

**FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
MISSOULA, MONTANA**



**SAFE GATHERINGS
POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL
Effective: July 1, 2020**

***for the protection of our Children, Youth, Vulnerable Adults, and
Ministry Partners***

Introduction

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in June 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of all forms of child abuse in the church. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state "...children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation, and abuse." God calls us to make our churches safe sanctuaries, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from all forms of exploitation and abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children, youth and adults can participate in ministry in a safe and secure environment. Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the protection and prevention of abuse for all persons in our church.

First United Methodist Church (FUMC) believes that scripture instructs us to care for the children brought into the church. These children may be regular attenders, or they may be the children of guests, grandchildren of our members, or others. Regardless of how these children come to us, we covenant to commit to their protection, and in doing so to represent God's justice and mercy in the world.

Purpose

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this POLICY FOR SAFE MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH, VULNERABLE ADULTS AND ADULTS and the accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute unwavering commitment to the physical safety, emotional integrity, and spiritual growth of all persons in our church.

Statement of Covenant

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 our children, youth, vulnerable adults, and adults. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the recruitment and selection of both staff and volunteer workers. We will implement prudent operational procedures in all events and programs. We will educate all our workers who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding the use of appropriate policies and procedures, including basic first aid and disciplinary measures. We will have a clearly defined procedure that conforms to the requirements of applicable state/federal law, for reporting a suspected or alleged incident of abuse. We will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if such an incident occurs.

Conclusion

In all our ministries with children, youth, vulnerable adults and adults, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each will be "...surrounded by steadfast love, established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to eternal life." (Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Hymnal, pg. 44)

The Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) is charged with the review of this policy and accompanying procedures annually. Revision will be presented to the Administrative Council for approval.

Statement of Purpose

FUMC desires to be a safe place for all children, youth, vulnerable adults, and adults. Having adopted a Safe Sanctuary Policy in January 2016, we fully realize that sexual abuse of children, youth, vulnerable adults and adults can happen anywhere, including the church; and thus we have a moral and legal obligation to reduce the possibility of sexual abuse occurring within the framework of our ministries and our activities.

The purpose of this manual's procedures is to safeguard children, youth, vulnerable adults, and adults of our church from sexual abuse and to protect church staff and volunteer workers from false allegations of sexual abuse. Although no organization or individual can assure complete protection, this Safe Gatherings Policy and Procedures Manual reflects FUMC's commitment to help protect children, youth, vulnerable adults, and adults from harm. The procedures set down in this manual apply to all paid and volunteer workers of First United Methodist Church of Missoula, MT.

This Safe Gatherings Policy and Procedures Manual is a "living document", and as such, will need to be revised periodically to reflect the current circumstances and situations encompassed by the activities and ministries of First United Methodist Church of Missoula. The FUMC Administrative Council is responsible for the management of this manual as a "living document". The SPRC will review this document annually and notify the Administrative Council of any necessary revisions.

Definitions

In this manual the following definitions apply:

Child: Any person infant through 6th grade;

Youth: Any person in the 7th grade or higher not yet 18 years of age;

Vulnerable Adult: Any person 18 years and older who because of mental or physical dysfunction, is unable to manage his/her own resources, carry out the activity of daily living, or protect himself/herself from abuse or neglect without assistance from others;

Adult: Any person age 18 or older;

Compensated Worker: Hourly, salaried, part-time, or full-time individual who works with children, youth, vulnerable adults, or adults at any church-sponsored activity;

Volunteer Worker: Any non-compensated individual who works with children, youth, vulnerable adults, or adults at any church-sponsored activity;

Temporary Volunteer: Any occasional or "last-minute", non-compensated individual recruited to help with a church-sponsored activity involving children, youth, vulnerable adults or adults who has not been fully certified as a Safe Gatherings worker by completing proper paperwork and attending a training/orientation session;

Junior Nursery Attendant: Any non-compensated youth who, under adult supervision, helps with infants and young children in the nursery. These student helpers must have parental consent, be at least twelve (12) years old, and must be at least five (5) years older than the oldest member of the group(s) with which they are working;

Program Staff: Consists of any compensated worker on staff who is responsible for an area of ministry which could involve children, youth, vulnerable adults, or adults, i.e. the Pastor, Director of Children's and Youth Ministries, Director of Worship Ministries and Nursery Attendant;

Ministry Partner: Any individual or group that engages in church-sponsored or church-affiliated ministry;

"Activity": Any church-sponsored event or program; and

Child Abuse: Physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment of, or the maltreatment of a child or youth by a caregiver responsible for that person's welfare.

PROCEDURES WHEN INTERVIEWING AND SCREENING COMPENSATED AND VOLUNTEER WORKERS WORKING WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

It will be the responsibility of members of the Program Staff to interview and screen each individual considered to work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults at FUMC of Missoula. The following procedures should be followed to provide protective care for all children/youth/vulnerable adults or adult workers who participate in any church-sponsored activity.

All compensated or volunteer worker(s) should be an active member of FUMC for at least six (6) months prior to the time they begin serving with children, youth, and vulnerable adults in church activities. An exception to the 6-month waiting period could be made with the following two (2) requirements:

- The person asked to serve has been in ministry with children, youth, and vulnerable adults for at least six (6) months in the church he or she attended prior to coming to FUMC.
- The person can provide a reference from a staff person with whom he or she worked at the previous church.

Compensated or volunteer workers must be eighteen (18) years of age or older and at least five (5) years older than the oldest child, youth, or vulnerable adult he or she will be supervising to be considered as the primary responsible supervisor for any activity involving these individuals.

Adults who have been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse will not be considered as workers with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Convictions in any one of the following areas will permanently disqualify the applicant from service:

- Crime against a child, youth or vulnerable adult;
- Crime involving a child, youth or vulnerable adult;
- Any kind of abuse (i.e. physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, neglect, endangerment) regardless of the age of the victim;
- Sexual intercourse with a child or youth age seventeen (17) or younger;
- Sexual exploitation;
- Crime resulting in the registration of the individual as a sex offender;
- Indecent exposure;
- Possession, production, distribution of child pornography;
- Use of a computer to facilitate a sex crime;
- Kidnapping and/or Abduction;
- Stalking;
- False imprisonment

Convictions in any one of the following areas will disqualify the applicant from service for a minimum of ten (10) years:

- Drug use, possession, manufacture, or distribution;
- Assault;
- Battery or Threat;
- Causing injury, disability or death;
- Causing property damage or injury while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol

All compensated or volunteer workers applying for any position involving the supervision of children, youth or vulnerable adults must complete the following documentation:

- Employment Application or Volunteer Application Form
- Background Check Form: compensated and volunteer workers will be screened through Mountain Sky Conference Background Check, Montana Department of Child and Family Services, or equivalent accredited service. FUMC will conduct a criminal background search as part of the application process and may again at any time during paid or volunteer service, with additional searches being performed at least once every three (3) years;
- All voluntarily disclosed personal information will be maintained in the strictest of confidence. All forms and reference reports will be kept as part of the worker's confidential file in a locked cabinet. Upon completion of the appropriate forms by the worker, staff will submit appropriate documentation to the appropriate authorities. All files will be maintained for three (3) years after service ends;
- Until screenings are complete, workers will only be permitted to participate in ministries in the presence of another cleared worker;
- All paid staff and volunteers working with minors (defined as anyone under the age of eighteen (18)) and vulnerable adults shall complete a background check prior to serving or within ninety (90) days of the adoption of this policy;
- Results of the criminal background search will be used to evaluate the applicant's suitability for paid or volunteer service with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults and may be used as reason for disqualification from said service;
- Personal References: A minimum of two (2) personal references will be required, preferably one to be from a Pastor, and none to be accepted from immediate relatives or extended family (i.e. in-laws). All references will be contacted by FUMC and in the event contact cannot be made, we will ask for additional references;
- International criminal background searches will also be conducted on all immigrants to the United States;
- Release Form: Gives your consent to release confidential information back to FUMC of Missoula;
- Health Form: When required by law for compensated workers.

All compensated and volunteer workers are required to attend an orientation/training meeting. Those working with minors or vulnerable adults shall complete Safe Gatherings training offered by the church and led by a certified district trainer not less frequently than annually.

Each "temporary volunteer" asked to help in any activity involving children, youth or vulnerable adults must be under the direct supervision of a fully certified (by FUMC staff or appointed Safe Gatherings trainer) Safe Gatherings adult worker. Temporary volunteers need to be made aware of the Procedures set down in this manual and agree to abide by them.

All original documentation will be kept on file at the FUMC office in Missoula unless specifically requested to be sent for processing to the Mountain Sky United Methodist Church Conference Office. Applications and the results of all forms of screening will be kept strictly confidential by authorized staff. All training will be done on-line and in-house as directed by the Mountain Sky Conference.

PROCEDURES FOR SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS AT ANY CHURCH-SPONSORED ACTIVITY

The following procedures should be followed to provide the best protective care for all children, youth, and vulnerable adults, as well as, adult workers who participate in any church-sponsored activity, regardless of where the activity occurs.

Supervision: Supervision procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse and to protect staff persons and volunteers from unwarranted accusations. No child will be left unsupervised while attending a children's ministry activity. It is strongly recommended that there be a staff/child ratio of:

Infants	2:8
Young Toddlers	2:10
Older Toddlers	2:12
Preschool	2:10
Grades Kindergarten to 2 nd	2:24
Grades 3 rd to 6 th	2:30
Grades 7 th to 12 th	2:20

Workers may limit children/youth to these recommended ratios or lower to ensure adequate supervision and safety.

Two-Adult Rule: Regardless of the group size, a minimum of two (2) adults is always required to be present during all church-sponsored activities, events, programs, or ministries involving children/youth/vulnerable adults. However, at a minimum, this may include a "roamer," or a system of floating supervision in which an adult moves in and out of rooms.

Any one-on-one interactions between adults and children/youth/vulnerable adults should be conducted in sight of another worker and/or in an open/public location with the knowledge of another adult. At no time will paid staff or (adult or teen) volunteer worker(s) be permitted to be alone with a child/youth/vulnerable adult in an isolated situation (unless there is expressed written permission on file in the church from the child's/youth/vulnerable adult's legal parent or guardian stating otherwise for specific situations or programs).

Children, youth, and vulnerable adults should be released to a "custodial" parent or authorized adult only. Under no circumstances, is a child, youth, or vulnerable adult to be left alone to wait for someone to come and pick them up.

Five Years Older Guideline: All workers, including teen workers, are expected to be at least five (5) years older than the children/youth/vulnerable adults they are teaching or supervising. Anyone under the age of eighteen (18) will be paired with an adult staff person/volunteer.

Teen Workers: Youth must work with an adult present and must be twelve (12) years or older to assist with the care of minors.

Parental Guidelines: When children/youth/vulnerable adults are not participating in, or are released from, church sponsored activities, parents are responsible to know where their children are, whom they are with, and what they are doing at all times.

Accessibility Through Windows and Doors: There will be windows into rooms where programs take place or doors will remain open or unlocked to allow access to meeting spaces.

Programming Location: Classes shall remain in the assigned room location. If a change of location is necessary, a sign shall be posted on the door providing notice of that change.

Hallway & Classroom Roamer: One or more adults will monitor the hall of the church building where ministry activities are scheduled. Periodically, the person(s) serving as roamer(s) shall check all classrooms being used throughout the allotted programming time.

Buddy System: Understanding there is safety in numbers, children/youth/vulnerable adult are to use the “buddy” system (i.e., groups of three) during all on- and off-site church activities as appropriate.

Toileting & Diaper Changing: Whenever possible, an adult shall escort any child in preschool through 2nd grade to the restroom and wait outside. For rooms that have attached bathrooms, a worker may assist a child in the bathroom while keeping the door open. Workers shall periodically check the bathrooms. No more than one child/youth/vulnerable adult shall be in a single bathroom or single stall in a common bathroom at the same time. Children in grades 3-6th are encouraged to use the buddy system when visiting the bathroom. Diaper changing shall be done in the open and not behind closed doors.

Bathroom/Shower Procedure: Workers should give youth as much privacy as possible. Showering at camps and overnight events, when facilities are less than private, requires careful planning. Adults will not shower with any youth. Adults should not be in showering facilities in the presence of a youth without the presence of another adult or youth. At no time shall adults be in the presence of youth or vulnerable adult without wearing suitable clothing or bathing suits.

First Aid/CPR: Training is strongly encouraged for all workers and volunteers that have direct supervision of children in our programs. When an accident occurs, an incident report shall be completed, and the designated church leader notified (incident reports are in the church office).

Fire Evacuation & Response: Fire evacuation plans shall be posted. Workers shall be trained to understand evacuation procedures and locations of fire alarms and fire extinguishers. In the event of a fire, the priority is to ensure the safety of the children/youth/vulnerable adults in our care. Evacuation plans shall be reviewed with children/youth/vulnerable adults periodically.

Physical Safety: Staff, leaders, and workers should be conscious of safety concerns when leading and supervising activities and games. Proper equipment and adequate supervision of the activity should always be in place.

Participation Records: Accurate participation records shall be maintained for all activities. At a minimum, records should list the date and hours of the activity, its location, the names of participants and the name(s) of the adult worker(s) directing the activity.

Advance Notice to Parents: Parents or guardians will be given advance notice, schedule information, and detailed policies and procedures for on- and off-site programs, activities, and events. Parents are required to update their emergency contact information every three (3) months.

Parental Consent Form: All parents/guardians of children/youth/vulnerable adults participating in off-site events or activities must sign and submit a Parental Consent Form beforehand. This form: 1) grants permission for the child/youth/vulnerable adult to participate in an activity, event or program; 2) serves as a photography release; 3) authorizes supervising adults to seek emergency medical care if

necessary; and 4) provides emergency contact information. This form is also necessary for on-site overnight retreats. It is available on the church website and can also be obtained from those supervising the event(s). Youth are required to have their Parental Consent Form updated every three (3) months.

Internet Safety Guidelines: While communication via Internet, texting, and social networks is common among children/youth and can be an important tool for ministry, we recognize that those forms of communication can also be dangerous if not used properly. Therefore, workers should be aware that all direct communications with FUMC children/youth/vulnerable adults may be subject to audit.

Medication: Permission forms, for prescribed medications to be taken during off-site activities or at overnight retreats, must be completed by a parent. Medications are to be under the control of and administered by an adult/nurse in charge.

Overnight Chaperone Procedure & Guidelines: On overnight retreats/trips, all adult chaperones must be over the age of twenty-one (21). Adults will not sleep in the same bed as children/youth at any time. In open space sleeping settings, at least two (2) workers should be present in every room. There should be no permission for boys to enter the room where girls are sleeping and no permission for girls to enter the room where boys are sleeping.

Driver's License & Insurance: Drivers must have a valid state driver's license to drive on a church sponsored activity. In addition, any compensated and volunteer workers used as driver(s) must have auto insurance coverage on the vehicle in use. Drivers must be adults over the age of twenty-one (21), and they must have a clean driving record and drive a vehicle in good repair.

Auto Safety: Drivers are responsible to see that all children/youth/vulnerable adults wear seat belts when being transported to and from activities. No more passengers than number of seat belts will be carried in a vehicle for these activities. Buses not equipped with seatbelts are exempt from this rule. Children under thirteen (13) years shall not sit in the front seat of vehicles with air bags. Child safety seat laws will be followed when traveling in a motor vehicle. Children/youth/vulnerable adults may not travel alone in a vehicle with only one (1) adult unless it is their parent. When multiple vehicles are used for an event, a single worker may drive if all the vehicles travel together. Every effort should be made for all vehicles traveling together in this circumstance to stay within sight of one another. If possible, there should be a cell phone or some other way to communicate.

Alcohol/Drugs: Alcohol and illicit/recreational drug use are prohibited at all church-sponsored activities/events/programs.

GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ABUSE

When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse, the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults must be the most immediate and important concern considered. It is the legal and moral obligation of any person with responsibility for the care of children, youth, and vulnerable adults to report all cases of abuse they observe, and further, to report visible signs of alleged abuse. Failure to report could lead to liability on the part of the church, the observer or both. First United Methodist Church of Missoula has determined that it is the responsibility of all compensated or volunteer workers to report all cases of abuse or suspected child abuse to the proper legal authorities. It is also recognized that while the confidentiality of the minister/parishioner relationship is very important,

reporting reasonable suspicions of child abuse has the potential for helping individuals receive assistance for a problem beyond their control and may prevent further harm to that person or another. Reasonable suspicion is defined for these Safe Gatherings Procedures to mean that there is credible evidence or a discrepant or inconsistent history in explaining suspected abuse. A report based on reasonable suspicion does not require proof that abuse has actually occurred or that the reporter witnessed the incident in question. Reporting is not a determination that abuse has occurred rather it is a request for an assessment of the condition of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS/ACCUSATIONS

Because we believe children, youth, and vulnerable adults are a most important concern, First United Methodist Church of Missoula has adopted the following guidelines for responding to abuse or suspected abuse:

Upon observing or suspecting abuse, the compensated or volunteer worker should immediately make certain the person's safety and comfort are secured and make certain the suspected abusive individual is safely isolated from the person.

Report the abuse or suspected abuse promptly to the Pastor or other member of the Program Staff.

Confidentiality is very important in reporting cases of abuse or suspected abuse and any incident is to be discussed with the appropriate Program Staff member and the Pastor ONLY. The exception would be if the Pastor is the accused - allegations of abuse or suspected abuse are immediately reported to local law enforcement for investigation. After having reported the abuse or suspected abuse, the incident is to be reported immediately to the District Superintendent by the Administrative Staff of the church. The District Superintendent will report the allegation(s) to the Bishop's office. Do not try to handle this without professional outside assistance.

MEDIA RESPONSE

The Pastor or media relations spokesperson will be the only official spokesperson of First United Methodist Church of Missoula in the event of an incident of child abuse or alleged child abuse. The media relations person will be appointed by the Safe Gatherings team comprised of a delegate from SPRC, Church Council, Trustees, and the Pastor to work in conjunction with the Pastor on all media relations. The Pastor or media relations person will provide all necessary information to the media, using the suggested response that follows. In the case of the Pastor being the accused, the media relations person will respond to the media in the same suggested manner.

SUGGESTED WRITTEN AND/OR VERBAL MEDIA RESPONSE

"We here at First United Methodist Church of Missoula are saddened by the allegation(s) that have been brought. We have attempted to create an environment here that is welcoming and safe; to provide a place where all persons might learn of the Good News in Jesus Christ. We do this by
List specific areas that relate to the allegation(s).

We are cooperating fully with local officials who are investigating this incident. Our Bishop has been notified, and an investigation will also be conducted through that office. If you desire more information, we will help you get in touch with our Bishop. As we learn more we will be forthcoming with all the information. Thank You."

MAINTAINING SAFE GATHERINGS DOCUMENTATION

FUMC will process and keep on file a copy of all documentation, as required by this manual, for each person screened and interviewed as a paid or volunteer worker with children/youth/vulnerable adults, unless specifically requested to be sent for processing to the Mountain Sky United Methodist Church Conference Office. The Conference Office is located at 6110 Greenwood Plaza Blvd., Greenwood, Colorado 80111. No information will be given about any person without the proper release form.

IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND PHONE NUMBERS

MONTANA DIVISION OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES
TOLL-FREE HOTLINE - HELENA
1-866-820-5437

Department of Child & Family Services	Missoula County	406-523-4100
District Superintendent's Office	Great Falls, MT	406-315-8122
Rev. John Daniels	Missoula, MT	406-396-8966
First United Methodist Church	Missoula, MT	406-549-6118
Mountain Sky Conference Office	Greenwood, CO	303-733-3736
Missoula Police Department	Missoula, MT	406-552-6300

COMPLIANCE WITH SAFE GATHERINGS POLICY AND PROCEDURES

The Safe Gatherings Policy and Procedures Manual for First United Methodist Church will be kept on file in the church office. Copies will be available in the church office, upon request to any member or visitor of First United Methodist Church of Missoula.

All compensated and volunteer workers involved in areas of ministry to children, youth, and vulnerable adults will complete documentation and participate in a training/orientation session as required by the Procedures, no later than three (3) months from the date on which these Procedures are adopted by the Administrative Council of FUMC. Failure to complete initial documentation and training to maintain a current Safe Gatherings credential will result in disqualification to serve and will place compensated workers on unpaid leave until all items are completed.

Safe Gatherings Procedures will affect any individual desiring to work in church ministry areas that involve children, youth, and vulnerable adults regardless of the time in service already spent by said individual in these areas.

Adopted (date) 7/7/2020

Signatures -- Church Representatives:

Cheryl A. Bauer
SPRC Chairperson

Keith S. Ball
Administrative Council Chairperson

J. Bauer
Trustee Chairperson

John F. Daniels
Pastor

APPENDIX I

Date:

This Parental Consent Form gives permission for my child to participate in an activity and/or event sponsored by the First United Methodist Church, Mountain Sky Conference, The United Methodist Church.
(All portions of this form shall be completed for registration).

Name of student _____ Telephone _____

Address _____

I give permission for my student _____ to attend and participate in
(full name of child)

ALL youth activities and/or events from _____ through _____, including but not limited to those activities and/or events requiring off-site transportation.

My child has the following physical condition that may require special attention:

() Diabetes () Hyperventilation () Convulsions () Seizures () Allergies

() Special Dietary Needs (please specify) _____

() Other (please specify) _____

Does your child require any medications, special accommodations or have special accessibility needs?

Explain _____

(A counselor or youth staff member will contact you to discuss these needs.)

Medical Treatment Release, Liability Release, and Photograph Release

I hereby authorize event staff to obtain and give consent for medical treatment for my child for such injury or illness that may occur during the event and hereby hold the event staff and their representatives harmless in the exercise of this authority.

I give permission for my child to be transported in vehicles operated by the adults in whose care the minor has been entrusted while attending and participating in this event.

It is my understanding that the above-named participant will be covered by my personal medical insurance. The event provides limited/supplemental medical payment coverage for injuries arising out of the event activities which is payable in excess of any other collectible insurance. Payments of any medical injuries not covered by my insurance or the event limited/supplemental medical insurance will be paid by me.

I give permission for photographs of my child taken during the trip to be used at the discretion of the First United Methodist Church and its children & youth ministries leadership wherever deemed appropriate.

Name of parent/guardian (please print) _____

Signature of parent/guardian _____ Date _____

Telephone: Home _____ Office/Cell _____

Medical Insurance Carrier _____ Group No. _____

Email Address _____