.)

6. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to inform a minister of this congregation if you have ever been convicted of child abuse? Yes 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

REPORT OF SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE

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

2. Victim's name: _____ Age/Date of birth: _____

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

4. Victim's statement (give 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 completing this form

Date

ACCIDENT REPORT FORM

Please print all information

Date of accident: _____ Time of accident: _____

Name of child injured: _____ Age/Date of birth: _____

Address of child: _____

Location of accident: _____

Parent or guardian: _____

Name of person(s) who witnessed accident: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Describe the accident:

Background Check Authorization

Munford United Methodist

APPLICANT/VOLUNTEER INFORMATION:

Position Applying For _____ Date of Birth ____/____/____

Last Name _____ First _____ Middle _____

Current Phone Number _____ Email Address _____

In the past seven years, have you ever used a name (or names) other than those listed above? _____

If yes, please list all names used (including maiden name): _____

Social Security # _____

Driver's License # _____ State _____

Present Address _____

How Long? _____ City State Zip

Previous Address _____

(You Must Include Addresses for Past Seven Years) City State Zip

Previous Address _____

(You Must Include Addresses for Past Seven Years) City State Zip

Previous Address _____

(You Must Include Addresses for Past Seven Years) City State Zip

Previous Address _____

(You Must Include Addresses for Past Seven Years) City State Zip

*Please attach a list of additional addresses to this document if needed.

In connection with this request, I authorize all corporations, former employers, credit agencies, educational institutions, law enforcement agencies, city, state, county, and federal courts, military services, and persons to release information they may have about me to the person or company with which this form has been filed. This releases the aforesaid parties from any liability and responsibility for collecting the above information.

NOTE:

If applicant/volunteer is under the age of eighteen, a parent or guardian must sign in his/her place.

Applicant/Volunteer Signature _____ Date _____

For institution only: applicant is approved: _____ or _____
Yes N

