

## **Child and Youth Protection Policy of Christ United Methodist Church**

### **Introduction**

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church's resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church includes the following statement:

Jesus said, *"Whoever welcomes a child... welcomes me"* (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and 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. 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... (*Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church*, 2000 pp.180-181)

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, Christ United Methodist Church in Algonquin, IL adopts this policy for the prevention of child abuse, and the abuse of youth.

### **Purpose**

Our congregations' purpose for establishing this Child and Youth Protection 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**

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 nurturing of all our children and youth, as well as the safety and spiritual nurturing of those persons who work with children and youth.

1. We follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers.
2. We implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events.

3. We educate our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods, including first aid and methods of discipline.
4. We have clearly defined procedures for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of the State of Illinois. Our volunteers and paid staff are instructed to report all suspected incidents of abuse.
5. We prepare to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.
6. We inform parents of our policies, provide training for our teachers and other workers with children and youth, and provide forums for learning concerning these issues for our congregation, parents, teachers, and other children and youth workers.

## **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).*

## **Procedures**

1. At least two adults in every classroom whenever possible and preferably the two adults are unrelated and do not live in the same household. An adult will float between rooms when two adults are not available.
2. Youth volunteers with children are to be paired with an adult.
3. Doors are to be left open or have a window. Windows are to remain unobstructed.
4. A volunteer for children and youth must be an active participant of Christ United Methodist Church for at least 6 months.
5. Evacuation procedures are posted in the room and attendance folders.
6. Parents or guardians must pick-up children in the designated meeting room unless the parent or guardian has made specific arrangements in advance.
7. Adult volunteers will be subject to a background check before being put on the volunteer list. Checks are good for three years. All volunteers must complete Safe Sanctuary Training every three years.
8. Drivers for children and youth events must be at least 25 and have a valid state drivers license and insurance in addition to the preceding procedures.
9. Pictures or videos (including streaming worship) of children participating in church activities may be posted in the church only if a registration card with the parents' permission is on file with the Coordinator of Children and Youth Ministries.
10. Pictures of children participating in church activities for posting outside the church must first be approved by the Coordinator of Children and Family Ministries.