



Safe Sanctuaries Policy

Woodbine United Methodist Church

CALLING

Woodbine United Methodist Church (WUMC) is a sacred place where God's people of all ages come together for worship, study, service and fellowship. The ministries of WUMC seek to share the Good News of the Gospel of Christ and make disciples of Jesus Christ in order that all who enter may come to know God and experience the love of Christ.

MANDATE AND PURPOSE

The Southeast Georgia Conference of the United Methodist Church requires that each local church develop a program to ensure their facilities are welcoming and safe for children and youth. This program is termed "Safe Sanctuaries." The policies and requirements contained in this document were developed by WUMC Youth and Children's ministries to comply with conference requirements, Georgia State Law, and previously approved local policies to reduce the risk of abuse to children and youth and to protect the adult workers (either paid or volunteer) who interact with those children and youth in any church activity, whether on-site or away from the church buildings. By establishing these policies and procedures, we demonstrate our commitment to provide a safe environment for our children and youth as they grow in their relationship with God. We believe it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk of abuse and/or false allegations by following these procedures.

COVENANT

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the safety of our children and youth, as well as of the workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudential operating procedures in our ministries; we will educate our workers with children and youth regarding the use of appropriate procedures; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of the laws of the State of Georgia; and we will be prepared to respond should such an incident occur.

In all our ministries with Children and Youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be surrounded by steadfast love, established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.

DEFINITIONS

Children: Age 4 – Grade 5
Youth: Attending Grade 6 – Grade 12 or <19 years of age if not attending school
Adults: 18 Years of Age and older

* Legal adults may remain part of the UMYF as long as they are attending high school and are less than 20 years of age – the YCM Coordinator will ensure there is a smooth transition from youth to young adult

Sexual Abuse: Any contact or interaction between a child and another person which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator and/or any additional person. This contact or interaction can include rape, molestations, forcing a child to look at or fondle the sexual parts of another person, and exploitation of a child through pornography and prostitution.

YCM: Youth and Children's Ministries – Ages Birth – 18 years old

YCM Worker: A person, 18 years or older that has met all the requirements in this policy to work with children and youth. Includes nursery workers, Sunday School teachers, UMYF workers, YCM special event workers, or anyone working with any designated group of children and/or youth.

YCM Leader: A worker in charge of a group of children or youth.

YCM Coordinator: The person appointed by the charge conference to oversee the children's and youth ministries who chairs the YCM Committee

UMYF: United Methodist Youth Fellowship – a group of youth and children from 3rd to 12th grade who congregate periodically in Christian fellowship

GENERAL PROCEDURES

1. WUMC's Safe Sanctuaries policy will be approved by the Church Council and available to all church members.
 - a. Staff and Volunteers with children and youth will receive a copy of this policy.
 - b. Parents and Guardians will receive a copy of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy when their children enter the Sunday School at Age 4 and/or when their children enter the Youth Ministry at Grade 6.
 - c. The Safe Sanctuary Policy will be included in our new member packets, available for pickup in the narthex, and available online at www.woodbineumc.com.
 - d. This policy will be reviewed every three years by Youth and Children's Committee, Nursery Workers, and Sunday School Superintendent who will make recommendations for revision to the Church Council. The YCM Coordinator will maintain the detailed abuse reporting procedure current at all times.

2. Staff, leaders, and other volunteers will know the location of emergency aid kits, emergency escape routes/devices, and have telephone access (cell) for emergency medical assistance.
3. Facility doors leading to areas not in use for the current program will be locked. Classroom doors will remain unlocked when occupied. Specifically:
 - a. Bathroom doors will be blocked partially open during Sunday School, Children's Church, and when any children/youth specific programming is in progress.
 - b. Classroom doors without a glass cutout or peep hole viewer will remain cracked open unless two adults are present. These viewers will not be covered or obscured.
 - c. The lock for the gate leading to the upstairs children and youth area will be locked on the clasp when the gate is opened to prevent the gate from being locked with persons upstairs. Further, the upstairs will be verified void of people before the gate is locked shut.
 - d. Electrical panels and/or electrical equipment rooms in areas where children/youth programming is in progress shall be locked unless being accessed by authorized personnel.
4. Off-campus specific requirements:
 - a. Written parental permission and medical forms must be completed in the advance of the event. Forms must be specific to the event, i.e. not generic in nature.
 - b. Transportation – Workers transporting children or youth shall not be alone with a child in a vehicle
 - c. Transportation to/from the church outside of the actual event (including the Sunday service) is a private agreement between the children/youth's parents and the worker – this arrangement is outside the scope of this policy.

YCM WORKERS/LEADERS

1. Individuals who are suspected of or who have been convicted of either child sexual abuse or physical abuse or domestic violence will not be allowed to volunteer service in any church sponsored activity or program for children or youth.
2. All persons working with children or youth are required to:
 - a. be members or regular attendees of WUMC for a minimum of three months or have been known to the staff or another member/attendee for a minimum of six months.
 - b. be familiar with this policy and its requirements
 - c. agree to abide by and enforce this policy by signing a covenant
 - d. authorize WUMC to conduct a criminal background and driving history check
 - e. participate in annual and special training on the subjects covered by this policy
3. Adult YCM workers should observe the two-person rule whenever possible. Where this is not possible, a roaming adult shall be utilized to monitor the activity or the spaces where the activities are taking place. The Sunday School Superintendent or the assistant shall monitor the bathrooms, hallway, and upstairs frequently during the Sunday School hour to ensure the safety of all participants.

4. Adult to Children/Youth Ratios: (No fewer than two qualified adult leaders will be present at all children and youth events, on or off campus.)

Children: 1:15 (on-campus) 1:6 (off-campus)

Youth: 1:25 (on-campus) 1:10 (off-campus)

5. YCM Workers should immediately report any behaviors that seem abusive or inappropriate to the leader in charge.

6. Volunteers who serve as teachers and leaders of children and middle school youth will be at least 18 years of age and those working with high school youth will be at least 21 years of age. While any qualified adult worker can serve as the second person or be included in the adult ratio, the person-in-charge of the group must meet the age differential requirement above.

APPLICATION, VERIFICATION, AND BACKGROUND CHECKS

1. All church staff, volunteers, and pastors who work with children and youth will be required to first submit an application and authorize a criminal background and driver's license check (Appendix A). Until the application is reviewed and the background check is adjudicated, these people may not serve in any capacity as a children/youth worker or leader.

2. Procedure:

- a. A person who desires to work with children or youth picks up an application (Appendix A) from the church office, YCM Office, or downloads it from the church website.
- b. The completed application is turned in to the church office or YCM Coordinator and a photocopy of the applicant's federal or state identification is obtained.
- c. The application is reviewed, personal/church references are checked, and the background check is initiated by the YCM Coordinator or their representative per Appendix B. The background check will consist of at a minimum, identity and social security number verification, national database search, and DMV history. WUMC uses First Advantage (formerly Lexis Nexus) as the provider for performing the investigations as recommended by the South Georgia Conference. The investigation will normally include a search of local court house records where the person has resided for the past fifteen years. Any flags on the national databases will be followed-up by a local records search to determine charge disposition regardless of the time frame involved.
- d. Once the preliminary results of the background check are received, additional searches may be required based on the applicant's background, previous residences, and national database flags. Particular attention will be given to derogatory information obtained in the investigation that was not disclosed on the application.
- e. The background investigation and application package will be reviewed by the YCM Coordinator and forwarded to the church secretary who will enter the information into the children and youth worker tracking spreadsheet and will file the package in a locked filing cabinet.
- f. Applicant packages with complete and positive references, clear background checks, and otherwise meet all of the requirements regarding the application of this policy and are then eligible to work with children and youth pending initial training.

g. Persons with a recent criminal history, in particular sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, domestic violence, felony charges, drug-related charges, alcohol abuse, excessive traffic violations, etc. are referred to the pastor for disposition. In general, persons who are found to represent a potential threat of committing abuse, violating this policy, or not being a proper role model will not be allowed to serve as YCM workers. Applicants with only significant traffic violations may be allowed to serve as workers, but may not be allowed to transport. Any limitations placed on an applicant will be detailed in a formal participation agreement.

3. To respect the applicant's privacy, only the pastor, church secretary, YCM Coordinator, and the representative performing the background checks will have access to the completed packages.

4. A background check will be performed on the pastor(s) upon appointment to WUMC. The completed package will be reviewed by the SPPR Chairperson.

5. Only background checks performed by WUMC using the process described above will be accepted for any children and youth program sponsored by the church. An exception, however, may be granted if the program has its own requirements that are equivalent or more stringent than WUMC's, e.g. the Boy Scouts. Exceptions must be approved through the YCM Committee and Church Council.

6. Background checks may be performed for other positions in the church such as the Finance Committee Chair, Financial Secretary, and Treasurer; however, the requirements for these checks are outside the scope of this policy even though using the same provider and representative.

ELECTRONIC ACCESS, PUBLIC MEDIA, PRIVATE INFORMATION

1. WUMC has internet access both through installed equipment and via WiFi throughout the facility. All internet access will be filtered at the router level to minimize the risk of exposure in inappropriate material.

2. WUMC will only publish photos of children or youth whose parents have signed a media release form. Youth and children's names will never be published and name tags will be removed or digitally obscured.

3. Regarding social media, WUMC will not "tag" youth or children or otherwise associate their name, login-id, handle, etc. with their picture. Association may occur in social media's private groups that are closed to public access. Social media groups established for children or youth must have at least two administrators.

4. Child and family information collected by YCM or the Nursery is only shared with the YCM Committee/Nursery staff, the pastor, and the church secretary and then only as necessary to properly care for and minister to the particular child or youth. Only information required for the constituent role will be released to other church committees.

PROCEDURES SPECIFIC TO YOUTH AND CHILDREN

1. Children will attend the appropriate grade/age level equivalent to the grade/age level they attend in school or preschool.
2. If a child repeats or defers attendance of a grade in school, that child will also repeat or defer attendance of that grade in Christian education.
3. Youth and Children will have age-appropriate training on this policy annually.

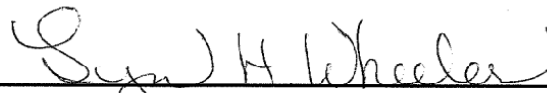
PHYSICAL, SEXUAL, OR EMOTIONAL ABUSE/NEGLECT REPORTING PROCEDURE

1. Purpose: By reporting, you are helping to end the cycle of abuse and to ensure the safety of our children. Sexual perpetrators have been found to have numerous victims and a high recidivism rate.
2. **A detailed reporting procedure with names and phone numbers is maintained by the YCM Coordinator and is posted in the education wing and church office.** A copy of the procedure is carried by the YCM leader on all off-campus events.
3. Order of Report (General Outline):
 - a. A report of inappropriate behavior (possible abuse) is made to a volunteer, teacher, or church staff person.
 - b. Volunteer, teacher or staff reports to Senior Pastor.
 - c. Senior Pastor or Designee
 - 1) Safeguards victim
 - 2) Contacts Department of Family and Children's Services
 - 3) Contacts victim's parents if not the suspected perpetrator
 - 4) Notifies church leaders, appropriate staff members
 - 5) Notifies District Superintendent
 - d. Department of Family and Children Services
 - 1) Interviews victim
 - 2) Contacts police in the county the abuse occurred
 - e. Police Department
 - 1) Interviews victim
 - 2) Interviews suspected perpetrator
 - 3) Refers case to District Attorney or find abuse case is unsubstantiated
4. No one on the church staff, including the pastors, should interview or attempt to investigate the situation or allegation.

RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

1. Every allegation will be taken seriously. Adequate care and respect must be offered to the alleged victims and alleged perpetrators until the allegation can be substantiated or cleared.
2. The safety and security of the alleged victim must be safeguarded before the person accused of abuse is confronted.
3. The parents/guardians of the suspected victim will be notified immediately.
4. All procedures listed in the previous section on Reporting will be strictly followed.
5. All records relating to the matter will be maintained in confidential files.
6. All efforts in handling the situation will be carefully documented.
7. The Senior Pastor or his/her designee will notify the liability insurer and request the Trustees obtain legal counsel for the Church about the alleged incident.
8. The Senior Pastor will be the spokesperson for WUMC unless the pastor or a member of his/her family is the one who is accused
9. Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities, as circumstances dictate, until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

**This revision (2) to the WUMC Safe Sanctuary Policy was approved
by the Church Council on October 14,2014.**



Lynn Wheeler, Recording Secretary

Appendix A: CHURCH STAFF AND VOLUNTEER APPLICATION AND SCREENING FOR WORKING WITH MINORS

Appendix B: SAFE SANCTUARY VOLUNTEER/STAFF SCREENING CHECKLIST

CHURCH STAFF AND VOLUNTEER APPLICATION AND SCREENING FOR WORKING WITH MINORS

This application is to be completed by all applicants for any position (volunteer or compensated) involving the supervision or custody of minors. This is not an employment application form. Persons seeking a position in the church as a paid employee will be required to complete an employment application in addition to this screening form. It is being used to help the church provide a safe and secure environment for those children and youth who participate in our programs and use our facilities. The information in this application is only shared with the Youth and Children's Ministry Coordinator, pastor, church secretary, and a representative used to conduct the reference/background checks. The applicant must disclose the information requested in order to be considered for any position working with youth and children. Falsifying or omitting information can be reason in itself to decline eligibility in the program. All staff and volunteers eighteen years of age and above who work with children and/or youth at Woodbine United Methodist Church must complete a background check. No other background checks are acceptable. No exceptions unless approved by Church Council.

Today's Date: _____ Birthdate: _____
(REQUIRED FOR BACKGROUND CHECK)

Full Legal Name: _____
FIRST MIDDLE LAST SUFFIX

List aliases / Maiden Name: _____

Present Address: _____

Present City / State / Zip: _____

If less than five years at present address:

Previous Address: _____

Previous City / State / Zip: _____

County: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Social Security Number: _____ (REQUIRED FOR BACKGROUND CHECK)

Driver's License: _____ | _____
STATE NUMBER

HISTORY:

Church of which you are a member:

NAME	WHEN JOINED
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List (name, city, state) of other churches you have attended previously during the past year?

List previous church work involving children/youth (list each organization's name, city, state, type of work performed, and dates)

List previous non-church work involving children/youth (list each organization's name and address, type of work performed, and dates)

List any gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that have prepared you for children's or youth work? Do you prefer to work with a particular age group?

Have you been ever been convicted of a felony or misdemeanor: YES NO

If "yes", describe with dates: _____

PERSONAL REFERENCES (People who know you personally not a family member or relative):

NAME HOW LONG HAVE THEY KNOWN YOU?

ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP

NAME HOW LONG HAVE THEY KNOWN YOU?

ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP

REFLECTION (Is there anything in your past that you believe could cause the church to be concerned for your suitability to work with children or youth?):

APPLICANT STATEMENTS:

- The information contained in this application is true, complete, and correct to the best of my knowledge.
- I hereby request any company that Woodbine United Methodist Church uses for background checks to release any information which pertains to any record of convictions contained in its files or in any criminal files maintained on me whether local, state, or national. I hereby release the fore mentioned company and Woodbine United Methodist Church from any and all liability from such information.
- I authorize any references or churches listed in this application to give you any information including opinions that they may have regarding my character and fitness for children's or youth work. In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of the application by Woodbine United Methodist Church, I also certify that any person(s) who may furnish such information concerning me should not be held accountable for giving this information and I do hereby release said person(s) from any and all liability which may be incurred as a result of collecting such information. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any persons or organization identified by me in this application.
- **I further state that I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE APPLICANT'S STATEMENTS ABOVE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF AND SIGN THIS STATEMENT OF MY OWN FREE ACT. This is a legally binding agreement which I have read and understood.**

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE

WITNESS (Not a relative or family member)

DATE

WOODBINE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH COVENANT WITH VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

Woodbine United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, vulnerable adults, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation’s commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

Please answer each of the following questions: (circle one)

- 1. As a volunteer in this congregation or a paid employee of Woodbine United Methodist Church, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth? YES NO

- 2. As a volunteer or employee of Woodbine United Methodist Church that works with children or youth do you agree to observe the “Two-Adult Rule” or properly use a roving worker at all times? YES NO

- 3. As a volunteer or employee of Woodbine United Methodist Church that works with children or youth do you agree to participate in annual training of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy of the church as well as any associated training? YES NO

- 4. As a volunteer or employee of Woodbine United Methodist Church that works with children or youth do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor? YES NO

- 5. As a volunteer or employee of Woodbine United Methodist that works with children or youth, do you agree to discuss with a pastor of this congregation your experience, if any, as a survivor of child abuse? YES NO

- 6. As a volunteer or employee of Woodbine United Methodist church that works with children or youth, do you agree to inform a pastor of this congregation if you are ever suspected or accused of child abuse? YES NO

I have read this Participation Covenant, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

PRINTED NAME

SIGNATURE

DATE

