

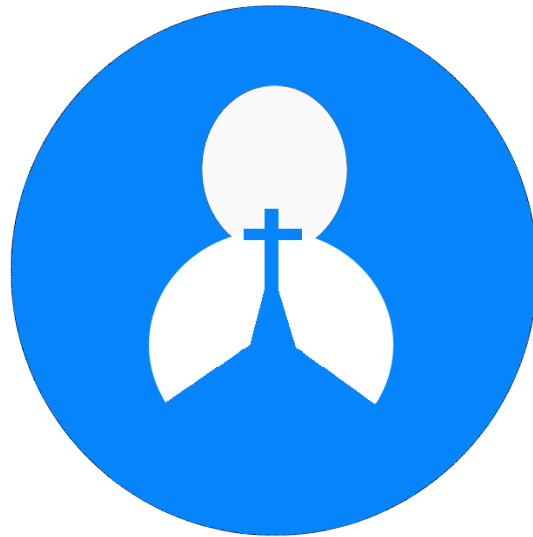


## Lebanon First United Methodist Church

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### Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries Policy



# SafeSpaces

Creating Safe Spaces that become Sacred Places

*[Jesus] took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." —Mark 9:36-37 NIV*

*[Jesus also said,] "If anyone causes one of these little ones—those who believe in me—to stumble, it would be better for them to have a large millstone hung around their neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea." —Matthew 18:6 NIV*

## **Introduction**

*Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma...Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.*

*God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from any abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.*

—from the 1996 General Conference Resolution

*The TWK UMC seeks to create a safe environment for children, youth, and vulnerable persons in which opportunities for abuse are minimized by the provision of proper enlistment and supervision of those persons working with them...Clergy and laity are encouraged to read this policy and make it an essential part of the operations of your local church. For more information or to seek clarity visit [twkumc.org](http://twkumc.org) and go to the Safe Spaces Ministry page.*

—from the Tennessee/Western Kentucky UMC Safe Sanctuary Policy

## **Purpose**

Lebanon FUMC is committed to providing and maintaining a safe, nurturing environment for all children, youth, and adults while they are participating in the life of the church.

## **Statement of Covenant**

We pledge to nurture an environment that is safe for all children, youth, and adults by:

- 1) Using prayerful discernment in selecting those who will work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults
- 2) Maintaining background checks for all staff, employees, and volunteers
- 3) Conducting thorough training of all new Staff/Employees/Volunteers of this policy and safe practices, and requiring regular refresher classes
- 4) Conducting annual classes for all staff, employees, and volunteers on all church policies, first aid, methods of discipline, etc.

- 5) Ensuring all staff, employees, and volunteers are aware of procedures for reporting suspected abuse of any kind, as a matter of law as well as Christian compassion

Thus, we adopt the following Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries Policy for the general safety of our community and for the prevention of abuse in our church.

## **Scope**

This Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries policy shall apply to all individuals — whether paid staff/ employees or unpaid volunteers — whose duties or volunteer activities bring them into direct contact with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults participating in any activities or events sponsored by Lebanon FUMC. Lebanon FUMC is committed to providing an environment that is as safe as possible for all who to the best of our ability. This policy does not supersede or countermand requirements that apply to any paid or unpaid staff/volunteers by reason of applicable law or regulation.

## **Definitions**

- A. Delineation of Ages/Ministries
  - a. **Adult** — a person who has attained the age of majority (18 years in TN except for alcohol/tobacco/vaping restrictions, which is 21)
  - b. **Child** — generally defined as person who is under 18 years of age
  - c. **Children's Ministry** — at Lebanon FUMC, includes all programs and care for children ages birth through 6<sup>th</sup> grade
  - d. **Youth Ministry** — at Lebanon FUMC, includes all programs and care for children ages 7<sup>th</sup> grade through 12<sup>th</sup> grade
  - e. **Vulnerable Adult** — any person aged 18 or above who, by reason of age, illness, mental or other disability, or other situation is unable to take care of themselves or to protect themselves against significant harm or exploitation
- B. Delineation of Roles
  - a. **Participants** — children, youth, adults, or vulnerable adults who are registered, enrolled, attending, or otherwise participating in an event or activity sponsored by Lebanon FUMC
  - b. **Staff** — any Lebanon FUMC clergy person, paid employee of the church, and/or paid employee of any children's, youth, or vulnerable person's ministry that has the care or supervision of a participant at an event
  - c. **Authority Figure** — a person who is a primary leader of any activity for children, youth, or vulnerable persons, and therefore responsible to be in charge of a group of children, youth, or a vulnerable person/persons and

to be giving direction, setting boundaries, disciplining appropriately, and/or maintaining safety in all situations (includes ministry directors and leaders). Such persons should be 21 years of age or older and at least 5 years older than the age group with which they are to work. This role requires background checks and extensive training in Safe Spaces and risk reduction.

- d. **Adult Volunteer** — any staff, employee, and/or volunteer who has the care/supervision of a participant/participants at an event. This role requires Safe Spaces training and background checks.
- e. **Adult Helper** — works temporarily, infrequently, or indirectly with children, youth, and/or vulnerable people, and does not have any direct supervision role. Such persons should be 18 years of age or older and at least 5 years older than the age group with which they are to work. This role requires situational briefing on policy and procedures related to the event.
- f. **Helper Under Age 18** — considered a child and, therefore, can serve in no role of authority over children, youth, or vulnerable persons. This role requires age-appropriate situational briefing on procedures related to the event.

C. Types of Abuse (applies to behaviors both in person and online)

- a. **Emotional/Mental** — abuse in which a person exposes a person to spoken and/or unspoken violence, emotional cruelty, and/or manipulation; includes shaming, humiliation, and cruelty
- b. **Neglect** — abuse in which a person endangers a person's health, safety, or welfare through negligence; includes withholding food, water, shelter, bathroom breaks, and other basic needs
- c. **Physical** — abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to another; includes hitting, shaking, and using unnecessary restraints
- d. **Sexual** — abuse in which sexual contact or language occurs between a person and another person (including a child/youth and another child/youth); includes inappropriate touching, exposing oneself, and sexually oriented conversations or language
- e. **Child Abuse** — harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a person responsible for the child's health or welfare or by a person in a position of trust; such harm may be physical, emotional, mental, or sexual and may occur or be threatened through language and/or in-person or virtual contact
- f. **Child Sexual Abuse** — any in-person or virtual interaction in which a child is used for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older child. A child is powerless either to consent to or resist such sexual acts. This includes language/innuendo, fondling, sexual intercourse, forced participation in

sexual acts, incest, exploitation for the purpose of pornography or prostitution, and/or exposure to pornography and/or adult sexual activity.

- g. **Vulnerable Adult Abuse** — harm or threatened harm to a vulnerable adult's health or welfare by a person responsible for the vulnerable adult's health or welfare or by a person in a position of trust; harm may be physical, emotional, mental, or sexual and may occur or be threatened through language and/or in-person or virtual contact

**D. Prohibited Conduct: Lebanon FUMC will not tolerate any physical, sexual, emotional, or mental abuse of any child, youth, or adult — in person and/or online — which breaches the trust relationship of our hospitable, safe, nurturing, Christian environment.** Includes but is not limited to:

- a. Physical abuse or bodily injury to a minor or vulnerable adult
- b. Neglect of a minor or vulnerable adult
- c. Causing mental or emotional injury to a minor or vulnerable adult
- d. Possession or being under the influence of any illegal substances
- e. Possession of any type of weapon on church property
- f. Any interaction between a child and an adult in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of an adult. This may or may not entail touching.
- g. Use of language with sexual connotations, overtones, or innuendo in the presence of, directed toward, or about a minor or any adult
- h. Sexual advances or activity of any kind between any adult and a minor or vulnerable adult
- i. Sexual advances or activity of any kind between a child/youth and another child/youth
- j. Possessing or watching obscene or pornographic materials

### **Screening of Staff and Volunteers**

- A. All persons, including staff, who intend to work with children, youth, and/or vulnerable persons at church-sponsored events, including overnight or longer events, must be properly screened and attend an age-appropriate training session on Safe Spaces/child protection and abuse and have current background check.
- B. Before serving, each applicant must be either a member of or an approved active participant of Lebanon FUMC for at least 6 months.
- C. A volunteer who has not been screened and trained will be able to serve in the presence of a staff member or volunteer who has been screened and trained.

## Training

- A. All staff, employees, and volunteers will be given a written copy of this policy and will sign a written acknowledgement that they have read and understand it.
- B. Upon completion of training, staff, employees, and volunteers will complete a Safe Spaces covenant and submit it to leadership (prior to any participation).
- C. A training course will be offered periodically throughout the year for new staff and/or current volunteers to inform them of the church's policies and procedures.
- D. All staff shall participate in mandatory training as deemed necessary. Paid staff shall be required to annually renew their covenant to abide by and cooperate with the church's policies and procedures.
- E. All forms will be kept on file in the ministry director's office under strict confidentiality.
- F. All volunteers already screened and approved shall renew their covenant yearly to abide by and cooperate with the church's policies and procedures.
- G. Training materials will be available for review from the staff person directly responsible for the ministry area.
- H. Certified First Aid/CPR training will be offered on an annual basis.

## Safe Spaces Procedures

- A. **Appropriate Boundaries** — *All persons (staff, employees, volunteers, and participants) will maintain physical and emotional boundaries appropriate to their specific roles, ages, and relationships to others.*
- B. **Equal Treatment** — All ministry participants—including children, youth, adults, staff, employees, volunteers, visitors, etc.—will be treated equally, regardless of sex, race, age, orientation, background, religion, or other qualities and characteristics.
- C. **Ministry Requirements** — All staff, employees, or volunteers for church-sponsored and ministry events must have completed a background check, interviewed with the ministry leader, and completed training on the Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries Policy.
- D. **Six-Month Rule** — All volunteers involved with children, youth, or vulnerable adults must be members of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment. Persons not meeting this minimum requirement may serve only in partnership with fully screened and trained volunteers.
- E. **Two-Adult Rule** — *There will be two adults present for all interactions with children and youth at all times, both in person and online.*

- a. In person interactions in any room must be observable at all times from outside of the room. If one-on-one interactions are unavoidable, they should occur with door open, in an unenclosed area, and with the knowledge of another approved adult.
  - b. Online interactions should take place in public forums observable by others (no private messaging); see *Electronic Communication* section for details and exceptions (pages 10-11).
- F. **Five Years Older Rule** — Persons supervising children and/or youth in person will be at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth participant.
- G. **Recommended Ratios** — Ratios may vary depending on the age. ***It is the responsibility of the Authority Figure to know the exact ratio, but a minimum of two adults must always be present.*** Employees, volunteers, and other caregivers are empowered and encouraged to limit children/youth to these recommended ratios or lower.
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|--|------|
| Infants-3 years                              | 2:10 |
| 4 years-Kindergarten                         | 2:20 |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> grade-5 <sup>th</sup> grade  | 2:30 |
| 6 <sup>th</sup> grade-12 <sup>th</sup> grade | 2:40 |
- For any activity held off church premises, it is recommended that a stricter ratio of adults to children/youth apply (typically 2:16 minimum).
- H. **Physical Contact** — Lebanon FUMC promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting ministry participants, leaders, and volunteers. To that end, we encourage appropriate forms of physical contact and prohibit inappropriate ones.
- a. **Appropriate Physical Contact:** side hugs; handshakes; high-fives; pats on the arm, shoulder, or back; holding hands with young children in escorting situations
  - b. **Inappropriate (Prohibited) Physical Contact:** kissing; full-frontal hugs; lap-sitting older than kindergarten; piggyback rides, tickling; wrestling; massage; touching private areas outside of authorized and documented personal care assistance; showing affection in isolated areas or one-on-one; any form of touching or affection which is unwanted
- I. **Verbal Interactions** — Staff, employees, and volunteers are prohibited from speaking in a way that is or could be construed as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. They must not initiate personal sexually oriented conversations or discuss their own sexual activities.
- a. **Appropriate Verbal Interactions:** positive reinforcement, appropriate jokes, encouragement, praise, affirmations
  - b. **Inappropriate (Prohibited) Verbal Interactions:** name-calling, cursing, off-color or sexual jokes, secrets, shaming, belittling, derogatory remarks, harsh language which may frighten, threaten, or humiliate

- J. **Discipline** — Staff, employees, and volunteers are not to use physical force except in self-defense or defense of others. It is against Lebanon FUMC policy to use corporal punishment.
- K. **Visibility** — In classrooms where there is not a window, the door must remain open when the room is in use. If one-on-one interactions between adults and children/youth are unavoidable, the interaction should occur with the door opened, in an unenclosed area and with the knowledge of another adult.
- L. **Movement Within the Facility** — Parents/guardians are responsible for escorting their children from one location to another at all times (i.e., to the bathroom during worship, from worship to donuts, from Sunday School to worship, etc.).
- M. **Drop Off/Pick Up Procedures** — Parents/Adult guardians will sign children in and out of rooms/events. This includes VBS, children's choir, Sunday school, nursery, and other as needed.
- N. **Medical Release/Registration Forms** — All persons attending age-level events shall have a completed medical release form and completed parental permission form. The medical release form will be valid for a 1-year period beginning with the first event for which it is submitted; a new form must be submitted if a change in medical status occurs. All forms will be maintained by the ministry director and will be available upon request as needed.
- O. **Transportation** — In order for one driver to provide transportation for one child/youth passenger, parent/guardian permission must be obtained in advance.
- P. **Rooming** — In situations where adults are lodging with children or youth in a hotel, cabin, tent or other, there must be two fully screened adults present in the room at all times. Adults may not sleep in the same bed with children or youth.
- Q. **Searches** — Lebanon FUMC staff, employees, and volunteers are not to perform searches on children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Staff shall notify parents and the appropriate law enforcement if a child/youth is committing or has committed an unlawful act upon church campus or at a church function. Such unlawful acts may include but are not limited to possession of any weapons, drugs, alcohol, or dangerous instruments.
- R. **Facility Security** — Authority Figures are responsible to ensure the security of the facility at all times during their respective department events, activities, etc. This includes requiring that all doors be supervised by at least one adult when open/in use, and are securely locked when not in use and after the event/before leaving.

### **Anti-Bullying**

- A. **Lebanon FUMC will not tolerate the mistreatment or abuse of minors by adults, adults by other adults, or minors by other minors. In addition, we will not tolerate any behavior that is classified under the definition of bullying, and to the extent**



**that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps as needed to eliminate such behavior.**

- B. **Definitions** — Bullying is aggressive behavior that is intentional, repeated over time, and involving an imbalance of power or strength.
- a. **Physical Bullying** — when one person engages in physical force against another person, such as by hitting, punching, pushing, kicking, pinching, or restraining another.
  - b. **Verbal Bullying** — when someone uses their words to hurt another, such as by belittling or calling another hurtful names.
  - c. **Nonverbal, Emotional, or Relational Bullying** — when one person manipulates a relationship or desired relationship to harm another person. This includes social exclusion, friendship manipulation, gossip, and intimidating by using gestures.
  - d. **Cyberbullying** — the intentional and overt act of aggression toward another person by way of any technological tool, such as email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, or website postings (including blogs). Cyberbullying can involve:
    - Sending mean, vulgar, or threatening messages or images.
    - Posting sensitive, private information about another person.
    - Pretending to be someone else in order to make that person look bad.
    - Intentionally excluding someone from an online group.
    - Hazing: activity expected of someone joining or participating in a group that humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers that person regardless of that person's willingness to participate.
    - Sexualized bullying: when bullying involves behaviors that are sexual in nature. Examples include sexting, bullying that involves exposures of private body parts, and verbal bullying involving sexualized language or innuendos.

Anyone who sees an act of bullying and then encourages it is engaging in bullying. This policy applies to all adults and minors.

### **Electronic Communication**

Lebanon FUMC strongly encourages staff, employees, and volunteers to refrain from electronic communication and/or social media use with minors outside of regular programming. However, when these interactions are part of programming or otherwise unavoidable, observe the following guidelines:

- A. Where available, use public social media pages and platforms created by ministry leaders for the program instead of individual personal profiles. This allows administrators to monitor communication and ensures against private (and possibly inappropriate) conversations or accusations. Lebanon FUMC monitors our social media pages and removes any posts that violate our policies for appropriate behavior.
- B. Where available, use texting platforms designed for groups, clubs, or team communication and which allow all communication to be seen by others (GroupMe, etc.) instead of personal phone numbers.
- C. Follow all Safe Spaces Procedures for verbal interactions (page 8).
- D. Do not post inappropriate pictures or inappropriate comments on the pictures of others.
- E. Unless absolutely necessary, limit interactions to office hours (8AM-5PM M-Th, 8AM-Noon on Fri and Sun, or during your ministry events).
- F. Keep communications professional in nature, and limit discussion to programming purposes.
- G. If a minor contacts you through private messaging, you must:
  - a. Alert the ministry leader. Carefully document and forward it to the ministry leader and/or an approved second adult to include them in the conversation per the Two-Adult Rule (page 7).
  - b. Exceptions may be made under emergency situations wherein private messages occur in order to locate a minor and secure their safety, but all such contact must be documented accordingly.
  - c. If a minor or vulnerable adult reveals abuse or inappropriate interactions, you must report this information to a ministry leader, and in the case of abuse, child protective services or law enforcement immediately (see pages 12-13).
- H. If you are serving in a mentor or advocate relationship with a minor:
  - a. Evaluate and secure written approval from parents/guardians for outside communications for that minor.
  - b. You may choose or be required to include a ministry leader or second approved adult in your direct communications.
- I. Lebanon FUMC informs parents/guardians of any posts or online behavior which goes against this policy on our pages and/or which directly affects our ministry groups and/or events. To the extent that such actions are disruptive, we will take steps as needed to eliminate such behavior.
- J. Lebanon FUMC will provide minors and parents/guardians with information about how to respond to abuse and inappropriate communication from staff,

employees, volunteers, and other adults or minors, including safe methods for reporting concerns.

- K. Parents and guardians may request in writing that a minor not be contacted through any form of electronic communication or social media by any members of the organization.

## **Outside Interactions**

When interactions with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults outside of regularly scheduled activities are part of programming, or are due to familial or social relationships, or are otherwise unavoidable, then staff, employees, and volunteers must observe the following guidelines:

- A. Staff member/employees/volunteer shall work to ensure proper boundaries are drawn and followed during church and ministry programming (avoid favoritism, nepotism, etc.).
- B. Parents/guardians must give written approval of outside contact including a release-of-liability statement.

## **Reporting of Accidents/Abuse**

### A. Accidents/Injuries

- a. The staff/employee/volunteer present shall fill out a hard copy of the Incident Report form. A copy shall be given to a parent/guardian, the original to the director of the ministry area to keep on file.
- b. Each child/youth shall have a completed emergency treatment form on file.

### B. Abuse

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with minors or allegations of abuse will be taken seriously.

- a. Lebanon FUMC will provide minors and parents/guardians with information about how to respond to abuse and inappropriate communication from staff, employees, volunteers, and other adults or minors, including safe methods for reporting concerns.
- b. Staff/employees/volunteers shall immediately report any incident actually witnessed, learned of indirectly, or suspected to a staff person or ministry leader. A ministry leader is anyone who is in a position of formal responsibility for an event, activity, or group.
- c. The staff person/ministry leader will do whatever is necessary to ensure the child, youth, or adult is safe and cared for in the immediate moment.
- d. In cases involving abuse, alleged sexual harassment, or sexual misconduct of a minor, the person receiving the report shall promptly

report the incident to the local authorities of child welfare and protective services. Lebanon FUMC will fully cooperate with authorities if allegations of abuse are made which require investigation.

- e. The staff/employee/volunteer shall fill out an Incident Report form. The person making the report shall also notify the ordained clergy.
- f. If a staff person is involved, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee chairperson will be notified by one of the pastors.
- g. An ordained clergyperson will contact the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent cannot be reached, the bishop's office will be contacted.
- h. An ordained clergyperson will notify legal counsel and insurance agent.

### **Media Response**

In the event of any form of abuse, church staff and members will not speak to the media. The District Superintendent and Senior Pastor (unless the Senior Pastor is involved in the abuse) shall turn over the information to allow the Conference Media Crisis Response team to make public announcements.