

SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY

First United Methodist Church

Lancaster, PA

A Policy to Reduce the Risk of Abuse in the Church and to
Keep our Children Safe

Adopted by Charge Conference on December 3, 2015

PREAMBLE

God has called us to make the ministries of First United Methodist Church, Lancaster, PA (“First Church”) safe, protecting our children from abuse and exploitation. God has also called us to create communities of faith where children can be safe and grow strong in their Christian faith.

Jesus taught “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me,” (Mark 9:37 NRSV) and “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6 NRSV)

The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state “...children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse.”

At each child’s baptism, we affirm our responsibility to their safety by our congregational response, pledging:

“With God’s help, we will so order our lives after the example of Christ that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (The Book of Worship, Baptismal Covenant, Congregational Pledge II)

Building on these foundations, we recognize that our faith calls us to offer hospitality and protection to all children, as well as those who are committed to ministering to them as volunteers and employees. Often, abuse occurs in places where children feel safe – homes, schools, camps, and even churches.

First Church adopted a policy to address these concerns on June 10, 1996. The Policy was entitled the “Sexual Harassment, Abuse, and Misconduct Policy.” In 2008, the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of The United Methodist Church (“Conference”) established a policy that can help to 1) prevent such abuse from happening in the Conference’s churches; 2) make the Conference’s churches places where children can

feel safer in disclosing abuse; and 3) protect the loyal volunteers and employees that minister to the Conference's children. The Conference has required that every church in the Conference adopt a Safe Sanctuaries policy that conforms to the standards set forth in the Conference policy.

The Conference revised its policy in 2015, and, therefore, this Policy was adopted by Charge Conference on December 3, 2015.

This Safe Sanctuaries Policy has been adopted by First Church on the date above to conform to the requirements of the Conference and to incorporate those provisions of First Church's Sexual Harassment, Abuse, and Misconduct Policy as appropriate.

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary contained in this policy, First Church must be in compliance with all aspects of the Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law (63 PA. C.S.A. 6301). In the event that the law conflicts with this policy, the law shall control.

DEFINITIONS:

Administrator – the person who is charged with ensuring that the provisions of this Policy are met. At the time of adoption of this Policy, the Administrator is the Pastor of Christian Formation & Evangelism.

Bodily Injury – Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act which results in impairment of physical condition or substantial pain.

Child (or Children) – a person under the age of 18.

Direct contact with children – The care, supervision, guidance or control of children or routine interaction with children.

Fabricating, Exaggerating, or Inducing a Medical Symptom or Disease – Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly fabricating, feigning or intentionally exaggerating or inducing a medical symptom or disease which results in a potentially harmful medical evaluation or treatment to the child through any recent act.

Imminent Risk – (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 Pa. C.S. Chapter 63) – which is defined at the time of adoption of this Policy as an act or recent act or series of such which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual exploitation of a child.

Known Persons – a person who has been accused in the legal system and/or convicted and/or incarcerated for a sexual offense. The inference is that the church is fully aware of the circumstances/degree of the offense and the punishment; and that the person has agreed completely to follow First Church’s procedures.

Mandated Reporters - The following adults are required to make a report of suspected child abuse, if the person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse:

- (1) A clergyman, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization.
- (2) An individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child.
- (3) An individual supervised or managed by a person listed above.

Mental Abuse – (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 PA C.S. Chapter 63) – which is defined at the time of adoption of this Policy as an act or failure to act that results in a psychological condition, as diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment that: renders a Protected Person chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic, or in reasonable fear that the protected person’s life or safety is threatened; or seriously interferes with the protected person’s ability to accomplish age-appropriate developmental and social tasks.

Physical Abuse – (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 PA C.S. Chapter 63) – which is defined at the time of adoption of this Policy as a recent act (within the past two years) or failure to act, which causes a non-accidental serious physical injury that causes the protected person severe pain or significantly impairs the protected person’s functioning, either temporarily or permanently.

Protected Persons – children.

Serious Bodily Injury – Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causing bodily injury to a child through any recent act or failure to act. Bodily injury is defined as an injury which creates a substantial risk of death or which causes serious permanent disfigurement or protracted loss or impairment of function of any bodily member or organ.

Serious Mental Injury – Intentionally, knowingly, or recklessly causing or substantially contributing to serious mental injury of a child through any acts or failure to act or series of such acts or failures to act. The mental injury is a psychological condition diagnosed by a physician or licensed psychologist, including the refusal of appropriate treatment,

that:

(1) renders a child chronically and severely anxious, agitated, depressed, socially withdrawn, psychotic or in reasonable fear that the child's life or safety is threatened; or

(2) seriously interferes with a child's ability to accomplish age- appropriate developmental and social tasks.

Serious Physical Neglect - (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 PA C.S. Chapter 63) – which is defined at the time of adoption of this Policy as a prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life which include but are not limited to adequate medical care (which is defined as medical care which if not provided endangers a protected person's life or development or impairs the protected person's functioning), food, shelter, clothing, dental care, personal care, protection from physical injury and supervision.

Sexual Abuse - (As defined in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 PA C.S. Chapter 63) – which is defined at the time of adoption of this Policy as an act or failure to act that results in the employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement or coercion of a protected person to engage in or assist any other person to engage in a sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of any explicit conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction, including photographing, videotaping, computer depicting or filming, of any sexually explicit conduct to rape, sexual assault, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, aggravated indecent assault, molestation, incest, indecent exposure, prostitution, statutory sexual assault or other form of sexual exploitation of protected person.

Supervision – to oversee or direct a ministry or activity. This is in contrast to workers who only work with protected persons but who do not have a supervisory role.

Worker – any person who works with groups of protected persons as a volunteer, in any regular capacity such as pastor, Sunday school teacher, youth group leader, choir director, regular driver, regular food servers, and general helpers on a schedule that repeats such as weekly, monthly, quarterly; or who participates on-site or as transportation for an overnight or longer program and any employee.

Youth Worker – a Worker who is 14 to 17 years of age. A Youth Worker must serve with an adult Worker and is subject to all background checks and all other required paperwork in order to serve.

SCREENING AND SELECTION OF WORKERS:

Careful screening is an effective way to help protect protected persons. It can be time consuming and expensive, but is an essential step in selecting the most reliable, committed and experienced workers for every program that involves protected persons.

Screening Standards:

Workers at the time this policy goes into effect shall complete the following steps prior to start of service.

Following the effective date of this Policy, all applicants for worker status shall complete the following prior to start service.

- 1) Written Application – All prospective workers shall complete a written application that shall include at least the following information:
 - a. Name
 - b. Address
 - c. Phone Number
 - d. Work/Volunteer History
 - e. Experience and skills related to the position
 - f. Three (3) personal, non-related references. (At least two (2) references must return the form to the Administrator.)
- 2) All workers shall read this Policy before beginning their ministry. Each worker shall sign a verification form to verify that he or she has read the Policy and will abide by its rules. The staff person responsible for the specific ministry shall give the verification to the Administrator for filing in a locked cabinet.
- 3) Background Checks – The following background checks shall be obtained for all prospective Workers who are 14 years of age or older who will be responsible for the welfare of a child or have direct contact with Children:
 - a. Pennsylvania State Police Criminal Report – A report of criminal history information obtained from the Pennsylvania State Police or a statement from the Pennsylvania State Police that the State Police central repository contains no information related to that person. The report or statement shall have been obtained within a one-year period proceeding initial application. A new State Police Criminal History Report shall be obtained every thirty six (36) months. The applicant shall produce the original documents and the church shall make

copies, signed and dated by the person receiving them, and retain copies in a secure location.

- b. Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance – A certification obtained from the Department of Public Welfare (“Childline report”) as to whether the applicant is named in the statewide database as the alleged perpetrator in a pending child abuse investigation or as the perpetrator of a founded report or indicated report. The certification shall have been obtained within a one-year period preceding initial application. A new Childline report shall be obtained every thirty six (36) months. The applicant shall produce the original documents and the church shall make copies, signed and dated by the person receiving them, and retain copies in a secure location.
- c. FBI Report –a report of federal criminal history record information. The applicant shall submit a full set of fingerprints to the Pennsylvania State Police for the purpose of a record check. A new FBI report must be obtained every 36 months. The applicant shall produce the original documents and the church shall make copies, signed and dated by the person receiving them, and retain copies in a secure location.
- d. Based on the results of the background checks obtained from sections (a), (b), and (c), the following rules, as found in the PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 Pa. C.S. Chapter 63, shall be followed. (Note that there may be reasons other than those set forth below for denying employment or volunteer service. This is not an all-inclusive list of reasons to deny employment or volunteer service):
 - i. No person that is named in the statewide database as the perpetrator of a founded report of child abuse committed within the previous five (5) years may be hired or otherwise used as a worker.
 - ii. No person may be hired or used as a worker when such person’s criminal history record information indicates the person has been convicted of one or more of the following offenses under Title 18 (related to crimes and offenses) or an equivalent crime under Federal law or the law of another state:
 - 1. Chapter 25 Relating to criminal homicide
 - 2. Section 2702 Relating to aggravated assault
 - 3. Section 2709 Relating to harassment and stalking

4. Section 2901 Relating to kidnapping
5. Section 2902 Relating to unlawful restraint
6. Section 3121 Relating to rape
7. Section 3122.1 Relating to statutory sexual assault
8. Section 3123 Relating to involuntary deviate sexual intercourse
9. Section 3124.1 Relating to sexual assault
10. Section 3125 Relating to sexual aggravated indecent assault
11. Section 3126 Relating to indecent assault
12. Section 3127 Relating to indecent exposure
13. Section 4302 Relating to incest
14. Section 4303 Relating to concealing death of a child
15. Section 4304 Relating to endangering welfare of children
16. Section 4305 Relating to dealing in infant children
17. A felony offense under Section 5902(b) Relating to prostitution and related offenses
18. Section 5903(c) or (d) Relating to obscene and other sexual materials and performances
19. Section 6301 Relating to corruption of minors
20. Section 6312 Relating to sexual abuse of children
21. The attempt, solicitation or conspiracy to commit any of the offenses listed above

iii. No person may be hired or otherwise used as a worker if his/her criminal history record information indicates the individual has been convicted of a felony offense under the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act (P.L. 233, No. 64), committed within the previous five (5) years.

e. Applicants may be provisionally hired or used as paid workers for a single period not to exceed 30 days or, for applicants who presently reside outside of Pennsylvania, 90 days, if all of the following conditions are met:

- i. The applicant has applied for the required background checks and the applicant provides a copy of the properly completed request forms.
 - ii. The administrator has no knowledge or information pertaining to the applicant, which would disqualify the applicant from employment or from being a paid worker pursuant to the grounds for denying employment or volunteer service listed above.
 - iii. The applicant swears or affirms in writing that he or she is not disqualified from employment or as a worker pursuant to the grounds for denying employment or worker status listed above.
 - iv. If the information obtained in the background checks reveals that the applicant is disqualified from employment or worker status, the applicant shall be immediately dismissed.
 - v. The applicant will not be permitted to work alone with protected persons, and the applicant will work in the immediate vicinity of an employee or volunteer who has completed the screening process.
 - vi. If requested, the applicant may be asked to interview with a staff member and that interview must have been considered successful, in the sole discretion of the staff member.
- f. Applicants who cannot obtain background checks due to administrative reasons may be used as volunteer workers if all of the following conditions are met:
- i. The applicant has properly applied for the required background checks.
 - ii. The administrator has no knowledge or information pertaining to the applicant, which would disqualify the applicant from becoming a worker pursuant to the grounds for denying employment or becoming a worker listed above.
 - iii. The applicant swears or affirms in writing that he or she is not disqualified from employment or becoming a worker pursuant to the grounds for denying employment or becoming a worker listed above.

- iv. The applicant will not be permitted to work alone with protected persons, and the applicant will work in the immediate vicinity of an employee or volunteer who has completed the screening process.
 - v. If requested, the applicant may be asked to interview with a staff member and that interview shall have been considered successful in the sole discretion of the staff member.
 - vi. The applicant has been a member of or actively attending First Church for at least one year.
 - vii. If the information obtained in the background checks reveals that the applicant is disqualified from employment, the applicant shall be immediately dismissed.
- g. Volunteers - All volunteers who will have direct contact with children are required to produce the same documents and meet all other requirements as employees with the following exception:
- i. The volunteer applicant is not required to produce an FBI Record if all of the following apply:
 - 1. The position is unpaid.
 - 2. The prospective volunteer has been a resident of Pennsylvania during the entirety of the previous ten years.
 - 3. The prospective volunteer swears or affirms in writing that they have not been convicted of an offense in another state or territory, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, or foreign nation similar to those Pennsylvania offenses that cause disqualification.
- 4) Written notice of new arrest, conviction or substantiated child abuse – All employees and workers shall be notified that they are required to provide written notice to the administrator or designated person within 72 hours of the following:
- a. Being arrested for or convicted of an offense that would be grounds for denial of employment or volunteer service as a worker.
 - b. Being named as a perpetrator in a found or indicated report.
- If the person responsible for employment decisions or the administrator of a program has reason to believe that either a. or b. above is true, and has not

received written notification from the employee or volunteer worker, they shall immediately require the individual to provide new clearances. Pennsylvania law requires that clearances required for this purpose be paid for by the church.

- 5) References – at least two (2) Reference Checks shall be made on all new applicants for employment or volunteer service as a worker. These persons may not be related to the applicant. In the event that references do not respond, the applicant shall provide more references as needed until the administrator or his or her designee has an opportunity to talk to two (2) references.
- 6) Relationship with Church – All prospective workers shall demonstrate an active relationship with First United Methodist Church Lancaster for at least six (6) months before being allowed to be a worker. In the case of new staff hires, there is no need for a waiting period where references have been deemed adequate by the administrator.
- 7) Workers who will be driving protected persons to a church sponsored off-site event shall provide proof of valid driver's license and insurance on application form.
- 8) Records – All written records shall be confidential and shall be kept in a locked file cabinet. All files shall be maintained for three (3) years after service ends.

TRAINING:

All workers shall participate in orientation training and in annual reviews.

The orientation shall include an explanation of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy including:

- 1) The need for Safe Sanctuaries Policy and procedures
- 2) Supervision requirements
- 3) Appropriate discipline practices
- 4) Recognizing signs of child abuse
- 5) The role and responsibilities of the mandated reporter
- 6) Reporting procedures

The initial training shall occur prior to the worker's having direct supervision of protected persons.

The annual review shall include a review of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy, procedures, and current information on how to identify and report protected persons' abuse. The annual review may be a self-conducted reading of materials followed by a written self-test or it may be other forms of training in a classroom setting or by using videotaped materials.

SUPERVISION AND OTHER RULES OF CONDUCT:

Supervision procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse or exploitation of protected persons, and to protect workers from unfounded accusations.

Supervision Standards:

Programs and ministries in the church that are licensed or accredited by a licensing or accreditation body, or that have formally adopted supervision procedures, and receive pre-approval from the conference Board of Trustees shall follow their established requirements for the supervision children.

Programs and ministries that are not licensed or accredited shall use the following standards for the supervision of protected persons.

- 1) The two adult rule – Regardless of the size of the group, there will always be at least two adults present. This may include the presence of an adult 'roamer' who moves in and out of rooms/ministry activities. In addition, more workers may be needed as set forth below. The two adults should not be from the same household.

The Senior Pastor or Administrator may make exceptions. For example, Confirmation Mentors may meet with their Confirmands one-on-one during the Confirmation process.

Note: When planning events, the numbers of protected persons involved will be reviewed and additional workers will be added for appropriate numbers of protected persons.

Proper ratios of workers to children are:

During Sunday School:

- a. 7th -12th grade: 2 Workers for 1 to 30 Children
- b. 3 years - 6th grade: 2 Workers for 1 to 16 Children
- c. 12-36 months: 2 Workers for 1 to 8 Children

d. 0 - 12 months: 2 Workers for 1 to 6 Children

Note: At the start of Sunday School each year, numbers of students in each room will be reviewed and additional Workers will be added as needed.

During an in-church activity other than during Sunday school:

- a. 2 Workers for 1 to 20 Children
- b. 2 Workers for 1 to 16 Children
- c. 2 Workers for 1 to 8 Children
- d. 2 Workers for 1 to 6 Children

During an off-site activity:

- a. 2 Workers for 1 to 14 Children
- b. 2 Workers for 1 to 8 Children
- c. 1 Worker in every sleeping room

- 2) No protected person will be left unsupervised while participating in a ministry activity/event.
- 3) All ministry activities should occur in open view. Each room or space where ministry activities/events occur must be open to public view. For example: enclosed spaces such as classrooms shall have a viewing window, a glass panel in the door, a ½ door configuration or an open door.
- 4) No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 18 years of age or older and is at least 5 years older than the persons being supervised. Workers ages 14-17 (herein defined as “Youth Workers”) shall serve with an adult.
- 5) Ministry events involving transportation shall require a written consent form signed by the parent or guardian of the child.
- 6) Workers shall speak and conduct themselves in a Godly manner while serving in ministry and when in the presence of impressionable protected persons. Examples include:
 - a. Only appropriate touching
 - b. Wholesome, supportive, and appropriate language will be used at all times
 - c. Male drivers may drive a vehicle with male and female passengers, but not with only female passengers
 - d. Female drivers may drive a vehicle with male and female passengers, but not with only male passengers.

- e. One driver should not drive only one child without written parental permission.
- 7) Workers must follow and enforce sign-in and sign-out procedures in the Infant through two-year-old nurseries.
- 8) Workers must be present before and after the activity for a reasonable period of time and until protected persons are reunited with parent, guardian, or other adult charged with such responsibility.
- 9) Workers must inform parents, teachers, leaders, or church staff of inappropriate behavior of the Child.
- 10) Disciplinary procedures should be carried out with other adults and Children present.
- 11) During an activity, Children must use the bathroom within the classroom, if there is one. If bathroom assistance is required, the door shall be left slightly ajar. Children who use a restroom outside the class room must be accompanied by a Worker who may wait for the child in the hall outside the bathroom.
- 12) On the rare occasion when two (2) adults are not available for a class, a substitute worker will be sought, a roamer will be sought, or classes combined.

WELCOMING KNOWN PERSONS ACCUSED OR CONVICTED OF A CRIME OF SEXUAL ABUSE TO FIRST CHURCH:

- 1) Known Persons are welcome to attend worship or other events at First Church (either/both on and off-site). Those who wish to attend First Church functions must contact the Senior Pastor or other staff person well in advance of first attendance so that these procedures can be followed.
- 2) Known Persons must be escorted at all times when attending worship or other events. It is the Known Persons' responsibility to procure said escorts. However, First Church may be called upon for assistance in finding these persons. Escorts must have background checks as more thoroughly explained above at First Church expense.
- 3) Escorts may not be family members of the Known Person whom they are escorting.
- 4) Senior Pastor is responsible for informing congregation about the presence of Known Persons. The Pastor may choose to communicate through letter or newsletter article.

- 5) First Church will work with and accommodate court or Parole Officer recommendations in each situation.
- 6) Known Persons shall receive notice of these procedures and agree to abide with them in writing.
- 7) Known Persons shall restrict conversations with persons who are eighteen years of age or younger.
- 8) Known Persons may not serve in any positions of leadership or teaching unless Senior Pastor provides written consent.
- 9) Known Persons may be required to limit attendance to worship or other specific events.

CHURCH RESPONSIBILITY:

- 1) Maintain visibility into all classrooms as more fully set forth above.
- 2) Lock unsupervised areas.
- 3) Limit general access to the building.
- 4) Provide lighting in parking lot and on sidewalks around the building.
- 5) Provide lighting in all stairwells.
- 6) Secure a signed screening questionnaire from all Workers.

PARENT AND PARENT APPOINTED DESIGNEE RESPONSIBILITY:

Throughout this paragraph, when the term, "Parent" is used, it includes a parent's designated appointee.

- 1) Parents must drop off and pick up protected persons in such a way so that they are not left unsupervised and Workers do not need to arrive very early or leave very late.
- 2) Parents must drop off and pick-up Children in second grade or younger at the classroom or activity door.
- 3) Parents are responsible for Children who leave the worship space for any reason.
- 4) Parents must adhere to the sign-in and sign-out procedures.
- 5) Parents must require that Children remain in supervised areas.

REPORTING:

Reporting of an allegation of protected person abuse is required whenever there is "reasonable cause to suspect" that abuse has occurred (PA Child Protective Services Law, Title 23 Pa. C.S. Chapter 63). Reasonable cause to suspect abuse can occur under any of the following circumstances:

(1) the mandated reporter comes into contact with the child in the course of employment, occupation and practice of a profession or through regularly scheduled program, activity or service,

(2) the mandated reporter is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child, or is affiliated with an agency, institution, organization, school, regularly established church or religious organization or other entity that is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child,

(3) a person makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse, and

(4) an individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the individual has committed child abuse.

It is crucial that reporting be immediate and the allegations dealt with as soon in time as possible to the incident or disclosure.

It is not necessary for a mandated reporter to observe the child in order for the mandated reporter to have reasonable cause to make a report of suspected child abuse.

It is not necessary for a mandated reporter to identify the alleged perpetrator to have reasonable cause to make a report of suspected child abuse.

Failure of a mandated reporter to file a report of suspected child abuse may result in criminal penalties.

Reports of suspected child abuse are made to the Pennsylvania Child Abuse Hotline (24-Hour service) at 1-800-932-0313, or the PA Department of Human Services established electronic filing system.

The mandated reporter shall enjoy civil and criminal immunity. The mandated reporter is also entitled to an action against the employer if the reporter is terminated for making the report.

Persons other than a mandated reporter (permissive reporters) may make a report of child abuse, provided it is made in good faith and the reporter has reasonable cause to suspect a child is a victim of child abuse.

The Administrator shall ensure that a plan of safety is put in place for the protected person. The protected person would be placed with a “safe” relative. Confidentiality will be maintained.

In addition:

- 1) All mandated reporters shall immediately make a report to Childline any time they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been the victim of abuse.
- 2) Immediately after making the report to Childline, the mandated reporter shall inform a designated person at the church that a report has been filed.
- 3) The identity of the designated person who is to be informed that a report has been filed. This person will then be responsible to facilitate the cooperation of the church with the investigation of the report by the authorities.
- 4) The mandated reporter must provide a written report to the state using the CY-47 form available from the conference website or the PA Department of Human Services within 48 hours of the oral report, and provide a copy of same to the church.
- 5) The District Superintendent must be notified if the alleged perpetrator is a staff person or volunteer of the church.

In the event that a member of the clergy becomes aware of suspected child abuse as a result of confidential communication which is protected under 42 PA C.S. § 5943 (relating to confidential communications to clergy), the conference legal counsel should immediately be consulted.

PASTORAL RESPONSES FOR ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE:

Any allegation of abuse requires a process to address responding to the victim, the alleged perpetrator, and the press. The response must be quick, compassionate and unified. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse there shall be cooperation with all official investigating agencies.

RESPONSE TO VICTIMS OF ABUSE:

In the instance of any allegation of abuse, there shall be a reaching out to the victim and the victim’s family. Pastoral resources shall be extended, and the conference I-Care

Team can be contacted to assist in providing this service. The care and safety of the victim shall be considered the first priority. Response to the victim and the victim's family shall be done in a positive and supportive manner.

The parents or guardians of the victim shall be notified and steps shall be taken to address the safety and well-being of the protected person until the parent(s) arrive. NOTE: If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, the direction of the child welfare authorities shall be followed concerning notification of others.

RESPONSE TO ALL ALLEGED PERPETRATORS OF ABUSE:

The alleged perpetrator shall immediately, yet with dignity and respect for their sacred worth, be removed from further involvement with protected persons and advised that there has been an allegation of abuse. Details of the allegations of the abuse shall not be discussed with the alleged perpetrator at the time of removal. In any removal of a staff member or volunteer from any activity/ministry, care shall be taken to handle the removal in a discreet manner, recognizing that there will be an investigation by either state or church authorities, or both.

When it has been alleged that a member of the church staff or a volunteer has committed an act of abuse, the staff member or volunteer shall be required to refrain from all ministry activities/events with protected persons until the incident has been fully resolved by the appropriate state authorities and/or in accordance with the Book of Discipline.

RESPONSE TO THE MEDIA:

The District Superintendent, the Conference Director of Communications and pastor shall decide on a single spokesperson for contact with the public/media. All media requests for statements shall be directed to that spokesperson.

COMPLIANCE:

Compliance with this policy shall be a matter of record at each annual Charge Conference.