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Safe Sanctuary Guidelines

New Life United Methodist Church

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*“With God’s help we will so order our lives after the example of Christ,
That this child, surrounded by steadfast love, May be established in the faith,
And confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to eternal life.”*

*The Congregational Pledge to Baptized Children
From The United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44 UMPH, 1989*

Our Vision

New Life United Methodist Church (NLUMC) strives to provide a nurturing environment that promotes the physical, emotional, and spiritual well-being of all of God’s children.

Our Mandate

The purpose of the Safe Sanctuary Guidelines of NLUMC is to provide procedures specifically designed to protect children/youth and other vulnerable persons, church staff and volunteers associated with the ministries of the church; as well as establish appropriate ways of responding to alleged, reported or suspected incidents of abuse.

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families and Child Protective Services (CPS) receive more than 70,000 reports of child abuse each year. The majority of these reports were allegations of neglect and/or sexual abuse.

In April 1996, The General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in church facilities and/or during church sponsored activities. This resolution includes the following statement:

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principals of the United Methodist Church state, “... children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse.”

Our Goal

New Life United Methodist Church is committed to the goal of providing a safe and secure environment for all people who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the Church. These guidelines reflect our congregation’s goal of preserving NLUMC 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.

DEFINITIONS

- **Children** – Persons from birth to Grade 4. This includes individuals up to age 10.
- **Youth** – Persons attending Grades 5 – 12. This includes individuals ages 10 – 18.
- **Adults** – Persons 18 years of age or older. However, if the person is 18 years old or older and is participating in a youth Church activity, then the person is not an adult for the purpose of this definition. Anyone serving in a position of authority/supervision over children/youth will be at least five years older than the oldest person they are teaching or leading.
 - **Staff** – Employees of the church who are compensated for their work. Staff is generally hired with proper interviews, background checks and approval by the Ad Council and/or SPRC.
 - **Leader** – A Staff member, or a volunteer who has completed a volunteer registration form, signed the code of conduct, passed a background screening, attended Guideline Training and has been approved for service to the congregation.
 - **Volunteer** – An individual who may come in contact with vulnerable people thru Church Ministry
 - May be supervised by a Leader or Lead Person
 - Does so in a larger group setting with other Leaders and adults immediately present.
 - In proximity to children/youth for a specific event, not an ongoing program.
 - Background screening and approval is not required, however it is required they read and sign the code of conduct.
- **Church Ministry** – Any Church sponsored ministry, event or program approved by and promoted as an activity organized by a Leader of the church.
- **Designee** – Any adult approved by the Pastor to act in his/her place when s/he is not available or has a conflict of interest. Generally this is Clergy or Lay Leaders.
- **Administrative Church Council** – Any number of members from a group of Church Leaders, including but not limited to the Pastor, Lay Leaders, Christian Education Leaders, Trustee, and SPRC.
- **Lead Person** – The adult who has primary responsibility for an event, ministry, or program.
- **Vulnerable People** – Children, youth, or adults who may be vulnerable to any type of abuse.
- **Christian Education Leaders** – Comprises the Leaders from all of the groups attending Wednesday night religion: God School, Phoenix and Journey.

SAFE SANCTUARY GUIDELINES of NEW LIFE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH (NLUMC)

• **Adoption and Review**

- Guidelines will be approved by the Ad Council

- The Safe Child Guidelines will be reviewed every 3 years by the persons filling the following positions:
 - Pastor
 - Christian Education Leaders
 - Ad Council
 - SPRC

- The Guidelines can be amended immediately as new situations arise or present themselves.
- Leadership, contact information, and any similar type information will be updated as those positions change.
- Any forms referenced in these procedures are produced and approved by the Leaders utilizing those forms. Leaders are able to change any forms without approval, provided they adhere to the procedures and policies approved in these Guidelines. Copies of all forms will be kept in the City Site Office.

• **Recruitment and Training**

- Leaders who will be working with vulnerable people as part of their service are required to undergo a criminal background check before beginning to work with vulnerable people. A background check will be conducted every two years.
 - Background checks will be paid for by NLUMC.
 - The Pastor and a Leader will review the results of each background check and determine the eligibility of persons to work with vulnerable people. The Leader will be designated from the Church Ministry that they are a Leader of.
 - All background checks will be kept confidential.
 - Files from background checks will be kept under the Pastor's control.

- Leaders will attend Guidelines training on the processes and procedures laid out in this document as well as the subject of child abuse and local church procedures.
 - The training will be developed by the Christian Education Leaders and the Pastor. Copies of these Guidelines are to be provided to all at each training session.
 - Opportunities for training will be provided on a regular yearly basis (before the new school year begins in the fall) so all new Leaders will be trained and continuing Leaders will be able to update their training every other year.

- Copies of the Guidelines will be available to parents, committee members, and congregation upon request.

IMPLEMENTATION

• Program and Event Policies

- NLUMC according to the law is responsible for the safety and well-being of each person in attendance at an event for the duration of the event regardless of the location.
- Parents/guardians will provide emergency contact information, typically provided in a Christian Education Registration form.
- Children/youth are expected to stay for the entirety of an event without prior notice from a parent/guardian; and must also notify a Leader where they are going and with who.
- All activities involving children/youth will be supervised by at least one Leader. Ideally, a roving volunteer will also be available for assistance and supervision. It is encouraged that parents/guardians volunteer as a rover at least once during the year.
- Ideally a ratio of one Leader per 10 children/youth should be maintained in each situation involving the supervision of children/youth; although this ratio can differ with age groups as well as events.
- Children/youth are expected to use the bathroom nearest to their classroom or event space. If a child needs bathroom assistance, two adults must be present. If another adult is not available, the main bathroom door must be propped open. Youth should notify a Leader when going to the bathroom and the Leader will check on them if a reasonable amount of time has passed before they return.
- Leaders and volunteers will **never** engage in the following conduct at NLUMC:
 - Strike, spank, shake, slap or otherwise physically discipline a child/youth.
 - Humiliate, degrade, or threaten a child/youth.
 - Touch a child/youth inappropriately.
 - Shame, withhold attention, or speak or act with cruelty.
 - Use profanity, tell inappropriate jokes, or share intimate details of one's life.
- If children/youth are behaving inappropriately, Leaders and volunteers will use positive techniques of guidance, redirection, positive reinforcement and encouragement to change their behavior.
- If physical restraint is necessary because a vulnerable person is a danger to the health and safety of him/herself or anyone else, a Leader and/or volunteer will take the steps necessary to carry out the restraint. If possible, Leaders and/or volunteers will move the vulnerable person to another environment. Another adult will accompany the Leader/volunteer and the vulnerable person. If moving the individual is not possible, the Leader will take reasonable precautions to move the rest of the people or take other measures deemed safe, reasonable, and appropriate for the circumstances. Any such action will be reported to the Lead Person in charge of the Church Ministry or directly to the Pastor as soon as possible. An incident report will also be completed by all people involved in the incident.
- Persistent inappropriate behavior by a child/youth will result in a request for a parent/guardian

meeting with the Pastor and any other appropriate Leaders and/or volunteers. The child/youth cannot return to class or an activity until said meeting occurs. The meeting will be recorded in an incident report.

- **Christian Education Policies**

- Enrollment in God School, Phoenix and Journey shall be done by a parent/guardian of all children/youth using the Christian Education Registration Form.
- Parents/guardians who bring their children/youth to Christian Education or an activity at NLUMC are encouraged to remain on the property while their children/youth are present. Parents/guardians may also be asked to volunteer for events and are encouraged to visit and observe at any time.
- Children/youth will be assigned to the appropriate grade/age level of Christian Education Class equivalent to the grade/age level they attend in school or preschool.
- Classrooms and church spaces occupied by children/youth will be as visible as possible to other Staff, Leaders, volunteers, congregation, and parents. Children/youth will not be left alone in a classroom. If only one adult is present, another Leader or volunteer will step in when necessary for the Leader to leave the room.
- Children will be released to parents/guardians inside the church. Youth will notify Leaders who they are leaving with.

- **Nursery Policies – Nursery only available at City Site**

- A member of the Staff will manage the nursery during regular Church Services. Ushers during regular Church Services will work as rovers to intermittently check on the nursery.
- Parents/guardians of children in the nursery will remain in the building at all times.
- Parents/guardians will be responsible for changing the diapers of their children.
- Only the parents/guardians may remove children from the nursery.

- **Travel Policies**

- Permission slips will be required for each off-campus event involving youth. The Lead Person will have the youth Registration Forms for emergency contact purposes.
- When traveling off Church premises, all efforts will be made to have at least two Leaders and/or volunteers with youth.
- Youth will never be left alone in an unsafe or unfamiliar environment.
- Leaders will always assign designated meeting locations and times to check in and perform a head count as needed.
- Youth will be assigned a buddy group of 3 or more youth when traveling.

- Leaders are to make sure everyone is present. The entire group will not leave an area until everyone is accounted for.
- When multiple vehicles are used to transport youth, only one Leader per vehicle is needed if traveling together with Leaders in other vehicles.
- All legally mandated safety procedures for car travel with youth are to be followed.
- Volunteer drivers will provide the church office a copy of their driver's license, general contact information (cell phone number), and proof of insurance prior to leaving the church premises.
- Trips that involve rental vehicles, those vehicles are covered under the church insurance policy. Any trips utilizing individual vehicles, insurance would be covered by the individual.
- **Overnight Trip Policies**
 - Completed permission slips will be on file prior to departing on the trip. The Lead Person will have the youth Registration Forms for emergency contact purposes.
 - At least two Leaders will be present on all overnight trips.
 - The total number of Leaders and/or volunteers on each trip will be adjusted according to the number of youth participating in the planned activities. Ideally a 1:6 ratio of adults to youth should be sought.
 - If the youth present are both male and female, there will be at least one male and one female Leader on the trip. At single-gender overnight events, at least two Leaders present will be of the same gender as the participating youth.
 - Adults may not sleep in the same rooms as youth. Exceptions are:
 - A parent and his/her own youth when no other youth are housed in the same room.
 - A bunkhouse or similar style facility in which there are more than four people to a room.
 - Adults shall not share a bed with a person of either gender under age 18 except a parent with their own youth.
 - Where group (not individual) showers are provided, adults will not bathe at the same time as youth. Mixed gender bathing is not allowed.
 - Medications:
 - No over the counter medications are allowed unless previously notified and approved by the Lead Person (cold medicine, cough syrup, etc). Youth can ask Leaders for over the counter medications such as Ibuprofen, etc.
 - The Lead Person must be informed by a parent/custodian of any medical condition requiring prescription medication and how/when the medication should be administered prior to departure. This information is required in case there is a need for emergency medical treatment.

- Prescription medication must be in the original packaging from the pharmacy.
 - Prescription medications that are classified as narcotics must be turned in and logged with the Lead Person. This is for safe keeping as well as tracking administration. Examples of this would be ADD, sleeping, anti-depressant, and pain prescription medications.
 - The quantity of medications brought on the trip should be limited to the duration of the trip (meaning if the trip is for 5 days, bring 5 days worth of medication). The exception to this would be if the medication is required to the health and well being of an individual, then an extra 2 days of medication should be brought along if the trip is extended for some unforeseen reason.
- **Social Media and Communication Policies**
 - Social Media abuse, in many ways is governed by the same laws as physical abuse; and will be reported and dealt with in the same ways as described for physical abuse.
 - Everyone should feel comfortable to bring a possible abuse of Social Media to any Church Leader at any time. This is regardless of whether the abuse occurred during a Church event or not.
 - Parents/guardians will give affirmative permission for children/youth to appear in Church sponsored Social Media pictures and/or videos. If a parent/guardian does not give permission, every attempt will be made to not include that child/youth in Church sponsored Social Media.
 - The Church cannot be responsible for individuals taking pictures or videos; however if a concern is raised to the Pastor and/or a Leader, they will notify the individual of the concern and attempt to resolve the conflict. If it becomes an issue of abuse, it will be treated as such.
 - When a Leader needs to communicate with any youth via text messaging, the Leader will include another Leader in any and all text communications.
 - When a Leader needs to communicate with any youth via phone, the Leader will make every attempt to ensure either an adult is with the Leader, or an adult is with the youth, during the duration of the phone conversation.
- **Community Group Policies**
 - Many community groups use the Church property outside of Church events at which children/youth under the age of 18 will be present.
 - Any community group using the Church property will be notified of our policies and expected to follow the Guidelines described in this document. We understand these Guidelines may go above and beyond any rules or regulations of the group involved. If a group is found to not be adhering to our Guidelines, they will be notified. If the Guidelines continue to not be upheld then the community group relationship with the Church property will be terminated.
 - Any violation of the policies presented in these Guidelines should be reported in the same manner as described in these Guidelines. A Church Council will meet to determine if the group can continue to use the Church property.

- **Policy for Registered Sex Offenders Attending Worship Services**
 - In the event that it comes to the awareness of a member of the Church Leadership that a registered sex offender is attending the church, we will contact the individual's parole officer to determine appropriate boundaries. That person will be asked by a Church Council to enter into a Covenant Relationship with the church by signing a Covenant Agreement which will be drafted based on the recommendations of the Church Council and parole officer. Such information may come to the Church Leadership through a background check if that person applies to work with children/youth, from reliable public information such as the National Sex Offender Registry, or from the individual themselves. Any sex offender refusing to sign the Covenant Agreement will be prohibited from attending worship or other church activities where children or youth may be present.
 - These individuals will never be allowed to work with children/youth ministries; nor be in a position to be left alone with children/youth.

- **Emergencies and/or Disaster Plan**
 - First and foremost call **911**
 - City Site telephones are available in the Office and the Kitchen. County Site does not have a land line telephone.
 - All Leaders, most adults, and many youth have cell phones as well.
 - First Aid Kits
 - City Site locations: in the kitchen on the wall by the sink and also in a file cabinet in the Office
 - Country Site locations: in the kitchen
 - Only adults should utilize equipment found in a First Aid Kit.
 - Fire Extinguishers
 - City Site locations: by the main entry door, kitchen door, trophy case in the fellowship hall, American flag in the sanctuary, and the emergency exit door by the youth room.
 - Country Site locations: by the front Sanctuary exit, stairs leading up to the second level balcony, and in the kitchen in the basement.
 - Only trained adults should attempt to put out fires.
 - Building Exits
 - City Site locations: the main front door, from the front of the sanctuary past the youth room, the rear of the sanctuary opposite of the front door, and the back of the kitchen.
 - Country Site locations: the main front door, the front of the Sanctuary and downstairs by the kitchen.
 - All accidents and emergencies will be documented in the Accident Report Form.

- **Conceal and Carry Law Policies**
 - The Church prohibits weapons of any type from the Church premises
 - A valid conceal carry permit does not authorize Staff, Leaders, volunteers, congregation members or visitors on Church property to carry a weapon of any kind into the Church buildings.
 - Anyone possessing a valid conceal carry weapon license may keep a firearm **locked** inside their privately owned motor vehicle while their vehicle is parked on Church property in the designated parking areas.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

- Incidents of abuse or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse of anyone will be reported as soon as possible to the Pastor, a Leader, or the SPRC Chair.
- Every allegation will be taken seriously. Adequate care and respect must be offered to the alleged victim of abuse until the allegation can be substantiated or not.
- The safety and security of the alleged victim must be safeguarded until police or a social service agency takes control of the alleged incident of abuse.
- The parents/guardians of the alleged victim will be notified immediately.
- Any person accused of abusive behavior must be treated with dignity and support. If that person is a part of Staff, Leaders, or volunteers; that person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
- The confidentiality of all persons involved in the alleged abuse except as needed to notify the police and the reporting of the abuse will be safeguarded.
- The person reporting the incident will document in writing all facts, allegations and circumstances including the steps taken in handling the alleged abuse incident. This documentation will occur in the Incident Report Form.
- The Pastor and/or Leader who receives a report for alleged abuse will document all actions taken regarding the incident, such as notification of the police or social service agency. This documentation will occur in the Incident Report Form.
- As soon as possible the Pastor will notify the District Superintendent and consult with the Insurance Company for advice.
- All records relating to the matter will be maintained in confidential files under the control of the Pastor except as needed by the police or social service agency.
- The Pastor of the Church, or his/her Designee, is the only person/s authorized to make statements to the representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Pastor. Suggested language for this type of statement could include: "We at New Life United Methodist Church are saddened by the allegations that have been brought forward. We have attempted to create an environment that is welcoming and safe, whereby all persons might experience the Good News in Jesus Christ. We are cooperating fully with local officials who are investigating this incident. Our Bishop's office has also been notified, and an investigation will also be conducted through that office. If you desire more information, we will help you get in touch with our Bishop. This is all we can comment on at this time."