

1 **SAFE SANCTUARIES**

2 [Resolution Adopted June 2011 Session
3 Upper New York Annual Conference]

4 **Background**

5 The Safe Sanctuaries Task Force of The Upper New York Annual Conference has been meeting
6 for approximately six months. The goal of this group is that the Upper New York Annual
7 Conference shall become a Safe Sanctuaries Conference by December 31, 2012.

8 To achieve this goal a group of dedicated and passionate clergy and lay people have drafted
9 a *Safe Sanctuaries* Resolution and Minimum Standards Policy. All local churches, programs
10 and ministries of this Conference would reaffirm and revise, as necessary, the Safe
11 Sanctuaries policies and procedures they have had in place; for those where there was no
12 previous policy and/or procedures, one will be put into place by December 31, 2012.

13 The Upper New York Annual Conference will establish training programs; assist churches in
14 establishing standard policies and procedures; and assist churches, districts and conference
15 ministries and programs in reducing the risk of abuse to children, youth, and vulnerable
16 adults¹ in order to:

- 17 1. provide for the safety of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our churches and
18 conference;
19 2. provide safeguards for adults who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults;
20 3. hold accountable all those who minister in the name of Jesus Christ; and,
21 4. be diligent and good stewards of God's resources provided to the church through Spiritual
22 gifts and material means of ministry,
23

24 The Upper New York Annual Conference has affirmed its

25 Vision:

26 To live the gospel of Jesus Christ and to be God's love with our neighbors in all places.

27 Purpose:

28 **Growing** in our relationship with God

29 **Being** the body of Christ within the world,

30 **Living** in accordance with the example of Jesus Christ by:

- 31 • **Engaging, equipping and empowering local churches** to be in ministry with and to
32 our Global Neighborhood
33 • **Encouraging and developing leadership** within the laity and clergy that is diverse
34 yet united by our love for Christ; and
35 • **Building relationships with our neighbors**, particularly with those who have been
36 disenfranchised by mainstream society
37

¹ One definition of Vulnerable adult is any person, 18 years and older, who because of physical or mental infirmity or emotional disability or other physical, mental or emotional dysfunction maybe vulnerable to maltreatment (Minnesota law 626.557). Vulnerable adults are also those adults who work with children and youth who can be in a position where accusations of abuse could mistakenly arise; or, adults who have been abused either as a child or an adult.

1 To this end the *Safe Sanctuaries* Task Force respectfully offers the following Resolution which
2 addresses the vision and purpose of this annual conference.

3 WHEREAS God has called us to make disciples of Jesus Christ with concern that our ministries
4 safely protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation; and

5 WHEREAS Jesus taught that *“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me,”*
6 *(Mark 9:37 NRSV)* and *“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones... it*
7 *would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were*
8 *drowned in the depth of the sea.”(Matthew 18:6 NRSV);* and

9 WHEREAS The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state that *“...children must be*
10 *protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse”²; and*

11 WHEREAS at each child’s baptism, we affirm our responsibility to their safety by our
12 congregational response, pledging: *“With God’s help, we will so order our lives after the*
13 *example of Christ, that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the*
14 *faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way to leads to eternal life.”³; and*

15 WHEREAS as Disciples, we affirm Christ’s commandment to love our neighbors and serve as
16 witnesses of Christ’s power to transform lives; and

17 WHEREAS the resolution “Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church” was adopted
18 in 1996 and readopted in 2000, 2004 and 2008⁴ by the General Conference of The United
19 Methodist Church, thus becoming the impetus for all Annual Conferences and congregations to
20 implement abuse prevention policies; and

21 WHEREAS The General Board of Discipleship has identified Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the
22 Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church⁵, as an official resource of The United Methodist
23 Church equipping churches to develop a child and youth abuse prevention policy;

24 **THEREFORE be it RESOLVED:**

25 That we, The Upper New York Annual Conference (UNYAC) of the United Methodist Church
26 engage in the ministry of the Gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of
27 all in our care. To that end we covenant to:

28 1. follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers,
29 2. implement prudent operational procedures in all program and events,
30 3. educate all of our workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults regarding the
31 use of appropriate policies and methods,
32 4. have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that
33 conforms to the requirements of state law and
34 5. provide for crisis response, crisis intervention and media inquiries should an incident
35 occur.⁶

² 2008 The Book of Discipline ¶162C

³ The Book of Worship, Baptismal Covenant, Congregational Pledge II

⁴ 2008 Book of Resolutions, page 245, ¶3084, Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church.

⁵ Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth; Melton, Joy Thornburg, Copyright 2008 Discipleship Resources

⁶ Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth; Melton, Joy Thornburg, Copyright 2008 Discipleship Resources, page 141

1 **And be it FURTHER RESOLVED** that all church/charge, districts, agencies and ministry groups
2 shall adhere to The Upper New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church *Safe*
3 *Sanctuaries* policy and the governing body [e.g. Church Council/Administrative Board] of the
4 church/charge shall be responsible for its implementation.

- 5 1. Each church/charge, district, agency and ministry group shall have a Safe Sanctuaries
6 committee or team in place no later than December 31, 2011;
- 7 2. A copy of each agency and ministry group's *Safe Sanctuaries* policy shall be on file in the
8 Office of the Director of Connectional Ministries by May 31, 2012;
- 9 3. The implementation of this policy in conference ministries other than local churches shall
10 be the responsibility of the Office of the Director of Connectional Ministries and shall be
11 implemented by May 31, 2012.
- 12 4. A copy of each church/charge's Safe Sanctuaries policy shall be on file in the appropriate
13 district office by December 31, 2012.
- 14 5. The minimum standards and procedures contained in The Upper New York Annual
15 Conference of The United Methodist Church *Safe Sanctuaries* policy shall be implemented
16 by December 31, 2012 and reviewed annually thereafter by the church's Charge
17 Conference.

18
19 **And, finally, be it FURTHER RESOLVED** that The Upper New York Annual Conference create
20 the Committee on Sexual Ethics (membership to be established by the Bishop and the
21 Conference Leadership Team in consultation with the Nominations and Leadership
22 Development Committee) to address these issues of policymaking, training, accountability,
23 and crisis response as it relates to:

- 24 • Sexual Ethics for clergy and laity -- providing education resources and support for
25 training. (2008 Book of Resolutions, page 136; 134 - 135; 2008 BOD paragraphs 341.5,
26 361, 605.8)
- 27 • Safe Sanctuaries -- establishing minimum standards and procedures, providing training
28 programs and assisting local churches and Conference ministry programs in reducing
29 the risk of abuse to children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- 30 • Crisis Response - providing a policy and procedures for crisis response, and appropriate
31 training and resources for responders, as well as local churches/charges, clergy, and
32 laity. (2008 Book of Discipline, paragraph 361)

33
34 In conclusion, in all of our ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adults, The Upper
35 New York Annual Conference is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that
36 each will be “. . . surrounded by steadfast love, . . . established in the faith, and confirmed
37 and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal”⁷. This *Safe Sanctuaries* Policy
38 represents our commitment to the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety and growth of all
39 within our care.

40 Recommended by The Upper New York Annual Conference *Safe Sanctuaries* Task Force meeting in
41 Cicero United Methodist Church, February 24, 2011.

⁷ (Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Hymnal, page 44)

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- 2 The Rev. Tim Gleason, Shawn Granish, The Rev. Jack Keating, The Rev. David Masland, Shirley
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THE MINIMUM STANDARDS

The Minimum Standards set forth below have been established by the Upper New York Annual Conference for all ministries. They are mandatory. They are not inspirational, but set minimum standards to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation. Without exception, these standards apply to all local churches/charges, district and annual conference ministries, and those who serve within.

Minimum Reasonable Safety Standards in Recruiting, Screening and Selecting Workers

1. Recruiting Workers

- a. A written position description that includes the essential functions of the job shall be provided for positions in ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- b. Interested workers shall complete an application that includes identification, address, employment history for the past five years, volunteer work during the past five years, experiences and skills specifically related to the position, prior church membership (if any), personal references (not related to the applicant) with complete address and contact information, waiver of any right to confidentiality and of any right to pursue damages against the church/charge caused by the references' responses, certification that the information provided is true and correct, voluntary disclosure of past criminal convictions, and authorization to conduct a criminal background check.

2. Screening Workers

- a. References provided by the applicant shall be checked by the pastor or a designated Safe Sanctuaries committee/team member. The reference check shall include questions about the applicant's ability to work with children, youth or vulnerable adults (depending on ministry) and leadership ability.
- b. A personal interview shall be conducted.
- c. A criminal background check shall be authorized by and completed for all clergy, paid workers, and volunteers who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The criminal background check shall be performed after every seven (7) years of service and at the beginning of service and after a break in service of one or more years. Background check results shall be kept in a secure manner.

3. Adult volunteers shall demonstrate an active relationship with the local church/charge for at least six (6) months before being allowed to be in a supervisory role in activities for children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

1 4. Selecting Workers
2

- 3 a. Only workers that have successfully completed the application and screening process
4 shall be eligible to be considered for selection to a ministry position with children,
5 youth, and/or vulnerable adults.
6
- 7 b. In the event that the criminal background check reveals a conviction or other cause
8 for concern, the pastor and/or another ministry leader shall consult with the
9 applicant.
10
- 11 c. Adults convicted of child abuse or named as the perpetrator in a founded or indicated
12 child abuse report through a designated state or county agency, or who are under
13 investigation for, or who have charges pending for child abuse, shall not be accepted
14 as paid employees or volunteers to have direct access to children, youth, or vulnerable
15 adults in any church-sponsored activity or setting.
16

17 **Procedures for Conducting Ministry Programs and Events for Children, Youth and**
18 **Vulnerable Adults**

- 19 1. Adult staff and volunteers and clergy shall observe the “Two-Adult Rule” at all times so
20 that no adult is ever alone with children or youth or vulnerable adults at a church/charge,
21 district or conference-sponsored event or activity. The two-adult rule requires that
22 regardless of the size of the group, there shall always be two unrelated adults present.
23 This may include the presence of an adult “roamer” who moves in and out of
24 rooms/ministry activities. No child, youth, or vulnerable adult shall be left unsupervised
25 while attending a ministry program or event.
26
- 27 2. Adult staff and volunteers are those who are at least 18 years old and who are at least
28 five years older than the oldest minor present, whom they are leading, ministering to or
29 supervising. Youth (those ages 13-17) are invited to assist adult volunteers but are not to
30 be considered an adult for the “two-adult rule”.
31
- 32 3. All adult staff and volunteers and clergy shall be observant for unusual behaviors and signs
33 of child, youth, and vulnerable adult abuse and shall report them immediately to the
34 appropriate supervisor.
35
- 36 4. All adult staff and volunteers and clergy working with children, youth, and vulnerable
37 adults shall receive a copy of the applicable local church/charge, district or conference
38 ministry or program Safe Sanctuaries Policy before starting their service and shall agree to
39 covenant with the (local) United Methodist Church, District or Conference ministry or
40 program to fully cooperate with these abuse prevention strategies.
41
- 42 5. All ministry activities shall occur in open view. Each room or space where ministry events
43 occur must be open to public view. This may require enclosed spaces such as classrooms,
44 having a viewing window, a glass panel in the door, a half door configuration or an open
45 door.

- 1
- 2 6. Written attendance records shall be kept for all ministry events/activities involving
- 3 children and youth. These records shall include at a minimum, the date and names of all
- 4 participants and shall be kept until Jesus returns (perpetuity).
- 5
- 6 7. Ministry activities involving transportation shall require a written permission slip/form and
- 7 signed by a parent/guardian. Drivers of children, youth and vulnerable adults must be 21
- 8 years of age. The ministry supervisor shall be required to keep a copy of their current
- 9 license and proof of insurance card on file with the appropriate ministry program (i.e.,
- 10 church/charge, district, conference ministry).
- 11
- 12 8. Facilities shall be free from conditions that pose a safety or health hazard to the
- 13 participants.
- 14
- 15 9. Appointed clergy shall regularly review and be familiar with public sex offenders registries
- 16 maintained by New York State law enforcement agencies. This is done by accessing:
- 17 http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/SomsSUBDirectory/search_index.jsp
- 18
- 19

20 EDUCATION

21

22 The Upper New York Annual Conference shall make available a standardized training program

23 to assist each charge, district, agency, and ministry to fulfill the covenant to “educate all of

24 our workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding the use of appropriate

25 policies and methods”.

26

27 REPORTING AND RESPONSE

28 Reporting

29 Reporting shall be required by any staff or volunteer that personally witnesses an incident of

30 abuse or exploitation, when an allegation of an event of abuse or exploitation is made to staff

31 or a volunteer by a third party and/or when a child, youth, or vulnerable adult discloses

32 abuse or exploitation to a staff member or volunteer. It is crucial that reporting be

33 immediate and the allegations dealt with as soon in time as possible to the incident or

34 disclosure.

35

- 36 1. The staff person or volunteer who observes alleged abuse or to whom such abuse is
- 37 reported or disclosed, or who suspects abuse shall be required to report the
- 38 incident/suspected abuse **immediately** to the person in charge of the ministry/activity.
- 39 Upon receiving the information, the person in charge of the ministry/activity shall
- 40 **immediately** call the New York State Child Protective Services Hotline at (800) 342-3720.
- 41 Identification information for the alleged victim and the adult responsible for their care is
- 42 required for the report. The pastor in charge and immediate staff supervisor are to be
- 43 informed immediately before or subsequent to the making of a report. The person in
- 44 charge of the ministry/activity in which the alleged abuse was observed or disclosed shall
- 45 immediately attempt to obtain necessary information such as the name of the alleged
- 46 victim and his/her address and family information.
- 47

- 1 2. If the accused is the appointed clergy, supply pastor or a member of his/her family, the
2 allegations shall be immediately reported to the District Superintendent. The District
3 Superintendent shall immediately report to the proper authorities as set forth in paragraph
4 1 above. The District Superintendent shall take responsibility and act according to the
5 established rules in The Book of Discipline with respect to claims against the pastor. If the
6 District Superintendent is not available, the incident shall be reported to the Bishop's
7 office.
8
- 9 3. All clergy are included in mandatory reporting as required by The Book of Discipline⁸.
10
- 11 4. After the person in charge of the ministry/activity has reported the suspected abuse to the
12 proper authorities, the appointed clergy/supply pastors shall report the incident
13 immediately to the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent is not available,
14 the incident shall be reported to the Bishop's office.
15
- 16 5. The person in charge of the ministry/event must keep a written report of the steps taken
17 by the church/charge in response to the reported abuse. The report should be kept brief
18 and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. This report should be kept
19 in a secure place. It should be written or typed to prevent it from being changed.
20
- 21 6. **NEVER** discuss allegations with any other people except law enforcement of designated
22 county investigators. To do so can cause irreparable harm to the victim, their family, the
23 church/conference and community.
24
25

26 Response Plan

27 A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse is expected. All
28 allegations shall be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse there shall be
29 cooperation with all official investigating agencies.

- 30 1. All media requests for statements shall be directed to the Annual Conference Director of
31 Communications.
32
- 33 2. Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show
34 care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are
35 needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the **first** priority. Respond in
36 a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.
37
- 38 3. Immediately, and with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the
39 accused from further involvement with children, youth, or vulnerable adults and advise the

⁸ The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, ¶341.5, All clergy of The United Methodist Church are charged to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences, except in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law.

1 accused that there has been an allegation of abuse. Details of the allegations of the abuse
2 should not be discussed with the accused at the time of the removal. In any removal of a
3 staff member or volunteer from any activity/ministry, care shall be taken to handle the
4 removal in a discreet manner, recognizing that there will be an investigation by either
5 state or church authorities, or both.
6

7 4. When it has been alleged that a member of the church staff or volunteer, has committed
8 an act of abuse or exploitation, the staff member or volunteer shall be required to refrain
9 from all ministry/activities with children, youth, and vulnerable adults until the incident
10 has been fully resolved by the appropriate state authorities and/or in accordance with The
11 Book of Discipline.
12

13 5. Notify the parents/guardians or the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure
14 the safety and well being of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult until the
15 parent(s)/guardian(s) arrive. **NOTE:** If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser,
16 follow the advice of the authorities concerning notifications of others.
17

18
19 6. The church/charge shall provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected,
20 offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing may
21 take place.