

**The Safe Sanctuaries Policy**  
of  
**Second United Methodist Church**  
**Millville, New Jersey**

- **The Committee recommends that this policy take effect January 1, 2005.**
- **A committee to be appointed by Church Council will review the policy annually for relevancy.**
- **All those who work in ministry with youth, children or vulnerable adults, whether paid or volunteer, will be required to attend an initial training session to make sure everyone is familiar with and understands the policy. In addition to those who are required to attend the class, the committee is urging all interested church members to attend. Thereafter, there will be an annual training session for review of the policy.**
- **The committee is deferring to Church Council the decision of appointing the person/persons who will teach the training session.**

**Committee Members:**

Pastor Jim

June Cobb – Education Chair

Shirley Boyd – Nursery Supervisor

Jean Singer – Jr. Fellowship Director

Judy Lutz – Children’s Music Coordinator/Church Office Manager

Chuck Thornley – Youth Director

Keith Thomas – Lay Leader

PART 1

**Specialized Ministries with Children and Vulnerable Adults**

**Personnel policies for all church programs shall require:**

For lay volunteers:

A screening form is to be used for all lay volunteer leaders in such programs.

This policy shall take effect January 1, 2005. Persons serving as volunteers prior to the effective date shall be “grandfathered in” and not be required to complete the screening form.

Volunteer leaders shall have been regular attendees of Second United Methodist Church before being allowed to supervise such programs.

Volunteers who are new to the church shall provide a pastoral reference to be included on the screening form. If the volunteer is a new Christian who cannot provide a pastoral reference, he or she will volunteer under supervision for 6 months.

For all paid staff

A screening form and application will be required of all applicants for the position. Once a candidate is selected, a criminal background check will be completed and employment will be contingent upon the results of the background check. The cost of the background check will be split between the employee and Second United Methodist Church. (suggested by Pastor Jim)

It is understood by Second United Methodist Church that since 1992, all new clergy have been required by the Conference to undergo both psychological testing and a criminal background check before being appointed.

Screening forms and background checks:

Shall be reviewed by the Chairperson of the PPSR Committee, the supervisor of the prospective employee and the pastor.

Shall be kept in the confidential personnel files of the church before, during and after termination of employment.

Pastoral references will be investigated by the pastor of Second United Methodist Church and kept in the confidential personnel files of the church.

**Program Policies:**

For every youth or children’s program, including Sunday School, there shall be at least 2 adults in attendance. If there are more than 12 children, there shall be 1 adult for every 6 additional children. If there are more than 20 youth, there shall be 1 adult for every 10 additional youths.

Children age 5 or under will only be dismissed from the program into the care of an adult who is the parent or who has the known permission of the parents to take the child.  
Youth advisors shall be at least 4 years older than the oldest youth.

Teens aged 14 and up may be used as additional volunteers to work with children but may not be used *in place of* an adult.

All classrooms should have an “open-door” policy, or have a window in the door.

## **Definition of Terms:**

**Adults:** Persons 18 years old or older.

**Youth:** Children age 12 through 18

**Vulnerable Adults:** Those adults with diminished physical, mental or emotional capacities.

**Screening Forms:** screening forms for use with volunteers are designed to assist the local church in gaining information on persons who are applicants for working in the church programs with children, youth and vulnerable adults. Their use is designed to enhance the protection of those who participate in the programs.

**Background Checks:** As with screening forms, background checks are designed to protect those individuals involved in the programs offered by the church to children, youth and vulnerable adults.

**Church Programs (as related to insurance):** Programs relating to children, youth and vulnerable adults are covered under the conference-wide Property and Casualty Insurance Program so long as they are church operated. That is, Second United Methodist Church must have control over starting and stopping the operation, hiring or firing the employees, and the management of the day-to-day operations. The decision to operate a program, as described above, should be a matter of record in the meeting minutes of the Church Council or Board of Trustees of Second United Methodist Church. This will lay to rest the question of whether it is a church operated program or a non-church program that is using the church premises, since non-church programs are not covered under conference insurance and need to be covered separately.

**Basic Standards Assumed:** The following are basic assumptions made as they relate to local church programs for children, youth and vulnerable adults.

All buildings in which such programs are housed shall have any necessary “certificates of occupancy.”

All groups conducting such programs shall have the necessary certificates of insurance for both liability and workers compensation. They shall be displayed as required by law.

All such programs shall conform to Federal and New Jersey wage and tax laws for employees.

## PART 2

### **Second United Methodist Church Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Abuse and/or Harassment**

#### **Context:**

For the purpose of this policy, we will use “clergy” or “clergyperson” to refer to all ordained, commissioned, consecrated, and licensed persons in ministry. For the purpose of this policy, the term “lay worker” shall be used to refer to any other person who is providing a ministry service for or in the name of Second United Methodist Church, whether that ministry be paid or unpaid.

#### **Purpose:**

Any person who is providing a ministry in the name of Jesus Christ is understood to be in a position of trust, power, and responsibility. This provides the opportunity for unique relationships of grace and caring. While most lay workers remain faithful to their Christian calling and their covenant with God and the church, there are a few who sometimes violate the trust given them. Sexual misconduct is one grave violation of this trust. This policy seeks to address the abuse of power by all lay workers who engage in sexual misconduct, abuse and/or sexual harassment.

Incidents of sexual misconduct, abuse, and/or harassment have been reported in United Methodist Churches, agencies and institutions. It is both the ethical and legal responsibility of Second United Methodist Church to ensure that there are mechanisms for addressing grievances in these matters. The intent of this document is to provide guidance to both laity and clergy of Second United Methodist Church regarding sexual misconduct, abuse, and/or harassment by lay workers. It is our hope, as the people of Christ, that this policy will help serve to guard against inappropriate behavior and be a guide for our community of faith as we seek to handle grievances should sexual misconduct, abuse, and/or harassment occur.

#### **Theological Foundation:**

All persons are created by God. In the Genesis stories, as in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is affirmed that we are created in the image and likeness of God. God values human life, intending all women, men, and children to have worth and dignity in all relationships with God and others. God calls us into covenant with each other as children of God and as the body of Christ. The scriptures remind us that Jesus was sent into this world that we might experience whole relationships with each other and God. “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28 RSV)

We affirm that our human bodies are good gifts from God and our sexuality is an integral part of our humanity. Healthy sexuality, within the sanctity of marriage between a male and a female, and appropriate expressions of it, are derived from the goodness of the gift. As children of God, we are holy in Christ and created equal. Where one is injured, physically, emotionally or spiritually, all are rendered less than God’s intended wholeness. Sexual misconduct, abuse, and/or harassment is an exploitation of power and abuse of position that uses sexuality as an excuse and distorts the relationships and blessedness of relationships and the upbuilding which God desires for humanity. It is sinful behavior.

One who repents for sinful behavior is promised forgiveness. However, discipline should be distinguished from forgiveness. The church must still take steps to protect the people of God.

## **Definitions:**

***Sexual Misconduct:*** It is sexual misconduct when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader or other position of leadership) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, co-worker, or volunteer within the ministerial relationship. (The 1996 Book of Resolutions, pp. 128-132)

Examples of ministerial relationships:

- Pastor/member of church
- Supervisor/church employee
- Youth pastor/youth
- Sunday School teacher/student
- Pastor/student intern
- Pastoral counselor/counseled

Examples of sexualized behavior or sexual contact:

- Displaying sexually suggestive visuals
- Making sexual comments or innuendos about one's own or another person's body
- Touching another's body, hair or clothing
- Touching or rubbing oneself sexually in the presence of another person
- Kissing, fondling, sexual intercourse

This understanding is equally applicable in the context of ministries in which there are no "parishioners" but there is a community which acknowledges the authority of the clergy person or lay worker as a spiritual leader or other ministries in which the ministering person serves a community much wider than the membership of the local congregation.

At the core of this definition of sexual misconduct is the abuse of power and trust that occurs when a ministering person initiates or allows sexual behavior with someone who is in a relationship of trust and/or dependence. Sexual misconduct breaks a sacred trust. Any such sexual misconduct is a violation by the ministering person who then bears the responsibility for his/her behavior.

***Sexual harassment:*** Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from the discrimination on the basis of gender. (Paragraph 65.1, the 1996 Book of Discipline)

Suggested guidelines for determining hostile environment:

- Is the behavior sexual in nature or gender specific?
- Is the behavior unwelcome?
- Is the behavior severe or pervasive enough so that it creates an environment which interferes with one's ability to work, get an education, or participate in ministry?

Sexual harassment also includes the development or attempted development of a sexual or romantic relationship between a clergy person or lay worker and a person with whom he/she has a ministerial relationship, when that is an unwanted or inappropriate relationship.

**Sexual abuse:** Sexual abuse is a sexual invasion of the body by force. Sexual abuse may be rape, sexual assault, incest, indecent exposure, statutory rape, indecent assault, and aggravated indecent assault. Sexual abuse is also an internal assault, a deliberate violation of emotional integrity, a hostile, degrading act of violence.

### **Standards for Clergy Conduct:**

1. Clergy related to the Annual Conference are always accountable for the ways they respond to persons who ask their ministerial assistance and over whom they have authority. Any breach of this ministerial relationship, ministerial responsibility, and ministerial authority is abusive and unethical.
2. Clergy often relate to persons who are fragile and vulnerable, and therefore must exercise special care:
  - That clergy are psychologically, emotionally and spiritually healthy.
  - That there has been proper and adequate preparation and education as well as adequate continuing education for providing appropriate help for those under their care.
  - That they seek counsel, advice and supervision.
3. Clergy sexual misconduct abuse, and/or harassment places an unfair and unavoidable burden on the victim of such conduct. It is in the best interest of the entire church to inform the laity concerning appropriate standards of ministerial conduct.
4. Clergy self-discipline requires self-awareness and takes for a standard of ethics those implied and described in the vows of ordination and consecration. (p301-p365, Book of Discipline, 1996) Personal integrity and mature professional conduct are a part of every ministerial relationship. This prohibits any sexual behavior with a parishioner, colleague, staff, or client entrusted to his or her sacred care.
5. All clergy have the responsibility to developing healthy and ethical relationships with other persons. Married clergy have covenanted to nurture and maintain a faithful marital relationship. The covenant also reminds single clergy that dating relationships must maintain full attention to sexual conduct as understood in Christian teaching and the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church. (p65, Book of Discipline, 1996)
6. When clergy are providing professional pastoral counseling to persons in their church or community, it is understood that they shall keep appropriate standards of professional behavior and boundaries in that relationship. It is also recommended that clergy seek supervision for their counseling by a certified counselor supervisor to ensure that proper counseling relationships are maintained.

### **Standards for the Conduct of Lay Workers in the Church:**

In general, standards for lay workers in the church are reflective of those of clergypersons, with the exception that lay workers are not accountable to, nor under the supervision of the Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Therefore, the Annual Conference can in no way be held responsible for the actions of a lay worker hired for a particular work of ministry in any local church. Lay workers, like clergy, are expected to lead with an exemplary Christian life and healthy and ethical human relations.

### **Standards for the Conduct of Laity:**

Within the United Methodist connection, laypersons are also called to a standard of conduct which stands against sexual misconduct, abuse and/or harassment as outlined in p65i of the 1996 Discipline. This would include sexual misconduct, abuse and/or harassment against clergypersons or other laity.

### **Honoring Perceptions of Reality:**

We understand that intentions and perceptions are not always the same. It is our policy to treat seriously a person's perception of the truth of their experience if/when sexual harassment, abuse and/or misconduct are reported.

### **Confidentiality:**

The primary purpose of this policy is to encourage and support victims of sexual harassment, abuse and/or misconduct to report such incidents, by providing a process that protects them from intimidation and preserves their dignity. We recognize that there also may be occasions when persons are falsely charged with sexual harassment, abuse and/or misconduct. In either case, it is of the utmost importance that confidentiality be assured for both the victim and the accused, and that advocates, church officials and other who may be involved in the process take every reasonable and legal precaution to honor the issue of confidentiality.

### **Advocates:**

We have advocates to work with those who perceive they have been victimized by clergy sexual misconduct, abuse, and/or harassment and for those who are accused. Names of trained advocates are available at the offices of the Bishop, District Superintendents, and local churches. The role of the advocate is to help a person who perceives that he/she has been victimized by a clergy person to identify the wrongful behavior; contact the proper sources for assistance in stopping the sexual harassment, abuse, and/or misconduct; be present in meetings or interviews concerning the said abuse, harassment, and/or misconduct; and give courage to the person during the process of seeking resolution and healing.

## **Procedures for Reporting and Responding to Complaints of Sexual Misconduct/Abuse/Harassment**

- Persons desiring to report or discuss a concern regarding sexual misconduct, sexual harassment and sexual abuse may contact their pastor, another United Methodist pastor, a District Superintendent, the Bishop or a person trained to function as an Advocate.
- Persons reporting sexual misconduct, abuse, and/or harassment are assured that the process, as outlined in p358 of the 1996 Discipline, will be a confidential one; acknowledging that, in accordance with The Book of Discipline 1996, when a report is made the Bishop and District Superintendents must take action upon such a report.
- The provisions of Paragraphs 2623-2629 of The Book of Discipline 1996 shall determine procedures that will be followed in the case of a complaint.
- When an allegation of sexual abuse is subject to mandatory reporting requirements by the state (as in the case of a minor or adult incapable of self-reporting), it shall be reported to the Bishop and appropriate authorities and agencies.
- Persons approached by persons identifying themselves as victims of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment and/or abuse by persons within the life of the church shall report the complaint to a District Superintendent or the Bishop in a timely manner and with a sense of expediency.
- Persons wishing to review procedures outlined in paragraphs 2623-2629 of the Book of Discipline 1996 shall have access to this material through the office of the District Superintendent, a local United Methodist Church, or Cokesbury Bookstores (United Methodist Publishing House).