Gordon's Chapel United Methodist Church
Hull, Georgia

Safe Sanctuary Policy - Preventing Abuse in the Church

Introduction:
GCUMC believes that the spiritual, emotion and physical wellbeing of our children, youth and vulnerable adults is imperative. We must do all we can to nurture and protect our children, youth and vulnerable adults. This policy is intended to provide a guide for that protection, as well as the protection of our adult workers and the church. This policy is enacted to insure that the parents, members, volunteers and staff of GCUMC have a clear understanding of what the policies and procedures are regarding the safety of our children, youth and vulnerable adults. The leadership of GCUMC   requests the cooperation of all in our church, as they must abide by the guidelines of this policy.

Policy Standards and General Christian Moral Standard:
Staff and/or volunteers of GCUMC church who work in any area of the children and youth ministries that includes but is not limited to: Sunday School, preschool, sports, scouts, adult ministry trips, homebound visitations, etc., are required to adhere to these policies and standards as moral Christians. A signed covenant statement in support of this policy is required before a person may serve.

Supervision of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy: (OUR SUPERVISOR IS KEN DEAL)
The Senior Pastor will appoint the person or committee (staff or volunteer) with the responsibility of the oversight of the Safe Sanctuary Policy. These policies govern all activities held by the church that involve children and youth under the age of 18, and/or any adult vulnerable adult (persons with a mental age of 18 years or less, or over the age of 65.)
These policies must be reviewed annually, reapproved by the Church Council (or Administrative Council) and presented at charge conference. These policies may be altered at any time with the approval of the Church Council (or Administrative Council) and the Trustees

The following are basic procedures that GCUMC Church will follow to reduce the possibility of abuse.
The "Two Adult" Rule
The two adult rule requires that no fewer than two adults be present at all times during any church sponsored program, event or ministry involving children and youth. If this is impossible, "floaters" or "roamers" who move in and out of rooms will be assigned. To the best of our ability, the two adults will not be related.
The "Five-Years Older" Rule
Those who are paid or volunteer to work with children and youth will be at least five years older than those sin the class or program. Those under age 18 may serve as "assistants" but not as lead workers or teachers.
Classroom Windows:
All classrooms will have at least one window in the door, if possible. The window must *not* be covered at any time with decorations, etc. If a classroom has no window in the door, the door must remain open.
6 Month Hospitality Rule
No person who has not been a member of or a regularly participating visitor in the congregation for less than 6 months shall serve as a lead teacher or volunteer with children and youth.

Open Door Counseling:
Any one-on-one counseling session with any person will be done with the door open. If at all possible, it should be done when another adult is nearby but not necessarily within hearing distance.

Transportation:
Transportation to and from activities held at the church is not the church's responsibility.
Church approved volunteers may provide transportation to and from activities held away from the church. Church approved volunteers must have a valid driver's license and an insurance card on file in the Church office. All participants should carry information regarding: (a) current medical condition, including but not limited, medications, allergies, etc.; (b) current physician; (c) a copy of any Advance Directive signed by participant; and (d) contact person, in case of emergency. ***Remember, the contact person should not be on a trip.***

Training
GCUMC Church will provide yearly training for all volunteers on the policies and procedures outlines above. Each new volunteer must complete formal Safe Sanctuaries training provided by the district, the local church, or on line through Trak-1. Records of those volunteers successfully completing training must be kept on file in the church office.

Vulnerable Adults:
While much of this policy addresses the need to protect our children and youth, GCUMC recognizes that abuse of impaired and older adults is a major concern. Many older adults are also subject to financial abuse. We must be vigilant for signs of abuse in our adult membership and report any suspected abuse, following the process outlined below. The local Department of Family and Children Services has a division with responsibility for supervising elder care.

Reporting Abuse:
GCUMC regards any form of abuse and evidence thereof as unacceptable and has a strict policy regarding the reporting of such abuse. This is a serious criminal allegation and will be taken seriously. As of January 2012, church volunteers are MANDATORY reporters. If a volunteer becomes aware of an abuse allegation, he or she must report it to the person responsible for the program ***IMMEDIATELY***. If there is not a staff member on the grounds, then the Senior Pastor should be contacted or his or her designee must be contacted. Do not hesitate to contact a staff member if you feel there is abuse occurring. For ALL allegations, a report MUST be made by the Reporter by phone to the Department of Family & Children's Services in the county of the victim's residence. A copy of the incident report must be turned into the Senior Pastor within twenty four hours. If any further reporting is needed, the Senior Pastor and/or designee will handle the future reporting, including a report to the District Superintendent and law enforcement. Should the press or TV become involved, only an approved church spokesperson should respond. It is better not to make any response. Do not try to interview the victim. Leave that process to the proper professional law enforcement official, who is better qualified.