

**First Farragut United Methodist Church**  
**Safe Sanctuaries Policy**  
(Approved on 12/13/99, last revised 10/3/19)

**I. Safe Sanctuaries Policy Introduction and Purpose**

In April of 1996, The General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of sexual abuse of youth and children in the church. In 2004, the Holston Annual Conference also adopted a resolution requiring each congregation to develop a Child Abuse Prevention Policy. These adopted resolutions call all churches to welcome children and youth, and to make our churches a safe place for them to learn and grow in their faith. Jesus said “Whoever welcomes a child... welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to everyone who enters our doors. The United Methodist Church specifically states the “children must be protected...” Thus in covenant with the United Methodist Church we adopt this policy to maximize the prevention of abuse in our church.

First Farragut United Methodist Church’s purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuaries Policy is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety, mental well-being and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth.

Groups chartered by First Farragut United Methodist Church shall follow their own children and youth protection policies. Groups using our facilities shall be furnished a copy of this Safe Sanctuaries Policy and required to follow it unless they have their own policy.

**II. Statement of Covenant**

Children and youth are our present and our future, our hope, our teacher, and our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the Church and the realm of God. 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 educate all volunteers in regard to policies, procedures and methods; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting suspected incidents of abuse as defined by state law.

This congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child and youth are surrounded by steadfast love. The creation of this safe and secure environment is of utmost importance. Our policies not only protect the children and youth who enter our church, but also protect staff and volunteers who host those children and youth, as well as protecting our church.

**III. Screening of Employees/Volunteers**

Once a children’s/youth volunteer or paid worker has been selected, he/she must complete and sign the Participation Covenant Statement. The Participation Covenant Statement and any accompanying records will be maintained by the Director of Children and Family Ministries or the Financial Administrator in a locked file cabinet.

- Criminal background checks and reference checks should be completed on all employed workers 18 years old and older with background checks to be repeated every 5 years.
- Criminal background checks and approval by ministry staff should be given (which could include an interview) for all **certified volunteers** working directly with children/youth.

- Criminal background checks are not required for **approved volunteers**. These volunteers still require ministry staff approval and must fill out a Participation Covenant Statement. They are **NEVER** to be left with children/youth without a certified volunteer or staff member present.

Prior to the beginning of work as a volunteer or paid staff with children or youth, each individual should complete Safe Sanctuaries training. Completion of this training will be documented and kept with other documentation regarding position.

#### IV. Procedures and Policies for Working with Children and Youth

The following are the minimum standards for our children and youth ministries:

1. *The Two Adult Policy*: No fewer than two adults shall be present with any children or youth during any church sponsored program, event or ministry. Married couples may serve together, but count as one adult and an additional adult is required to meet the Two Adult Rule. If a second adult is not available during times of major use at the church (Sunday school, Sunday nights), the classroom door should remain open and an adult may “float” in the area. However, the adult inside the classroom **MUST** be either paid staff or a certified volunteer. Two adults, one of whom must be 21 years or older, are required for all trips and outings.

When situations require personal conferences, meetings should be conducted in view of other adults, children or youth, or in a public place.

Specific bathroom procedures vary according to age and ministry. (See Policy 5)

2. *Age Limit Policy*: Volunteers must be at least five years older than the group with which they are to work; except workers with senior high youth who must be at least 20 years old. This rule shall not prevent persons who do not meet this from participating in events, trip or outings, as long as other policies are met (ex: junior chaperone position).

At least one volunteer/paid worker/floater in each nursery, preschool or children’s area must be eighteen or older. Teen helpers who are in senior high or older may serve as an adult in *The Two Adult Policy* for children’s ministry only. No elementary children will be allowed in the nursery or preschool areas unless they are children of the employee or have been approved by the ministry staff to serve in a junior volunteer capacity.

All student workers will be complete student screening forms, the student helper covenant, and all required training.

3. *Three Month Hospitality Policy*: All children and youth volunteers must demonstrate an active relationship with this church for at least three (3) months before being allowed to supervise children and youth. An active relationship with this church means regularly attending worship, Sunday school or other church events multiple times during that three month period.

Exception from the three month rule may be provided if the persons transferring from another United Methodist Church where they have previously received Safe Sanctuary training and have a written recommendation from the pastor or youth/children's director of their former church.

4. *Open Door Policy:* Most of our classrooms have windows in them, so that passersby can observe inside. However, the ones that don't should keep their door slightly opened when children or youth are present.
5. *Bathroom Policy:* Every effort will be made to avoid a situation where one adult and one child are alone in the bathroom together. When using off site areas or shared adult bathrooms, the responsible adult needs to enter the bathroom and make sure it is completely empty before allowing the child to go in. The following are suggested guidelines to help ensure bathroom safety:
  - For children birth through age three (3) paid nursery workers shall be responsible for diaper changes and shall follow the diaper changing policy posted in the nursery area.
  - Potty training children will be accompanied to the restroom and when necessary the adult may assist but the door must remain open and a second adult should be nearby.
  - Parents should be reminded to take their children to the restroom before being dropped off. However, should a child need to use the bathroom during an activity, one volunteer may escort the child to the bathroom and remain outside in the hallway.
6. *Parental Permission Policy:* All children and youth require written permission for off-site event participation.
7. *Release of Children and Youth Policy:* Children and youth will only be released to authorized and properly identified adults. When acceptable the Director of Youth Ministries can release youth on their own or with who they arrived when given adult permission.
8. *Photographing Children and Youth Policy:* Parents may give permission for their children and youth to be photographed and videotaped when they fill out annual medical/participation forms. No identifying names shall be displayed at the church, on the church website, or other social media (this includes a "no-tagging" rule for children or youth on church sites). Parents should not post pictures of children in church-sponsored activities, without proper permission, on their personal sites. Parents are not required to give permission for their children to be photographed in order to participate in programs.
9. *Church Sponsored Website/Social Media Policy:* Church-authorized social networking, blogging, and web sites are used to convey information about First Farragut UMC, communicate with members and fulfill the church's mission. These sites must have more than one staff member or church-designated volunteer serving as authorized administrator and should monitor the site regularly.

When communicating through social media, First Farragut UMC should ensure that content is appropriate at all times, reflecting the church's Christian identity and values. The publication of confidential information is prohibited and any content deemed inappropriate will be deleted.

Church staff shall not "friend" (or any site equivalent) any child under the age of 13 or the minimum age required by the social networking site. Volunteers are discouraged from

communicating via social media with anyone under the age of 18 except through church-sponsored social media sites, pages or groups. (For example, volunteers “friending” minors on Facebook is discouraged).

10. *Appropriate Standards of Behavior* – It is the desire of this congregation that children and adults are protected not only physically but emotionally while in a relationship with First Farragut United Methodist Church. Therefore, all persons who work with children and youth are expected to guard their language, attitudes and behaviors so that children and youth are protected from any form of prejudice (race, gender or ethnicity), inappropriate or profane language, or other behavior that demeans the value and worth of an individual.

#### **V. Implementing of the Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures**

To ensure proper implementation of this Safe Sanctuary Policy, First Farragut UMC will adhere to the following procedures:

1. There will be an annual orientation for volunteer workers, staff and parents regarding the Safe Sanctuaries Policy. Parents of children and youth should receive a brief statement of the policy, including guidelines (check-in procedures, medical forms, disciplines policy, and other parent handouts). This information should be a part of the visitor packets, ministry handbooks and information given to new members. A supplemental training may be offered for any volunteer or employee who cannot make the annual training at the discretion of the Director of Children and Family Ministries, the Director of Youth Ministries or the Senior Pastor.
2. Information about annual First Aid/CPR training for FFUMC Nursery Staff shall be given to all volunteers and they will be invited to participate at their own costs. First aid kits will be available in each ministry area. Program staff shall maintain First Aid and CPR certification as well as any additional training available to better ensure the safety of our children and youth.
3. When any incident involving a child or youth occurs resulting in an injury or has the potential for serious injury, the lead adult should complete an Accident Report Form, alert the parents or guardians and inform the appropriate staff.
4. Other serious incidents, excluding abuse, should be documented on an Incident Report Form. (This could include, but is not limited to, instances of fighting, biting, alcohol or drug abuse, etc.) Incident reports shall remain on file for 18 months and then be destroyed.
5. This Safe Sanctuaries Policy should be reviewed each year and changes should be approved by Church Council no later than August.

#### **VI. Responding to Allegations of Abuse**

How an adult responds to a child when he or she discloses abuse information can influence the amount of victimization. By maintaining an apparent calm, the adults can help create a safe space for the child. The adult should reassure the child of concern and tell the child that help will be sought. Allegations must be told to the proper authorities but the child should be reassured that confidentiality is a priority.

**It is very important that no one besides the proper authorities, (and if applicable the Senior Pastor, the Director of Children and Family Ministries, the Director of Youth Ministries, or the Lay Leader) be**

**told about the allegations. If the allegations cannot be substantiated, one can be sued for defamation of character.**

Tennessee Child Abuse Reporting Requirements state that:

"Mandatory reporters are legally required to report known or reasonable suspected cases of child abuse, and they face criminal penalties for failing to do so... if acting in good faith, the person makes a report of harm, as required by the reporting laws, then the person shall not be liable in any civil or criminal action..."

**(It is important to note that the immunity is not afforded to those who report or mention the allegation to other persons.)**

According to Tennessee State Law, all reports of suspected child abuse no matter where that abuse takes place, must be made to child protective services, social services, or law enforcement officials. The United Methodist church takes seriously all allegations of abuse, sexual misconduct or harassment.

Therefore, the reporting procedure is as follows:

1. Immediately contact child protection services by calling the Tennessee hotline at **1-800-237-0004**. (Note that if the incident happens away from the church the incident must be reported in that jurisdiction.)
2. Immediately, but with respect for the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children/youth.

If the accused is the appointed clergy or a member of her/his family, the allegations shall be immediately reported to the proper authorities as required by state or local law the District Superintendent and immediately reported to the District Superintendent. The District Superintendent will take responsibility and act according to established rules of *The Book of Discipline* with respect to claims against a pastor. If the District Superintendent is not available, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office.

3. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the appointed clergy is to report the incident immediately to the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent is unavailable, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office.
4. The church should provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing can take place.
5. Keep a written report on the provided form of the steps taken by the church in response to the reported abuse. The report should be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It should be kept in a secure place. It should be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed.
6. Any contact with the media should be handled by the Senior Pastor or his/her designee.  
**NOTE:** The Holston Conference Crisis Team should be contacted and consulted in dealing with the media. The church spokesperson should generally convey a spirit of concern for the spiritual,

physical, and emotional well-being of all who are affected, and communicate that the matter is being diligently and appropriately handled.



**First Farragut United Methodist Church  
Student Volunteer Participation Covenant Form**

The congregation of First Farragut UMC is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and adults who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving the church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter and as a place in which people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. All volunteers and staff who work with children and youth shall observe the policies outlined under Section IV. Procedures and Policies for Working with Children and Youth.

**Do you agree to observe/enforce these policies to the best of your ability? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

2. All volunteers/staff who work with children and youth shall attend annual Safe Sanctuaries trainings and regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.

**Do you agree to participate in training and educational services provided by the church, including annual Safe Sanctuaries Training? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

3. **Do you agree to abide by all policy and procedures as outlined in the Safe Sanctuaries Policy as well as any other supplemental policies or procedures in the children and youth ministry areas (examples include: discipline policy, evacuation procedures, etc.)? Yes\_\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_\_**

I have read this Participation Covenant and I understand that as a student volunteer much is expected of me. I will do my best to serve as a leader in the children's ministry area. I will focus on the children in my care and ask for help when I need it. I will let someone know if I cannot serve in my position in plenty of time to find a replacement. I understand that if my actions become less than what is expected of me, I will be corrected, and dismissed of my duties if necessary. I understand the importance of my own relationship with Jesus Christ and how it will influence my ministry in the children's program.

I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Full Name

I understand the commitment that FFUMC expects of my son/daughter and I accept the responsibility of keeping him/her accountable in fulfilling these responsibilities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent/Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Print Full Name

**First Farragut United Methodist  
Adult Volunteer Screening Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred Form of Contact: **Cell Home Email**  
Please circle one

Previous volunteer experience:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why would you like to volunteer with children or youth ministries?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Special interests or hobbies:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other information you would like us to know:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of FFUMC? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Have you completed Safe Sanctuaries Training? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**\*Church Use Only\***

Background check complete \_\_\_\_\_ Department/Role \_\_\_\_\_

Date

**First Farragut United Methodist  
Student Volunteer Screening Form**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Preferred Form of Contact: **Cell Home Email**  
Please circle one

Previous volunteer experience:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Why would you like to volunteer with children or youth ministries?

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Special interests or hobbies:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other information you would like us to know:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Are you a member of FFUMC? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Have you completed Safe Sanctuaries Training? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**\*Church Use Only\***

**Background check not needed if under 18**

**Department/Role** \_\_\_\_\_





