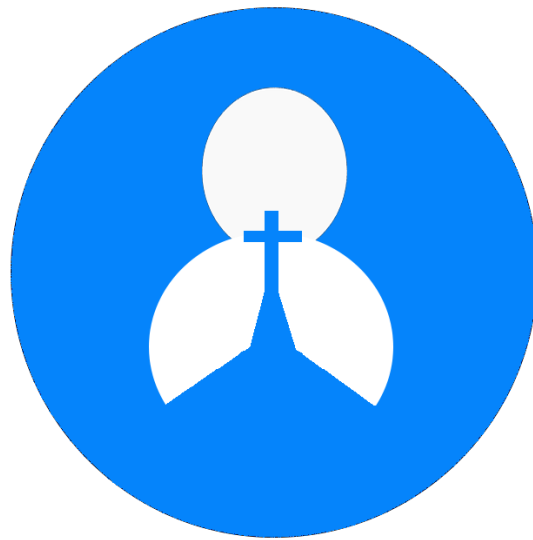




Lebanon First United Methodist Church
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Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries Policy



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 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) Doing and maintaining background checks for all staff, employees, and volunteers
- 3) Conducting thorough training of all new staff, employees, and volunteers regarding 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, in covenant, 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 participate in any Lebanon FUMC ministry to best of our ability within the conditions of the situation. 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 Age
 - a. **Adult** — a person who has attained the age of majority (18 years in Tennessee except for alcohol/tobacco/vaping restrictions, for which it 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 6th grade
 - d. **Youth Ministry** — at Lebanon FUMC, includes all programs and care for children ages 7th grade through 12th 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 (includes behaviors in person and/or online)

- a. **Emotional** — abuse in which a person exposes a person to spoken and/or unspoken violence, emotional cruelty, and/or manipulation
- b. **Neglect** — abuse in which a person endangers a person's health, safety, or welfare through negligence
- c. **Physical** — abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to another
- d. **Sexual** — abuse in which sexual contact or language occurs between a person and another person (including a child/youth and another child/youth)
- 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 Adults 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; such 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 — any form of physical, sexual, emotional, or mental abuse of any child, youth, or adult — in person and/or online — which breaches the trust relationship that is a hallmark of a hospitable, safe, nurturing, Christian environment.** Includes but is not limited to:

- a. Physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor or vulnerable adult
- b. Neglect of a minor or vulnerable adult, including failure to provide supervision
- c. Causing mental and/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 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 – including staff, employees, volunteers, and participants - will maintain physical and emotional boundaries appropriate to their specific roles, ages, and relationships to others.*
- B. **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.
- C. **Two-Adult Rule** — *There will be two adults present with children and youth at all times.* In addition, those in the room will be observable at all times from outside of the room. If one-on-one interactions between adults and children/youth are unavoidable, the interaction should occur with the door open, in an unenclosed area, and with the knowledge of another adult.
- D. **Five Years Older Rule** — Persons supervising children and/or youth will be at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth participant. It is expected that all staff or volunteers for church-sponsored events will have completed a background check,

interview with the ministry leader, and completed training on the Safe Spaces/Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

- E. **Recommended Ratios** — Ratios will 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.

Infants-3 years	2:10
4 years-Kindergarten	2:20
1 st grade-5 th grade	2:30
6 th grade-12 th 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).

- F. **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.
- G. **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.
- H. **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.).
- I. **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.
- J. **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.
- K. **Transportation** — In order for one driver to provide transportation for one child/youth passenger, parent/guardian permission must be obtained in advance.
- L. **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.
- M. **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.
- N. **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.

Reporting of Accidents/Incidents

- A. Accidents/Injuries
 - a. The staff/employee/volunteer present shall fill out an Incident Report form and make a copy. The 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 Incidents
 - a. Staff/volunteers shall immediately report any incident actually witnessed, learned of indirectly, or suspected to a staff person or adult supervisor.
 - b. The staff person or adult supervisor will do whatever is necessary to ensure the child, youth, or adult is safe and cared for. An adult supervisor is anyone who is in a position of formal responsibility for an event, activity, or group. E.g., teacher, teacher's assistant, youth counselor, leader, or chaperone, etc.
 - c. In cases involving alleged sexual harassment or sexual misconduct of a minor child (birth to 18 years), the person receiving the report shall promptly report the incident to the local authorities of child welfare and protective services.
 - d. The person making the report shall also notify the ordained clergy.
 - e. If a staff person is involved, the Staff-Parish Relations Committee chairperson will be notified by one of the pastors.
 - f. An ordained clergyperson will contact the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent cannot be reached, the bishop's office will be contacted.
 - g. Church staff and members will not speak to the media, but take information that will allow the Conference Media Crisis Response team to make public announcements.
 - h. 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 take the information to allow the Conference Media Crisis Response team to make public announcements.