**Bethlehem Stonepile United Methodist Church**

**Safe Sanctuaries Policy**

**Revision 7, Dated 11/2/17 (Blue highlights changes in 2017)**

**Introduction:**

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. The adopted resolution calls all churches to welcome the children and also to make our churches safe places for children to grow and learn. It is our responsibility to be proactive in our recruiting and training to find people with a gift for caring for children, to protect those volunteers from false accusations, to oversee all programs involving children to make sure there is a safe environment, and to have a plan of response in place should an accusation arise. The General Conference resolution affirmed that every local church shall have in place a policy for protecting children.

**Purpose:**

Bethlehem Stonepile United Methodist Church’s purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuaries Policy and accompanying procedures are to demonstrate our absolute unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of our children and to provide the necessary protection for our staff and volunteers in Children’s and Youth Ministries.

**Statement of Covenant:**

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children and youth, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers and we will be responsible in overseeing our programs, events and in training our staff, so that they are able and equipped to minister to children in Jesus’ name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience, and we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the accused perpetrator.

Therefore, no adult who has been convicted of child abuse should volunteer to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity. Any adult survivor of child abuse who desires to work with children or youth is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with the pastor before accepting an assignment.

 **1.) Procedures:**

Implementation of the following procedures, at a minimum, will ensure compliance with this policy.

* Screening and Selection
1. All new workers with children and youth (paid and volunteer) must complete an application. (Attachment #1)
2. All applicants must demonstrate an active relationship with the church for at least six months before being allowed to be in a supervisory role in children/youth and vulnerable adult activities.
3. All new workers will be interviewed per established Interview Guidelines (Attachment #2) interviews for

paid persons will be conducted by the PPRC. Volunteers will be interviewed by members of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee.

1. Applicants will be provided with a copy of the current Safe Sanctuaries Policy. The highlights of the policy will be reviewed with them at the interview, questions will be answered and the applicant will be required to sign a covenant agreeing to follow the policy (Attachment # 8)
2. All current workers will complete an information sheet in place of the application and interview process. (Attachment #3)
3. Returning workers (those who left the church for a period of time and now wish to resume their role with children/youth) will be required to complete the application and interview process as a new applicant. Criminal, Child Abuse checks and the Affidavit will need to be renewed whether or not the 5 years required have expired.
4. Returning workers (those who have not left the church, but have taken a break from children/youth ministry) will be required to update their current forms from their file and be required to update their Criminal, Child Abuse forms and Affidavit if the 5 year requirement has expired.
5. All Employees, 14 years of age or older, must obtain all of the following: Pennsylvania Criminal Background Check, Certification from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and Federal Criminal History report from the FBI which shall include submission of the individual’s fingerprints to the Pennsylvania State Police. All costs associated with obtaining these clearances will be paid by the church and rechecked every 5 years. The administrative process to obtain these clearances will be performed by the Program Coordinator or Church Secretary
6. All Volunteers, 18 years of age or older, must obtain all of the following: Pennsylvania Criminal Background Check, Certification from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services and Federal Criminal History report from the FBI which shall include submission of the individual’s fingerprints to the Pennsylvania State Police. HOWEVER only the Pennsylvania Criminal Background Check and the Certification from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services will be required for a volunteer if the following 3 conditions apply:

a. The volunteer position is in fact unpaid

b. The volunteer has been a Pennsylvania resident for a period of no less than 10 years immediately prior to the application for a volunteer position; and

c. The volunteer swears or affirms in writing that he/she is not disqualified from service under the provisions of the law. (Attachment #12)

All costs associated with obtaining these clearances will be paid by the church and rechecked every 5 years. The administrative process to obtain these clearances will be performed by the Program Coordinator or Church Secretary

1. All workers responsible for transporting children or youth for any ministry must be 25 years or older and complete an Interstate Motor Vehicle Record Check. Clearance will be paid for and processed by the church, housed in the Charge Office and will be rechecked every 5 years.
2. All screening and selection documentation shall be maintained in a separate confidential file by the Program Coordinator or Church Secretary for the life of the church.

2.)**Supervision**

1. There shall be at least 2 safe sanctuaries cleared adults in each classroom. These adults must be unrelated to each other.

1. Acceptable Alternatives to this rule are as follows:

a/A responsible safe sanctuaries cleared adult is available to serve as a “roamer” to periodically check the locations of children and youth programming where there is one safe sanctuaries cleared adult working.

b/The door to the room in which an activity is held remains open providing any passerby with visual and physical access to all areas. If the door is not open, it must have a window large enough to view all areas of the room where a safe sanctuaries cleared adult is working.

c/Youth over the age of 13 years may be permitted to assist in a classroom with a safe sanctuaries cleared volunteer. They should be 5 years older than the children they are assisting. It is also recommended that they complete a babysitter’s course (Red Cross or Safe Sitters) and that they complete the youth application (Attachment #9), go through the interview process (Attachment #2) and sign a covenant agreeing to follow the Safe Sanctuaries Policy (Attachment #8).

1. No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 5 years older than the oldest student.
2. No person under 18 years of age shall be considered as one of the 2 supervising adults.
3. Staff and volunteers will receive an annual review of this policy through meetings or mail/email correspondence and at this time will again sign a covenant agreeing to follow the policies set forth (Attachment #8).
4. Periodic trainings may be available to address the needs of the staff/volunteers (CPR, Discipline, etc) and information will be available to staff/volunteers on recognizing the signs of child abuse.
5. An official Safe Sanctuaries Training (offered by the Conference) will be required of every volunteer/staff member one time every 5 years
6. Registration materials for activities in which children and youth are off site will require a signed permission slip (Attachment #6). For activities (like Sunday school, on site parties and youth events) where children are outside the direct supervision of their parents/guardians but on site, staff/volunteers will make additional efforts to have a completed Student Information Sheet (Attachment #4) and a signed acknowledgement of the Discipline Policy (Attachment #5) on file.

 2. **Additional information pertaining to off site activities**

 a./ Upon leaving our site, the person in charge will ensure that the following has been done:

* A copy of the sign in sheet for the activity and a designation of the driver of each vehicle and the children/youth in that vehicle will be left at the church.
* Each driver has a file with all permission slips of participants in their vehicle
* If the two adult rule is not feasible, drivers will make reasonable effort not to transport less than two participants at a time. Seatbelts must be worn by all occupants. Each vehicle should have a first aid kit. Drivers should practice safe driving procedures (obeying speed limits and regulations). The event’s coordinator should provide the necessary maps, directions, phone numbers for each driver should an emergency arise.
* Adult coordinators will attempt to secure at least one adult with current CPR certification for each trip or event. All adult leaders should be aware of who that person is.
* Overnight events attended by both genders will be adequately chaperoned with cleared male/female volunteers/staff.

3. Additional precautions followed:

 a./ There will be separate sleeping areas for male and female

 participants

 b./ At least one adult will be present in each sleeping area and will be

 the same gender as the child/youth.

 c./ Random rounds may be conducted by two adult leaders (of the

 opposite sex) throughout the nighttime sleeping hours.

 d./ Separate shower facilities are encouraged. When this is not

 possible, a schedule for bathroom and shower use must be

 established and communicated to all participants.

 e./Participants found to be in violation of the above procedures will be

 addressed immediately and may be required to leave the event.

 f./Adult leaders must also respect the privacy of youth (and youth the

 adult’s privacy) and should only intrude to the extent that health or

 safety may require.

4. All medications and medication instructions shall be given to a

 designated adult prior to overnight trips for disbursement as appropriate

 (exception epi-pens and inhalers may be carried by

 child/youth with the understanding that they will be secured and out of

 sight unless needed—leaders must be made aware that these are being

 carried)

 **5. Additional information pertaining to on site activities:**

 a./Accurate participation records will be maintained for all activities

 and events involving children/youth outside the direct supervision of

 their parents (Sunday school, parties, youth fellowship, etc.) by the

 staff/volunteer supervising the event.

 b./ These records will indicate the name of the event and all persons in

 attendance, both the children and leaders/helpers, and the date of

 The activity.

**\*All records for both off site and on site activities will be housed in the charge office for the life of the church.**

1. Parents are encouraged to change infants and to see that all children who plan to stay for Sunday school/Children’s Church use the restrooms between services. In the event a child in the nursery needs changed, there will be 2 persons present at all times. In the event a child in preschool/Children’s Church needs to use the restroom, the child will use the restroom while the door adjoining the restroom and classroom is left ajar. If the child requires assistance, one teacher will assist while the same door remains ajar. Children in elementary grades and older will ask permission to use the restroom and while the teacher/helper stands in the classroom doorway watching the child/youth go and return, the child/youth will use the single restroom designated for men/handicapped in the children’s wing or the single units for men/women in the youth wing.
2. In the event that child care services are not offered for a church sponsored event, the parent or guardian shall be fully responsible for the supervision of the child/youth during the event.
3. Responsibilities of supervising adult volunteers/staff:

 1. Persons working with children and youth are expected to conduct themselves as role models. Therefore:

 a./ Respectful and positive language and attitudes are required at all times.

 b./ Volunteers/staff must conduct themselves in a responsible and non-

 threatening manner so that a safe and positive environment is provided

 for all parties involved.

 c./ In the event a leader needs to meet privately with a youth, the leader

 will ensure that he/she and the individual are visible to others while

 talking even though they may not be heard.

 d./ Adult volunteers/staff will use discretion when receiving sensitive

 information from a child/youth (whether by text, email or in person)

 and will notify the child/youth that they must share any information of a

 serious matter with the parent/guardian or the proper authorities.

2. Failure to meet these expectations shall result in the following steps:

 a./ A private discussion with the leader of the activity

 b./ A written warning to be kept on file (will include a third party present)

 c./The volunteer will be required to step down from the present position.

 d./The Safe Sanctuaries Committee, PPRC or Pastor reserve the right to by-

 pass steps 1 and 2 above and require immediate termination if deemed

 necessary.

3. Grievances against the above actions can be brought to the Safe Sanctuaries

 Committee for volunteers or to the PPRC for paid staff, at any point in this

 process.

**3) Facility Use by Outside Organizations**

A. Upon the request of an outside organization that works with children/youth to use

 our facility, a Facility Use Agreement with a copy of our Safe Sanctuaries

 Agreement attached will be sent by the Charge Secretary.

B. Leaders of these groups will be required to read this policy and sign a User

 Agreement stating that they will either comply with our current Safe Sanctuaries

 Policy or they will supply a copy of their own policy which is substantially similar

 in practice and effect to this one.

**4) Cyber Safety**

 A. Photos

1. Permission slips/registration materials for each on site or off site activity for

 which children are outside of the direct supervision of their parents will include

 a photo waiver on which the parent/guardian must indicate their desires

 regarding the posting of their child/youth photos on the Charge Facebook

 account or website.

 2. Failure to answer this question will be used as a negative response and photos

 will not be posted.

 3. Photos posted by the Charge Office will not be tagged and names will not be

 attached.

 B. Messaging

1. Permission is needed from the parents/guardians for their child/youth to receive

 text, Facebook or email messages from adult ministry leaders.

2. Adult leaders will use discretion in the information they send (not including

 names of participants, using the Bcc option when emailing)

 C. Internet Use

1. Web filtering and/or parental control software must be installed and active on

 all church-owned devices with Internet access. (The Sound Board and Office

 Computers are exceptions)

2. Any child, youth or church attendee who is granted access to the Internet on any

 church-owned device will be made aware that their activities can and will be

 monitored by use of web filtering software and/or parental controls.

**5.) Incident Reporting Process as mandated by law**

A. Upon receiving information of abuse, the employee or volunteer will immediately

report the incident to Childline (1-800-932-0313 or at [www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis](http://www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis)) See Attachment 7 for assistance in what information may be needed and who to contact. NOTE: even if all of the information requested is not available, a report must be made with the information currently available.

B. A written report must also be made using Form CY-47 (Attachment #11) and submitted to York County Children and Youth Services (846-8496) within 48 hours of your oral report to Childline.

C. The Pastor or Director of the Activity will be notified immediately (and if

 immediately available, may assist the employee/volunteer in making and completing

 the above reports.)

 D. The parents of the victim will be notified.

E. If alleged abuse occurred on church property by church volunteers or staff, he/she

 shall immediately be removed from contact with children until the incident report has

 been resolved. This should be handled in a discreet manner and he/she shall not be

 banned from other church ministries.

F. The Pastor or Director of the activity shall then follow up with Childline (1-800-932-

 0313) within in 48 hours to ensure the report was made.

G. In many cases, further cooperation by the reporting party may be required to aid in a thorough and timely investigation with the proper authorities.

**6.) Responding to Allegations**

A. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse will be initiated. All allegations (those said to have occurred by personnel within the church or by those outside the church) will be taken seriously. Nothing will be covered up.

B. The Lead Pastor, his designee or the Conference Director of Communications shall be the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to him/her. (Sean @ 717-586-9223)

C. The District Superintendent (755-8863) shall be notified of every allegation.

D. Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident.

E. All documentation shall be maintained in a separate, confidential file by the church secretary or Conference Camp and Retreat Ministry Office.