



**Policy of Broad Street United Methodist Church
Burlington, NJ**

Presented for approval to the Administrative Board
Sunday, November 20, 2011
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"What is a Safe Sanctuaries Policy and How Does it Affect Me?"

The short answers are:

- Safe Sanctuaries is a policy describing commitments and procedures that will help us reduce the risk of child abuse in our church.
- It affects all of us in the church body, as we support a safe and welcoming place for children, youth and at-risk adults*. Specifically, it defines pro-active requirements for church staff and volunteers working with ministries in these areas.



Besides meeting our Bishop's mandate that every church in the Greater New Jersey Conference submit a Safe Sanctuaries Policy, this policy reflects our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection, for all who enter, and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

Nonetheless, some people find the entire subject of Safe Sanctuaries distasteful, not wanting the church to operate from a place of judgment. Some are saddened by the need to discuss abuse safety in a church - wishing the church to be a sacred and safe place because it is a church. Some people are concerned that all of our preparations cannot eliminate all risk of child abuse, and therefore have difficulty supporting the policy requirements. Some people may feel a combination of all three reactions. This is normal.

The focus of this Safe Sanctuaries policy is to create a welcoming environment for our children, youth and at-risk adults; an environment in which they can participate in worship, learn Bible truths, witness to their faith, and be treated with dignity and respect. This policy has been approved by the Administrative Council. It will be administered by the Administrative Board and the Staff Parish Relations Committee of the Broad Street United Methodist Church and will be reviewed on a regular basis. Copies of the active policy are available in the church lobby, in the church office, in each Sunday School room, as well as from the website of the Broad Street United Methodist Church, www.broadstumc.org

*includes but is not limited to the disabled, and/or the elderly



God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (From the *Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church – 2000*, pp. 180-181)

Jesus made the importance of children clear when he said “Let the little children come to me and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of heaven belongs.”

Because the tragedy of abuse of children, youth and at-risk adults is a reality in our world, and because we recognize our responsibility to ensure a safe and protected environment for our children, the Broad Street United Methodist Church, Burlington, NJ, has developed this policy and procedures to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth.

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Statement of Covenant

Thus in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

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 implement prudent operational procedures on all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law.

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In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrate 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)

Introduction

At Broad Street United Methodist Church, the safety of our children is a top priority. In order to protect our children and vulnerable adults, as well as the church workers who come in contact with them, we have implemented a safety policy called **Safe Sanctuaries**. We based our policy on the recommendations of the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, the requirements of our church insurance policy, church legal counsel, the book Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in Your Church, and by researching policies that have been successful in other churches.

Objectives

The main objectives of our Safe Sanctuaries Policy are:

- 1) to maintain a safe, healthy environment for our children and at-risk adults
- 2) to make sure that all paid staff and volunteer workers have the necessary skills and judgment to work with children
- 3) to reduce the risk of the occurrence of physical or sexual abuse
- 4) to provide guidelines and support for our paid staff and volunteers
- 5) to follow the guidelines set down by the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference
- 6) to follow the recommendations of our Church Insurance Policy
- 7) to minimize the liability of our church and our church workers in a case of a lawsuit

Definitions

For the purposes of this document, a “Church Worker” is defined as any volunteer or employee who works with children, youth or vulnerable adults. A “Volunteer” is any unpaid church member who works with children, youth or vulnerable adults. “Paid Staff” or “Staff Person” includes all paid employees of the church. These categories include, but are not limited to, the pastor, Sunday School teachers and assistants, youth leaders, and Vacation Bible School volunteers, Director of Music and the church secretary.

Layout of the Policy

Our Child Safety Policy has 6 main parts:

- A) Worker Selection
- B) Worker Supervision
- C) Reporting Obligations
- D) Response to Allegations
- E) General Health and Safety Guidelines
- F) Annual Review of the Policy

A. Worker Selection

- 1) All Paid Staff will fill out an Employee Information Sheet, complete an on-line background check (found through the Safe Sanctuaries link on the Greater NJ Annual Conference website: www.gnjumc.org), and submit the results of that check to the Pastor or Chair of the SPR to be kept on file. The church will pay the cost of the background check. Candidates will be interviewed by the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee or his/her designee. References will be contacted. Background checks must be updated every three years.
- 2) All Volunteers will complete the Volunteer Information Sheet, complete an on-line background check (through the Safe Sanctuaries link on the Greater NJ Annual Conference website: www.gnjumc.org) and submit the results of that check to the Pastor or Chair of the SPR to be kept on file. The church will pay the cost of the background check. New volunteers will have an interview with a Staff Person, or the Chair of the committee on which they will serve, and be asked to give references. They must attend our church regularly for at least 6 months before they will be allowed to volunteer in a capacity covered by this policy. Background checks must be updated every three years.
- 3) All Church Workers will attend an orientation and/or training session on abuse prevention, and must agree to abide by the policies of this church.
- 4) All church workers will receive a copy of the Broad St. UMC Safe Sanctuaries policy. Copies will be available in all Sunday School classrooms, posted on a bulletin board in the Education Building and a Bulletin Board outside the Church offices, and posted on the church's internet website. The Sunday bulletin and the Beacon will also be used to communicate this policy.
- 5) Care of Documents:
All information received from or about applicants will be **completely confidential**. Volunteer and Employee Information Sheets, Reference Reports and results of Background checks will be reviewed by the Pastor or Chair of Staff Parish Relations. All records will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the Pastor's office for the duration of the church worker's service, plus seven years. **No other persons will have access to these records except in the case of an allegation of suspicious activity.** In the case of a report of suspicious activity, the Response team (see D1) and appropriate legal authorities will have access to the files.
- 6) Church workers who are working in a capacity covered by this policy at the time of its initial approval by the Administrative Board will not be required to undergo the selection process (interview) described in paragraphs 1) and 2) above, but will be subject to the remaining paragraphs of this section as well as the background check (which includes a driving-record check for anyone who might be driving children or youth to/from activities).

B. Worker Supervision

1) On Site:

- a. In order to protect children, youth, vulnerable adults and the church worker, workers will not be left alone with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult out of sight of another adult.
- b. Whenever possible, there shall be at least two adult volunteers in the classroom at all times. There may be one teacher in a Sunday School room with a *group* of children if there is a supervisor that checks in on the classroom during the Sunday School hour.
- c. All rooms used by minors should have a window in the door, or remain open.

2) Off Site:

- a. Whenever practical, at least two adults shall supervise all groups of children and youth for off-site events. **Exception:** When transporting children and youth to events in private cars, there may be one adult with at least two children in the car except on return trips when dropping off the last child. Also, the two-adult rule does not apply in parent-child relationships.
- b. Permission slips, including a medical release form, shall be used for all off-site events. Adequate personnel will be provided for supervision. Off-site programs involving children, youth, and vulnerable adults will include the supervisory personnel according to the following ratios:

Children's ages	0-2	1:4
	3-5	1:5
	6-11	1:6
	12-17	1:10
Vulnerable adults		1:10
- c. All persons riding in private cars must be wearing seat belts when transported to off-site events.

C. Reporting Obligations

- 1) Church Workers will be made aware of state laws that govern the reporting of child abuse during the orientation/training session on abuse prevention.
- 2) Church Workers will be made aware of church reporting procedures, and how to identify signs of physical and emotional abuse through receipt of this policy, and the training session.
- 3) Lines of Reporting:
 - a. If a church worker suspects or is made aware of any physical or sexual abuse occurring in a child's home, or somewhere outside of the church environment, it should be reported to the Pastor and to the New Jersey Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCP&P). The police will be notified if instructed to do so by DCP&P.
 - b. Any suspicious activity, observed abuse, or victim allegation within the church environment must be reported immediately to DCP&P and two or more of the following:
 - 1) Pastor
 - 2) Christian Education Director
 - 3) Youth Group Leader
 - 4) Director of Music
 - 5) Staff-Parish Relations Committee Chair
 - 6) Parish Nurse

A contact list will be attached to this policy.

- c. The persons to whom the incident is reported (see 3. b. above) will produce a written report on the appropriate form (copy attached to this policy) of abuse or suspicious activity and document what, when, where and how, date, time, and circumstances under which the report was made. This report will be provided to the Pastor and kept in a locked cabinet in the Pastor's office unless needed by legal authorities.
- d. Upon receiving such information, the Pastor, or the person designated in section 3b, of this document, will notify:
 - 1) District Superintendent
 - 2) Police (if directed to do so by DCP&P)

If the Pastor is implicated in the incident, or cannot be contacted, the Chair of SPRC will be responsible for reporting the incident.

D. Response to Allegations

- 1) A Response Team will be formed and will be assigned to take any further actions required. The Response Team will follow advice of legal counsel and bishop or bishop's representative.
- 2) The Response Team will be made up of pastor in charge, two administrative board members, and the Parish Nurse.
- 3) The Response Team will function as the church's liaison to outside local and state civil authorities. Documentation will be maintained on an ongoing basis and in follow-up to any communication pertaining to the incident.
- 4) One spokesperson will be appointed from the Response Team, and this person alone will communicate with the press, the congregation, and authorities.
- 5) A clear position statement regarding our church's Child Safety Policy: Safe Sanctuaries and established procedures will be prepared and released when appropriate. This is our opportunity to influence public opinion positively by emphasizing our awareness of the problems of child abuse, our concern for the victim, and the procedures we have put in place to reduce the risk, and to provide a safe environment for children.
- 6) The privacy and confidentiality of all involved must be maintained. Details of the allegations are not to be discussed in any public interview.
- 7) Do not engage in denial, minimization, prejudgment, or blame. Take all allegations seriously. Treat the alleged victim and the victim's family with respect and concern. Extend pastoral resources as needed. Offering care and support can help minimize the hurt, and decrease the possibility of litigation.
- 8) Treat the accused with respect and concern. Extend pastoral resources as necessary. If the accused is a volunteer, that person should refrain from all youth and child activities until the investigation is finished. If the accused is a paid employee, arrangements should be made whether or not to suspend the employee, and whether or not to suspend income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

E. General Health and Safety Guidelines

- 1) A registration form will be filled out by the parents of all Sunday School students. Information regarding allergies and/or specific health risks will be included on this form. Information about specifically which adults are allowed to pick up the child will be included on this form, as well as where the parents can be located during Sunday School.
- 2) Sunday School teachers will be given copies of Registration Forms for all individual students in their class, and they will be made aware of any allergies or health risks.
- 3) Basic CPR and First Aid training will be made available to all volunteers and staff. Paid staff members are required to complete this training.
- 4) A first aid kit will be kept in all Sunday School areas, and church sanctuary.
- 5) If any injury or illness occurs during Sunday School, youth group, or any other church event, an Incident Report will be filled out and given to the Pastor, Youth Leader, or Christian Education Director. Completed Incident Reports will be kept in a locked file cabinet in the Pastor's office, along with other confidential files. Blank incident reports will be kept in the Sunday School rooms, and will be made available to all church workers.
- 6) If church workers notice, or are made aware of any safety hazards within a classroom or any other area of the church, they will inform one or more of the following people:
 - a) Pastor
 - b) Christian Education Director
 - c) Youth Group Leader
 - d) Director of Music
 - e) President of the Trustees

F. Annual Review of the Policy

This policy shall be reviewed annually by the SPRC and any changes presented to the Administrative Board for approval. Policy last reviewed June 7, 2016. Next review due on or before July 1, 2017.

REFERENCES/RESOURCES:

Safe Sanctuaries. Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church by Joy T. Melton

Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in your Church by Hammar, Klipowicz and Cobble

Better Safe than Sued by Jack Crabtree

GNJAC Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator, 732-359-1000

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM
Broad Street United Methodist Church

The information obtained on this form is for internal use by this local church only.

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City, state, zip _____

Home telephone _____

Business telephone _____

Driver's License # (state) _____ Registration # _____

Auto Insurance Carrier/Policy # _____

List (names) of other houses of worship you have attended regularly during the past five years:

Please provide name and telephone or email of a pastor or religious leader; an employer and a personal reference who may be contacted:

Pastor or religious leader:

Employer:

Personal:

I understand that under the Safe Sanctuary policy of Broad Street United Methodist Church, Burlington, if I am, or become, a regular volunteer in a ministry area involving children, youth or at-risk adults, I consent to a background check at the expense of the church, which will be held in a confidential file. I understand that I must supply my Social Security Number for this purpose.

I hereby release and agree to hold harmless from liability any person or organization that provides information and this release may be sent to any reference. I also agree to hold harmless the Broad Street United Methodist Church, Burlington, and the officers, employees, and volunteers thereof from any use of this application or information. I waive any right that I may have to inspect references provided on my behalf. I certify that the information I have provided is true and correct; if it is found that the answers given are untrue, I understand it may be cause for dismissal.

Signature _____

Date _____

**WRITTEN RECORD OF CONTACT WITH A REFERENCE
OF AN APPLICANT FOR WORK WITH CHILDREN/YOUTH/AT-RISK ADULTS**

(Please complete one form for each reference contacted)

1. Name of Applicant _____

2. Reference contacted (if a house of worship or organization, identify both the church or organization and person contacted)

3. Date(s) and time(s) of contact(s) _____

4. Person contacting the reference _____

5. Method of contact (e.g., telephone, personal conversation, letter (attached))

6. Summary of conversation (summarize the reference's remarks concerning the applicant's fitness and suitability for work with children, youth or at-risk adults.

Signature

Position: _____

Date: _____

REPORT FORM FOR INJURIES

Today's Date _____

Injured's name	Age	
Address		
City	State	Phone

Parent/guardian of injured
Date/time/parent/guardian contacted:

Location of accident	
Date of accident	Time of accident
Staff person in charge at time of accident	
Brief description of accident	
Others involved in accident	
Other adult or youth witnesses to accident	

Action taken
Medical attention required
Treating medical personnel and/or facility
Follow up required

Insurance-related action

Report prepared by _____

REPORT FORM FOR SUSPECTED INCIDENTS OF ABUSE OR MISCONDUCT

Staff person completing report	
Victim's name	Age
Parent/guardian of victim	
Location of incident	
Date	Time
Brief description of incident	
Date/time/location of initial conversation with victim	
Notes of conversation	

Name of person accused of abuse or misconduct
Date/time/location of initial conversation with accused (if staff member)
Notes of conversation

Date/time/location of initial conversation with parent(s)/guardian(s)
Person spoken to
Notes of conversation

Date/time of call to DCP&P
Person contacted
Notes of conversation

Date/time/location of call to law enforcement agency
Persons contacted
Notes of conversation

Report prepared by _____