

**COMMUNITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
3487 ROUTE 130  
IRWIN, PA 15642  
Church office: (724) 744-3413

In accordance with resolutions adopted by the United Methodist Church in 1996, Community United Methodist Church (herein after referred to as CUMC) hereby adopts the following policy.

**A CHILD/YOUTH OR VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY**

Statement of Purpose and Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide a safe and secure environment for children, youth and vulnerable adults by limiting, to the maximum extent possible, the risk of abuse at Community United Methodist Church (CUMC). This policy is intended to serve and protect not only the potential victims of abuse but also limit the vulnerability of individuals and CUMC to loss from litigation arising from such abuse through prevention (screening), supervision and education/training. The policy also addresses reporting, documentation and response to abuse allegations. This policy will serve to provide guidance to the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), Church Council, Clergy and Laity of CUMC in matters of alleged abuse. Within CUMC, the Staff Parish Relations Committee has oversight responsibility for this policy including formulation, implementation and annual review.

**SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION**

Our relationship to God and our theological orientation as Christians and as United Methodists compel us to reflect on God's Word as the basis of our handling matters of abuse. All human beings, both male and female, are created in the image of God, and thus have been made equal in Christ.

- And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf is welcoming me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who trusts in me to lose faith, it would be better for that person to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around the neck. (Matt. 18:5 & 6)
- But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God – who chose you to be his children – is holy. And remember that the heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites when he judges. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of him during your time here on earth. (1 Peter 1:15 & 17)
- For He will conceal me there when troubles come; He will hide me in His sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock. (Psalm 27:5)

God's grace, freely given through Jesus Christ, calls us to be channels of grace, not exploitation, and to be agents of healing and redemption. In light of these understandings, when we honor the complete integrity of one another, we honor and remember the Body of Christ.

In all our ministries, CUMC is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person 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)

## **ABUSE DEFINED**

Abuse is commonly categorized in the following forms. (Safe Sanctuaries pages 12 & 13)

- **Physical Abuse**

Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child/youth/or vulnerable adult. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon (knife, belt, strap, and so forth), burning, shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing bones, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries to the body of a child/youth/or vulnerable adult.

- **Emotional Abuse**

Abuse in which a person exposes a child/youth/or vulnerable adult to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the receiver of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care. Children/youth/and vulnerable adults exposed to emotional abuse may have experienced being locked in a closet, being deprived of any sign of parental affection, being constantly told they are bad or stupid, or being allowed or forced to abuse alcohol or drugs. Emotional abuse is often very difficult to prove and is devastating to the victim.

- **Neglect**

Abuse in which a person endangers the health, safety or welfare of a child/youth/or vulnerable adult through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the self-worth or the child/youth/or vulnerable adult. This is, perhaps the most common form of abuse.

- **Sexual Abuse**

Abuse in which sexual contact between a child/youth/or vulnerable adult and an adult (or older more powerful person) occurs. The victim is never truly capable of consenting to or resisting such contact and/or such sexual acts. Often, the victim is physically and psychologically dependent upon the perpetrator of the abuse. Examples of sexual abuse may include fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation and of exposure to child pornography or prostitution.

- **Ritual Abuse**

Abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violation of a child/youth/or vulnerable adult are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the welfare of the child/youth/or vulnerable adult. The abuser may appeal to some higher authority or power to justify the abuse. The abuse may include cruel treatment of animals or repeated threats of harm to the child/youth/or vulnerable adult making such reports should not be ignored.

## POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

To create the safest possible environment within CUMC, the following procedures will be followed in selecting individuals to work with children/youth/ or vulnerable adults:

### I-SCREENING

1. All individuals (volunteers and paid employees greater than 18 years of age) who desire to work with or be the sole adult with children/youth/or vulnerable adults must complete a **confidential** Volunteer Application Form (Attachment A).
2. Application A will be checked by a Screening Committee which will be designated by the Ministry Area Attachment A will be placed in the church office in a **confidential locking file after the Screening Committee has finish its check**. Attachment B provides instruction or information for the Screening Committee performing the check.
3. A “Pennsylvania Child Abuse History”, a Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Check” (commonly known as Act 151 and 34 Clearances) and the FBI fingerprint, Act 114 clearance must be completed for all paid persons working in direct contact and/or interaction with children/youth/ or vulnerable adults. Forms and instructions will be available in the church office. Application fees are the responsibility of the applicant, however, CUMC will be willing to consider financial assistance on a case-by-case basis where need can be demonstrated. **Clearances must be renewed every five years.**

Volunteers who will be in direct contact and/or interaction with children/youth/ or vulnerable adults must complete Acts 151 and 34 clearances, “Pennsylvania Child Abuse History” and a Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Check”. Volunteers who have lived out of state of Pennsylvania in the last 5 years are required to also obtain the FBI fingerprint, Act 114 clearance. **Clearances must be renewed every five years.**

Paid workers which will have minimal contact and/or interaction with children/youth/ or vulnerable adults must complete Acts 114, the FBI fingerprint clearance. **Clearances must be renewed every five years.**

Note: An applicant awaiting clearances process will be permitted to work, **for a period not exceeding 90 days**, while supervised by a “cleared” adult, provided the screening processes are completed **prior to** starting work.

4. Copies of Clearances and the Volunteer Application Form, Attachment A will be placed in a locked **Confidential and Secure Personnel File** in the Church office.
5. Any individual who is found to have a prior conviction for any form of child abuse will not be permitted to work in any area that involves direct contact with children/youth/or vulnerable adults. The Screening Committee will also have the right to reject an applicant for any position by a majority vote if legitimate concerns are raised about their history of suitability to work with children/youth/or vulnerable adults. Such concerns will be discussed with the applicant. Such an individual may alternatively meet with the Pastoral Staff to determine how he or she can be involved in other areas of the church. Pastoral Staff shall be defined as the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Director of Youth Ministries and Director of Ark Ministries.

6. The Ministry Area should consider a six month waiting period (six month rule) for the new, unknown volunteers who will be in direct contact and/or interaction with children/youth/ or vulnerable adults. This waiting period will assist the Ministry Area in getting to know a new volunteer to the church.

## II-SUPERVISION

Even though reasonable care was used to select individuals to work with children/youth or vulnerable adults, the possibility of negligent supervision still exists. To reduce the opportunities for abuse or false accusations, the following policies will be followed:

1. A youth worker (less than 18 years of age) must always work under the supervision of a cleared adult. Youth worker(s) must not be left alone with the children. A five year age differential between the youth worker and the oldest child is **strongly recommended**.
2. It is strongly recommended that each classroom, activity area, or office used for children/youth/or vulnerable adults, have a window with unobstructed viewing or a viewing device that permits observation of the room's interior. In rooms without windows, the door must be kept open far enough that activities can be seen. This includes counseling sessions and private meetings.
3. During any church activity that involves children, a single youth, or a vulnerable adult, a **two adult rule** will be adopted (that means that two adults, preferably unrelated, will be present).

Note: When additional adult volunteers are needed on a temporary basis for a planned activity, parents of participating children or youth will be acceptable under the supervision of volunteers who have received their clearances. It is the responsibility of the person in charge of the church activity (Director of Youth Ministry, Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Director of Christian Education, etc.) to provide Safe Sanctuaries Policy familiarization training to the temporary volunteers **before** the activity starts. Each volunteer will be required to sign written documentation that he/she has received the training and accepts responsibility for adhering to the "Safe Sanctuaries" policy.

4. Supervision of children will be maintained before and after activities until all are in the custody of their parents or a designated adult. Parents, or designated adults, are required to pick up children-kindergarten and younger. Teachers will remain in the classroom with the children until they are each in the custody of the parent or designated adult. Exceptions to this rule must be made IN WRITING and signed by the parent or guardian. Parental release forms must be kept on file in the Church office.

### III-TRAINING

Each church member must understand the potential danger of abuse. CUMC will educate and train our workers about the issue of abuse and our prevention policy. Each worker will be informed of the church's expectations and what is required by law. Effective education and training is the cornerstone of abuse prevention.

1. Church leaders (Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor, Pastoral Staff; chairpersons of Church Council, Ministries Council, SPRC, Ark Council, etc.) will receive training in abuse prevention in the church, the legal liability of the church, and how to handle abuse allegations. Church leaders must understand the need for a prevention plan before it is implemented. The Safe Sanctuary Coordinator will be responsible for such training.
2. **Prior to starting work**, all individuals working with children/youth/ or vulnerable adults will be required to read the CUMC "Child/Youth or Vulnerable Adult Abuse Prevention Policy" and sign a covenant agreement (Attachment C) indicating that they have read the policy and agree to abide by it. Individuals should attend the next available Safe Sanctuaries training.
3. In addition, all individuals working with children/youth/ or vulnerable adults must attend a "Safe Sanctuaries" training session covering the following topics:
  - Abuse Definitions
  - Abuse Symptoms
  - Inappropriate Conduct
  - Civil and Criminal Consequences of Misconduct
  - Prevention Policies
  - Screening Procedures
  - Reporting/Documentation Procedures
  - Allegation Resolution
  - Safe Sanctuaries Video

**A written record of attendance is mandatory and must be maintained in the Church Office.**

4. "Safe Sanctuaries" training will be offered annually and, as a minimum, must be renewed **every five (5) years**. To help assure all workers attend this mandatory training, multiple sessions will be offered.
3. Similar training sessions for families, the congregation and/or the public are also strongly recommended.

### IV-DOCUMENTATION/REPORTING

Abuse thrives when it goes unnoticed or unreported. A proper documentation and reporting procedure will enhance our ability to prevent abuse. PA Law 1292, No. 151, sec. 6311 specifically includes a requirement that clergy report child abuse. In addition, Sec. 6312 also states "...that any person may make such a report if that person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is an abused child." Sec. 6346 further states that that a "...person or official required to report a case of suspected child abuse who willfully fails to do so commits a summary offense for the first violation and a misdemeanor of the third degree for a second and subsequent violation." This law became effective July 1, 1995.

1. If a worker has reason to suspect that a child has been abused (whether inside or outside of church programs) he or she must report his or her suspicions to the appropriate Ministry Area Leader, Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator AND to a Pastor. If the accused is a Pastor, the report should be made directly to the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator and SPRC Chair. A confidential "Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse" form (Attachment D) must be used to document the incident .
2. A doctor or nurse may be consulted for assistance. It is the right of that worker also to report the incident directly to the PA Childline and Abuse Registry at 1-800-932-0313.
3. In the event of alleged abuse to a vulnerable adult, a pastor is to be notified immediately. It is the responsibility of the pastor to report this to the appropriate agency.
4. Once a report is made to a Pastor, it is his/her responsibility to take action. If there is any doubt as to whether to report to state authorities, the local office of Children and Youth Services where the incident occurred may be contacted. (Westmoreland County Children's Bureau 724-830-3300). Simply ask to speak to an intake worker.

**Note of Caution**

**If the caller is in need only of advice, he/she may identify himself or herself but should not identify the child or the suspect at that point. Once a child's or suspect's name is given, the intake worker is required to investigate.**

5. Documentation of all actions taken by workers and paid staff will be noted in the appropriate area of the "Report of Suspected incident of Abuse" form (Attachment D) and kept indefinitely in the designated secured file in the Church Office.

## V. HANDLING ALLEGATIONS INVOLVING CHURCH WORKERS

An accusation of abuse may occur in any church. Wrong reactions can multiply the pain and liability inherent in an abuse case. Our congregation and community will know that CUMC takes all allegations seriously and will handle them forthrightly with due respect for the individual's privacy and confidentiality.

In addition to the REPORTING steps (1 thru 5 listed above), additional steps must be taken (not necessarily in the order listed) if the alleged is a church worker.

1. A pastor and the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator will notify the parents if they are not already aware of the allegation.
2. The alleged should be treated with dignity. However, the worker will be relieved from his or her position by the pastor until an investigation is completed. The church will refrain from judging the individual as guilty or innocent and will continue to offer support and care while the investigation is ongoing. This applies to any allegation of abuse within or outside of the church.
3. The incident will be reported by the Pastor to CUMC's insurance company (Church Mutual Insurance Company), the District Superintendent, the SPRC Chair and the Church Council Chair.
4. Pastoral resources and support for the victim and the family will be extended. The care and safety of the victim is our first priority.

5. Information regarding allegations and accusations is extremely sensitive material and **must** be kept confidential. Therefore, this information should not be shared in inappropriate situations or with the media. If contacted by the media, the Senior Pastor will issue a statement for the church, but **will not** grant any interviews. All information will be typed and maintained by the Senior Pastor in the designated secured file. All inquiries should be referred to the Senior Pastor.

## **POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW**

The CUMC “Child/Youth or Vulnerable Adult Abuse Prevention Policy” shall be reviewed annually by the Staff Parish Relations Committee under the direction of the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator. The Pastors are to be included in this annual review. The intent of the annual review is to identify any areas in need of revision.

1. The Staff Parish Relations Committee has overall responsibility for the formulation, review and implementation of the “Child/Youth or Vulnerable Adult Abuse Prevention Policy”. This overall responsibility includes periodic compliance check(s) within the various CUMC Ministry Areas to assure that the policy is being followed.
2. However, each Ministry Area Leader or Committee Chairperson where workers (paid or volunteer) come into contact with child, youth/ or vulnerable adults, is responsible for monitoring **ongoing compliance** with the requirements of this Policy as it relates to their daily activities. Any non-compliances should be reported immediately to the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator within SPRC or the Pastor(s) for corrective action. Suggested revisions to the policy should also be made in writing to the SPRC for inclusion in the annual review.
3. The Ministry Area Screening Committee will be responsible for screening applicants and insuring verification and proof of necessary clearances are received at the Church Office. The Screening Committee will request the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator, SSC, to review the verification of the clearances and completion of training of their volunteers and/ or paid staff and provide the SSC a list of those persons. Records of clearances and training will be maintained in the church office in a **confidential locking file**.
4. Only the SPRC Chair, Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator and the Pastor(s) will have access to the confidential screening and clearance files and abuse allegation records kept in the Church Office. However, an up to date list of “cleared ”workers will be available to all CUMC Ministry Area Leaders through the Church Office. All records listed above will be maintained indefinitely in the Church Office.
5. The Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator will be responsible for assuring that training of the Church Leaders and workers (paid or volunteer) in the CUMC “Child/Youth or Vulnerable Adult Abuse Prevention Policy” is performed per the requirements of this policy. The SSC will maintain a written record of who has attended “Safe Sanctuaries” training. Training may be delegated to “qualified individuals” as determined by the Safe Sanctuaries Coordinator.
6. The “Child/Youth or Vulnerable Adult Abuse Prevention Policy” must be reviewed annually by the Staff Parish Relations Committee and approved by the Church Council and Church Conference.
7. Note that anyone holding the position of SSC shall be considered an “at large” member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee if he/she is not already a current member of that committee.

Rev 03 6/29/08

**VOLUNTEER APPLICATION**  
**Community United Methodist Church**  
**3487 Route 130**  
**Irwin, PA 15642**  
**Church office: (724) 744-3413**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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

If you have not lived in PA for the last five (5) years, please supply out of state address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Daytime Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Occupation: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Current job responsibilities and schedule: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Previous work experience: \_\_\_\_\_

Previous volunteer experience: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Special interests, hobbies and skills: \_\_\_\_\_

How many hours per week would you be able to volunteer? \_\_\_\_\_

Days \_\_\_\_\_ Evenings \_\_\_\_\_ Weekends \_\_\_\_\_

Can you make at least a one year commitment to this volunteer role? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have your own transportation? \_\_\_\_\_

Do you have a valid PA driver's license? \_\_\_\_\_

Why would you like to volunteer as a worker with children and/or youth? \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

What qualities do you have that would help you work with children and/or youth?

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Would you be available for periodic volunteer training sessions? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Attachment B

**POLICY GUIDELINES FOR SCREENING COMMITTEE**  
**Community United Methodist Church**  
**3487 Route 130**  
**Irwin, PA 15642**  
**Church office: (724) 744-3413**

A screening committee is defined by the head or leader of a defined ministry area that is going to be utilizing volunteers for that ministry. This committee could be a single person or a small group of people that will organize and lead this ministry.

1. Attachment A (Volunteer Application) must be completed by potential volunteer.
2. Once Attachment A is filled out by applicant, the screening committee must review application thoroughly to evaluate potential and make sure all questions are answered.
3. Advise applicant that they are required to supply the following clearances:
  - a. Act 151 Pennsylvania Child Abuse History
  - b. Act 34 Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal Record Check
4. If the applicant has not maintained a continuous residence in PA for the last five years, they must supply in addition to Act 151 and Act 34 the following clearance.
  - a. Act 114 Federal Criminal History Record
5. Communicate to the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator (SSC) the list of names of the potential volunteers so the SSC can verify that all required clearances are valid.
6. If the SSC notifies the screening committee that any of the clearances are missing or outdated, you must notify the applicant and assure that clearances are obtained.
7. When the selection process for volunteers is complete, the applications are to be given to the church office so they may be kept in a locked file.

**COVENENT AGREEMENT**

**Community United Methodist Church  
3487 Route 130  
Irwin, PA 15642  
Church office: (724) 744-3413**

As an individual who desires to work with children, youth or vulnerable adults at Community United Methodist Church (CUMC), I pledge to conduct myself in a manner that assures their physical safety and spiritual growth. By my signature, I also demonstrate my absolute and unwavering commitment to this pledge.

I have read the CUMC “CHILD/YOUTH OR VULNERABLE ADULTY ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY” and I fully understand its requirements and agree to abide by them during all my contacts with children, youth or vulnerable adults. I also understand that I have an obligation to report any suspected incidence of abuse to the appropriate CUMC personnel as instructed in the above policy. Failure to do so may involve termination, loss of volunteer worker privileges and/or possible criminal charges.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Attachment D

**REPORT OF SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF ABUSE**  
**Community United Methodist Church**  
**3487 Route 130**  
**Irwin, PA 15642**  
**Church office: (724) 744-3413**

1. Individual observing or receiving disclosure of alleged abuse: (Complete Lines 1 thru 6)

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

2. Victim's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Victim's age/date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Date/place of initial conversation with/report from victim: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Victim's statement (give your detailed summary here): \_\_\_\_\_

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

5. Name of person accused of alleged abuse : \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

6. Reported to Pastor\*: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Received by Pastor (Sign) \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

8. Call to victim's parent/guardian/designated family member or friend:

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. Call to appropriate local service agency:

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/time \_\_\_\_\_

Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Call to local law enforcement agency:

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date/time \_\_\_\_\_

Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

11. Other contacts:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\* If accused is a Pastor, the report must go directly to the SPRC Chair

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