



**THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH OF
THE SPRINGS AND ST. PAUL'S**

SAFE PLACE POLICY

The United Methodist Church

St. Paul's: 600 Wilshire Blvd, Stevens Point, WI 54481 715.344.3557
The Springs: 2820 Plover Springs Dr. Plover, WI 54467 715.344.9192

Email: stpauls@stevenspointumc.org

Website: www.stevenspointumc.org

**The United Methodist Church: The Springs and St. Paul's
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SAFE PLACE POLICY

A. Principle

The United Methodist Church intends that its programs, events and worksites will be a safe place for all employees, church members, families and friends. The purpose of the following policy is to define expectations for all employees, volunteers and visitors who may be in direct contact with church members and/or their families and friends.

Statement of Covenant

As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our members, visitors, friends, children and youth as well as all of the workers and volunteers who encounter them. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers and volunteers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers and volunteers regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods of discipline; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Definitions:

Pastor – The ordained and appointed clergy of The UMC.

Staff – Refers to any person who is paid, either hourly or by salary by The UMC.

Volunteer – Refers to any person who engages in unpaid work at or in the name of The UMC, including but not limited to Faith teachers and guides, Camp Counselors, Church School Teachers, acolyte coordinators, childcare volunteers (including parents), youth group leaders and helpers, parent chaperones, etc.

Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) – The committee that hires, evaluates, counsels and supports staff and establishes policy related to staff including Safe Place Policy. They are also responsible for identifying and recruiting persons to the ordained ministry.

Child and Children – refers to any person ages birth through the completion of 5th grade.

Youth – a person who has completed the 5th grade through 17 years old.

Vulnerable Adult – a person over the age of 18 whose mental, emotional or physical condition makes him or her susceptible to abuse (temporarily or permanently).

Minor(s) – collectively Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adult.

Adult – a person 18 years and older.

Confidentiality

The primary purpose of this policy is to encourage and support victims of sexual harassment, abuse and /or misconduct to report such incidents, by providing a process that protects them from intimidation and preserves their dignity. We recognize that there also may be occasions when

persons are falsely charged with sexual harassment, abuse and /or other misconduct. In either case, it is of the utmost importance that confidentiality be assured for both the victim and the accused, and that church officials and others who may be involved in the process take every reasonable and legal precaution to honor the issue of confidentiality.

B. Safe Place Policy

The provisions of this policy are intended to supplement and support the Wisconsin Conference policies and procedures and shall be enforced and interpreted accordingly.

Our intent in offering this policy is preventative in nature. Employed staff and voluntary workers are expected to assent to this policy statement in a ministry participation covenant.

C. Creating a Safe Place Environment

The Church intends to reduce the risk of harassment and or sexual misconduct by a strategy that includes close attention to the following:

1. Primary Selection of Employed workers

All who work with children and youth, both employed staff and voluntary workers, require screening. In order to assure that quality applicants for both hired and voluntary positions meet the high expectations of the Church, such individuals must submit or engage in:

- a. Anyone wishing to work with children must submit an employment or volunteer application in writing. All applications will be kept on file in the church main office;
- b. Applicants must undergo a personal interview with the pastor and/or ministry representative(s);
- c. Applicants must provide a minimum of three references for a reference check and complete an Application for Employment, a Primary Screening Form, and a Criminal Background Check Authorization Form. All background checks will be kept confidential. Files from background checks will be kept in a locked cabinet with other personnel files. Only the pastor and the Chair of the SPRC will have access to the files.

D. Safe Church – Harassment Policy

To ensure no one ever feels he/she is being subjected to harassment and to create a comfortable working environment, the Church prohibits any offensive physical, written, or spoken conduct including the use of a computer, regarding any of the following subjects:

1. Unsolicited and unwelcome or unwarranted written, verbal, physical and/or visual contact with sexual overtones. Written examples: suggestive or obscene letters, notes and invitations. Verbal examples: derogatory comments, slurs, jokes and epithets. Physical examples: assault, touching, impeding or blocking movement. Visual examples: leering, gestures, display of sexually suggestive objects or pictures, cartoons, posters or magazines;
2. Unwelcome requests or demands for favors, including sexual favors. This includes either subtle or blatant solicitations, pressures, or requests for any type of favor, including unwelcome requests for dates, whether or not they are accompanied by an implied or stated promise of preferential treatment or negative consequence regarding employment;
3. Verbal abuse or kidding that is oriented toward a prohibited form of harassment, including that which is sexually oriented and considered unwelcome. This includes comments about national origin, race, body, disability or appearance where such comments go beyond mere courtesy, telling “dirty jokes” or any tasteless, sexually oriented comments, innuendos or actions that offend;
4. Creating a work environment that is intimidating, hostile, abusive or offensive because of unwelcome or unwarranted conversations, suggestions, requests, demands, physical contacts or attentions related to a prohibited form of harassment;
5. Continuing to express sexual or romantic interest after being informed that the interest is unwelcome. (Reciprocal or mutual attraction is not considered sexual harassment);
6. Making reprisals, threats of reprisal, or implied threats of reprisals following a negative response to establish relationship, where reprisal relates to compensation, promotion, discipline, tenure or job assignment;
7. Engaging in coercive sexual behavior which is used to control, influence, or affect the career, salary, and/or work environment or another employee; or which may have that effect;
8. Offering favors or employment benefits, such as promotions, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications in return for sexual/romantic favors;
9. Offering sexual favors in exchange for employment benefits, such a promotion, favorable performance evaluations, favorable assigned duties or shifts, recommendations or reclassifications and;
10. Sending pornographic, sexually explicit, or sexually erotic material through the computer or other means.

Normal, courteous, mutually respectful, pleasant, non-coercive interaction among employees, both men and women, that is acceptable to both parties, is not considered harassment, including sexual harassment.

E. Sexual Abuse and Misconduct Policy

Sexual misconduct relates to behaviors such as sexual abuse and sexual harassment. It is the Church's policy that no employee or volunteer church leader may engage in any form of sexual abuse or misconduct. Anyone violating this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including possible termination or referral to the criminal justice system. The Church is firm in its belief that a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult victim is never responsible for causing the abuse, and the child victim is never to be blamed for the abuse. The victim is never capable of consenting to abusive behavior, either legally or morally. Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult sexual abuse is always wrong and is solely the responsibility of the abuser.

1. Sexual Abuse of a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult (herein **Minor)**

Sexual abuse of a Minor occurs when an employee, volunteer or member touches a Minor participating in any church sponsored event or activity for the purposes of causing sexual arousal or gratification of either the Minor or such person. This refers to any sexual activity with a Minor that includes:

- a. Touching (such as feeling, oral, genital and anal penetration; intercourse, forcible rape); and
- b. Non-touching (such as verbal comments; pornographic videos; obscene phone calls; exhibitionism; allowing child to witness sexual activity).
- c. Minors may never give legal consent for sexual activity.

2. Reporting and Investigation of Sexual Misconduct

It is the policy of The United Methodist Church that any violation, suspicion or allegation of sexual misconduct must be reported. Laws of the state of Wisconsin and the United States of America require, in certain circumstances, that reports of sexual misconduct be made to the appropriate authorities. All provisions of such laws shall be complied with.

- a. Any person believing he/she has been a victim of sexual misconduct may proceed as provided by the policies and procedures set forth by the Wisconsin Conference Yearbook and Journal. The provisions of the Church's sexual misconduct policy shall not be used to avoid or limit the right of any person believing her/himself to be a victim of sexual misconduct nor shall the Church's policy and procedures be used to thwart or limit those rights and remedies available under civil and criminal law. Persons believing they are victims of sexual misconduct and persons accused of sexual misconduct will be subject to the procedures as set forth in this policy.

- b. The initial report shall be made to the pastor, unless he or she is the accused, or to the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations (SPRC) Committee or designated appointee.
- c. Such allegations of sexual misconduct shall be documented and in writing. The pastor, if the report is made to the pastor, shall notify the Chair of the SPRC immediately. The SPRC Chair shall form a subcommittee consisting of the Chair or appointee, two members of the SPRC and the pastor (if not the accused). The subcommittee shall provide for the pastoral care of the accuser (and his/her family) as well as for the alleged perpetrator, and make a determination within 30 days whether the allegation constitutes sexual misconduct. During the investigation, the alleged maltreated will refrain from the work or volunteer activity giving rise to the allegation.
- d. If a determination is made that sexual misconduct has occurred, then the chair of the SPRC shall consult and report as set forth by the policies of the Wisconsin Conference.
- e. Sanctions upon a finding of sexual misconduct, pursuant to this sexual misconduct policy, can include discharge of employment or termination of volunteer status or referral to the criminal justice system.

F. Bullying

Wikipedia defines “bullying” as: “a form of abuse. It comprises repeated acts over time that involves a real or perceived imbalance of power with the more powerful individual or group abusing those who are less powerful. The power imbalance may be social power and/or physical power.”

Bullying is commonly defined as intentional, repeated hurtful acts, words, or other behavior, including name-calling, threatening and/or shunning committed by one or against another. These negative acts are not intentionally provoked by the victims, and for such acts to be defined as bullying, an imbalance in real or perceived power must exist between the bully and the victim. Bullying may be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual in nature.

Six factors define bullying:

1. “Intent to harm – the perpetrator finds pleasure in taunting and continues even when the victim’s distress is obvious.
2. Intensity and duration – the teasing continues over a long period of time and the degree of taunting is damaging to the self-esteem of the victim.
3. Power of the abuser – the abuser maintains power because of age, strength, size, and/or gender.
4. Vulnerability of the victim – the victim is more sensitive to teasing, cannot adequately defend him or herself, and has physical or psychological qualities that make him or her more prone to vulnerability.

5. Lack of support – the victim feels isolated and exposed. Often, the victim is afraid to report the abuse for fear of retaliation.
6. Consequences – the damage to self-concept is long lasting, and the impact on the victim leads to behavior marked by either withdrawal or aggression.”

Bullying can include but is not limited to:

1. Physical (e.g., assault, hitting, kicking, theft)
2. Verbal (e.g., threatening or intimidating language, name-calling, racist remarks, false accusations, taunting)
3. Indirect (e.g., spreading cruel rumors, social exclusion or isolation, threatening looks and/or gestures)
4. Cyber (e.g., using technology in a hurtful manner such as the use of email, instant messages, text messages, digital pictures or images, cell phones, or website postings to threaten, harass, or intimidate the victim)

Individuals who believe they are victims of bullying should immediately report their concerns to the pastor, church staff person in charge of events or their parents who should then contact the pastor.

Formal complaints will be subject to thorough review and immediate investigation by the church staff designee.

All church staff will be trained to identify acts of bullying and be given appropriate guidelines to follow in order to prevent bullying from occurring or take appropriate steps to stop bullying as it is identified. This will be a part of the “Safe Place Policy Training.”

G. Volunteer/Employee Code of Ethics and Rules

While acting in our capacity as children/youth program volunteer or employee of The United Methodist Church, the following rules shall apply:

1. No smoking or using tobacco products.
2. No using, possessing, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal or illicit drugs.
3. No displaying or allowing abusive behaviors, including:
 - a. Display or demonstration of sexual activity; sexual advances of any kind between any persons, whether adults and/or Minors; allowing the presence or possession of obscene or pornographic materials at any function of the Church.
 - b. Physically abusive behavior or bodily injury.
 - c. Physical neglect of a Minor, including failure to provide adequate supervision in relation to the activities of the Church.

- d. Mental or emotional injury
- 4. Will portray a positive role model for Minors by maintaining an attitude of respect, loyalty, patience, courtesy and maturity.
- 5. Will act and react with Christian love and understanding in all situations.

As a sponsor, volunteer or employee working with Minors for The Church, I understand that:

- 1. I am required to abide by the Child Protection Policy and the Volunteer/Employee Code of Ethics.
- 2. Any violation of the Child Protection Policy or the Code of Ethics may be grounds for removal as a leader or volunteer with children or youth.
- 3. Before working with Minors, I will be subject to a background check and agree to sign the proper consent form(s) so that a background check may be initiated.

Employed Worker and Volunteer Supervision

Supervision of employed staff and voluntary workers with children and youth will be practiced with the intent to reduce the risk of harassment and any potential sexual misconduct. It is expected that all individuals who work with children/youth will conduct themselves according to the following:

- 1. A **“two adult”** rule requires that a team of adults be present wherever possible during any church-sponsored event or ministry program. There will be at least two adults of each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least two or more adults present will be of the same gender as the participating children/youth.
- 2. Children and youth will be supervised in “public” spaces. “Private” spaces will be neutralized by keeping doors open and window glass in classroom and office doors will be unobstructed.
- 3. Children/youth attending a church-sponsored event may not leave prior to the ending of that event without previous contact between the parents and the staff person in charge. Children will only be released to persons other than parents if prior contact has occurred between the parents and the staff person in charge. Nursery use must include a sign-in procedure and release of children to parent. The parent signing in the child must authorize release to any other person.
- 4. Employed staff and volunteer workers with children and youth must be informed about possible criminal sanctions in cases of sexual misconduct or harassment.
- 5. Inappropriate conduct between an adult and Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adults should be confronted and reported immediately to the pastor, program director or ministry representative. The pastor or ministry representative is required to investigate the report.

Secondary Screening for Volunteers

The secondary screening process is for church members and constituents only. Others must use the primary employee screening process.

1. Applicants must complete a Primary Screening Form to identify the applicant.
2. Applicants must undergo a personal interview with the pastor and/or ministry representative.
3. A “*six month*” rule applies – that is, volunteers will only be permitted to work with children and youth after they have been members or constituents of the United Methodist Church for six months.
4. Those transferring membership from another church must consent to either an oral or a written reference check with that church.
5. Volunteers without any former church affiliation must provide references.
6. Those with criminal sexual abuse or harassment violations will not be accepted as volunteers with Minors..

Rejection of Employees or Volunteers

The hiring of new employees or approval of volunteers may not be made if any of the following items become known:

1. Been convicted of a crime of child abuse, sexual abuse of a Minor or adult, physical abuse, causing a child’s death, neglect of a child, murder, manslaughter, felony assault, any assault against a Minor, kidnapping, arson, criminal sexual conduct, prostitution related crimes or controlled substance crimes.
2. Being adjudged liable for civil penalties or damages involving sexual or physical abuse of Minors in court.
3. Being subject to any court order involving any sexual abuse or physical abuse of a Minor or adult, including but not limited to domestic order or protection.
4. A history with another organization (volunteer, employment, etc.) of complaints of sexual or physical abuse of Minors or adults.
5. Resigned, been terminated, or been asked to resign from a position, whether paid or unpaid, due to complaint(s) of sexual abuse or physical abuse.

Safe Place Training of Staff and Volunteers

The Staff Parish Relations Committee or their designee shall provide regular orientation and training to employed staff. The purpose of such training with both staff and volunteers who work

with children, youth and other vulnerable populations is to reduce the risk of harassment or sexual abuse. Training will include the identification of inappropriate behavior involving children, youth or other vulnerable populations; the setting of appropriate boundaries in working with and accountability for reporting sexual and other forms of misconduct and/or abuse.

Additionally, the purpose of such training is to promote a healthy worksite for employees and staff that is free of harassment or sexual abuse.

The continued ministry of employed staff and voluntary workers is dependent on participation in these sessions. All new workers will undergo Safe Place Training within the first month of employment or before volunteers begin working with children/youth. Bi-annual updates of the Safe Place Training Policy and procedures will be offered to all continuing staff and volunteers.

All staff and volunteers working with members, visitors, children, youth and other vulnerable populations will receive a copy of the The United Methodist Church Safe Place Policy.

Adopted 11/9/2010

Revised 9/13/2014

Additional Revision Pending

ADDENDUM TO SAFE PLACE POLICY

Required sequence of actions prompted by the Safe Place Policy:

Before a new staff member or volunteer can start job responsibilities for The United Methodist Church the following must take place:

1. Background check must be completed.

(Responsibility: Patti Hermes)

2. Training on the Safe Place Policy must be scheduled. Training must be scheduled no later than two (2) weeks after assuming job or volunteer responsibilities.

(Responsibility: Pastor Howard Hintzman for staff; Laura Courtright for volunteers)

After a favorable background check:

1. Staff member or volunteer will complete the training no later than one month after assuming job or volunteer responsibilities.

2. Completed background checks and documentation of completed training on the Safe Place Policy will be given to Patty Hermes for entry in the appropriate database and then placed in a file with the appropriate individual's name and kept in the Human Resources file cabinet in the Pastor's office.

3. Background checks will be conducted every three (3) years for volunteers.

4. Review of the Safe Place Policy will be completed by all staff and volunteers every two (2) years or sooner if significant changes are made to the policy.

Additional Items:

Suggested Policy & Training Consultant: Sharon Cook, Coordinator of Camp, Retreat, and Age-Level Ministries; Wisconsin Conference of the United Methodist Church.