

Chapel UMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy

Revised October 2016

I. Introduction

The Plank Chapel United Methodist Church pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that protect the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults as well as all of those who work with them. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will provide training for our workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure which conforms to the requirements of North Carolina law for reporting a suspected incident of abuse.

II. Purpose

Our purpose in establishing this policy and accompanying procedures is to formalize our commitment to create within our ministries a “safe sanctuary” that will foster healthy growth and development for all children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Jesus said, "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)

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, Plank Chapel United Methodist Church adopts this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

III. Policy and Procedures

Parents and guardians have the primary responsibility for the safety of their children. However Plank Chapel has established the following policy and procedures intended to preclude potential abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our church. Specifically, we will:

- Establish a Safe Sanctuaries organization with authority to implement these policies;
- Implement prudent procedures in all programs and events, including supervision and support for workers as they are in ministry on our behalf;
- Ensure church facilities meet reasonable safety standards to reduce risk of harm or injury;
- Provide workers with training regarding the implementation of our policies, procedures, and methodologies;
- Have in place basic procedures for recruitment, screening and selection of leaders for children, youth, and vulnerable adult ministries;
- Educate parents and others in our congregation as to our policies and procedures;
- Have in place a clearly defined procedure for reporting instances of injury, harm or abuse that conforms to requirements of state law, and a designated spokesperson prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

- Respond with compassion and integrity to needs as they present themselves following any incident of harm, injury or abuse.

A. Safe Sanctuaries Organization

The Safe Sanctuaries Leadership will administer these policies and procedures and provide oversight. The Leadership will be the Pastor, the Chairman of the Staff/Parish Relations Committee, the Chairman of the Trustee Committee, and the Lay Leader.

The Leadership will convene a Safe Sanctuaries Task Force as required to address Safe Sanctuaries issues. This Task Force is an ad hoc group drawn from the congregation; Task Force meetings will be open to the congregation except when sensitive matters are considered. The Task Force will meet at least annually to review this policy. The Pastor will provide a Safe Sanctuaries status and progress report to the congregation at least annually.

B. Staff and Volunteer Screening

1. Screening Process

The Safe Sanctuaries Leadership will screen staff and volunteers who might work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. At least two Leadership members are required to conduct a screening. The Safe Sanctuaries Leadership will determine the appropriate degree of screening on a case-by-case basis using the following guidelines:

- Long-standing church member (5 years or more), well known in local community:
 - No additional screening
- Recent church member:
 - Interview by Safe Sanctuaries Leadership
 - Complete and sign application and waivers giving personal history, references, and permissions to check references and background information.
 - Reference checks, 2-3 references
 - Internet search
- New or non-member
 - Interview by Safe Sanctuaries Leadership
 - Complete and sign application and waivers giving personal history, references, and permission to check references and background information
 - Reference checks, 2-3 references
 - Internet search
 - Criminal background checks

The Leadership will make an extra effort to insure that those in key supervisory and leadership roles (e.g., clergy, paid staff, group leaders) are trustworthy; this may involve stronger screening measures than given in the guidelines.

2. Confidentiality

All results of the screening process will be confidential within the Safe Sanctuaries Leadership. Any screening documentation will be stored in a secure location. Details of derogatory information will not be disclosed; however, other church leaders with the need to know will be informed if specific individuals will not be allowed to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

3. Selection Guidelines

In general, individuals working with youth, children, and vulnerable adults must be trustworthy and sufficiently mature. For example, unsupervised individuals should be at least 21 years old and be at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth they will be leading.

Only individuals screened by the Safe Sanctuaries Leadership will lead child, youth, or vulnerable adult activities associated with the church.

Individuals who have not been screened by the Safe Sanctuaries Leadership will not work unsupervised with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

If the screening process reveals significant reliable derogatory information (e.g., convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect) on an individual, that individual will not work with Plank Chapel children, youth, or vulnerable adults in any capacity.

As a general principle, we will err on the side of protecting the children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

C. Supervision Guidance

Plank Chapel will use the following staff supervision guidelines to reduce the potential for inappropriate supervisory behavior for groups of children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

1. Two-adult rule

- Groups will be supervised by two non-related adults.
- If infeasible for two adults to be present for each group, an adult “floater” may monitor several groups.
- Visitation of our sick, shut-in, elderly, or vulnerable adults in their private residence will be conducted by two non-related adults when feasible.
- Hospital or other institutional visits are to be conducted by two non-related adults when it is feasible. When the conducted visit does not meet that criteria, open curtains or doors so that you are visible to staff at all times.

2. Accountability

- Leaders of children’s groups will take attendance to know positively who is present.
- Parents, legal guardians, or their designated representative (as provided in writing by the parent or legal guardian) should collect their children from church functions by entering the facility and signing out their children. If no sign out sheet is provided for the event, the parents, legal guardians, or their designated representative will inform the leadership of the event of their departure.

3. Outside Access

- Whenever possible, children will have access to a phone or cell phone when groups are at or away from the church facility.

4. Visibility

- Classroom doors will have a window for visibility from hallway or remain open while room is occupied.
- Windows in classroom doors will not be blocked except when room is used as a dressing room.
- One-on-one interactions with children, youth, and vulnerable adults should be open door and visible to all.

5. Child Escort

- During church services a parent, adult family member, or guardian will escort children to the restroom.

D. Church Facilities

Plank Chapel will manage church facilities to meet reasonable safety standards to reduce risk of harm or injury. In general, the Trustees will implement these requirements.

- The church will be locked except during church functions.
- Exterior doors will be equipped with locksets that allow easy emergency exit.
- Classroom doors will have windows that facilitate roaming inspections.
- Electrical outlets in nursery classrooms will be capped when not in use.
- Trustees will inspect and restock church first aid kits at least annually.
- Trustees will conduct a safety inspection of all church facilities at least annually.

E. Education and Training

The Safe Sanctuaries Leadership will educate the congregation on this policy, including briefing the congregation at least annually, posting the policy in the church vestibule, and posting the policy on the church web site and providing updates to the policy in the church newsletter.

The Leadership will brief each successfully screened individual, provide them with a copy of this policy, address any questions they may have, and solicit recommendations for improvement. This may be accomplished individually or as a group.

The Leadership will provide Safe Sanctuaries training for individuals working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults and this training will be available to all. The church will identify other training that supports this policy (such as CPR and first aid training). The Safe Sanctuaries Leadership will determine which other training is necessary and develop opportunities for providing this training.

F. Offsite Activities

Generally, these same policies apply to offsite church-sponsored activities with allowances for specific situations. Also, permission slips to participate in off-premise activities must be signed by the child's or youth's parent or guardian. Permission slips should include the following information:

1. To be filled out by the church:
 - a. Description of activity
 - b. Departure and return date and time
 - c. Adult supervision
 - d. Phone number for adult supervision
2. To be filled out by the parent or guardian:
 - a. Participants' names
 - b. Two emergency contact phone numbers
 - c. Participants' allergies or other relevant medical conditions
 - d. Medications and dosages that the participant may need
 - e. Health insurance information
 - f. Other special needs such as diet, etc.
 - g. Parent or guardian signature

Plank Chapel will not conduct off-site youth or childrens' events without a sufficient number of adult chaperones. For overnight events, at least two adult chaperones shall stay in each room used for sleeping. Adults shall be of the same sex as the rest of the occupants. One adult shall not be allowed to stay in a room with a single child, youth, or vulnerable adults unless they are parent/guardian. Paragraph III.B.3 established age criteria.

G. Transportation

Good judgment must be used if privately-owned vehicles are used for church-sponsored events. The drivers must be responsible adults in good health, have a good driving record, and meet age requirements in paragraph 3.B.3. The vehicles must be in good mechanical condition. Drivers and vehicles must be properly licensed and insured and meet all legal requirements (e.g., car seats).

For activities where the Church does not manage transportation, parents or guardians are responsible for the safety of their children.

H. Outside Groups

Plank Chapel has a case-by-case policy on approving outside individuals or groups for using church facilities. In general, these policies apply to any outside group using church facilities and compliance with Safe Sanctuaries policy will be a factor in the approval process. Copies of this policy will be made available as well as posted in our building. The group hosting these activities will be responsible for their own enforcement.

I. Actions

The main goal of this policy is to prevent situations that might harm our children, youth, or vulnerable adults. However the following procedures will be used in the event of a safe sanctuaries issue.

1. If any member, volunteer, or leader becomes aware of a Safe Sanctuary violation, he or she must immediately:
 - a. Insure the safety and privacy of the alleged victim.
 - b. Treat all individuals involved with dignity, respect, and confidentiality.
 - c. Immediately remove the accused individual from further involvement with children/youth or vulnerable adults.
 - d. Notify the Pastor immediately. If the Pastor is not available, notify any Safe Sanctuaries Leader defined in III.A.
 - e. Complete a report on the incident, accident or abusive situation.
2. Upon notification, the Pastor or any Safe Sanctuaries Leader shall take the following steps immediately:
 - a. Notify the parent/guardian of the alleged victim.
 - b. Address any needs the child, youth, or vulnerable adult may have, including medical.
 - c. Conduct initial fact-finding.
 - d. Notify each of the following:
 - 1) Law enforcement agency, if appropriate
 - 2) District Superintendent
 - 3) Plank Chapel insurance agent, if appropriate.
3. If the Pastor is accused the following actions shall be taken immediately by the chair of the Administrative Board:
 - a. Insure the privacy and safety of the alleged victim.
 - b. Treat the accused individual with dignity, respect, and confidentiality.
 - c. Remove the accused individual from further involvement with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
 - d. Notify the chairs of the Staff/Parish Committee and the Administrative Council, who shall immediately notify the District Superintendent.
 - e. The District Superintendent will represent Plank Chapel UMC in response to the accusation.
4. The Chairman of the Administrative Council (or a designated media liaison) will address any media inquiries associated with an alleged safe sanctuaries incident. Only such designated individuals are authorized to speak for Plank Chapel.

Other violations of this policy or recommendations for improving this policy should be reported to any member of the Safe Sanctuaries Leadership.

IV. Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child, youth, and vulnerable adult will be “surrounded by steadfast love...established in the faith and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Book of Worship, p.96).

Attachment 1: Screening Application

PLANK CHAPEL UMC APPLICATION FOR SAFE SANCTUARIES SCREENING

Full Legal Name: _____
First, Middle, Last

Other Names used (maiden names, nicknames, aliases, etc.)

SSAN: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Phone #: _____ Drivers License #/State: _____

Current and Previous Residences

Starting with your current address and working backwards, list all residences for last five years:

Current Address: _____
Street address, City, State, Zip

Previous Address from Start Date: _____ to End Date: _____
Month and Year Month and Year

Previous Street Address, City, State, Zip

Previous Address from Start Date: _____ to End Date: _____
Month and Year Month and Year

Previous Street Address, City, State, Zip

Personal References

List at least three personal references who are not related to you but who have known you well over the last five years:

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Relationship*: _____ When Known:** _____

Address: _____
Street Address, City, State, Zip

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Relationship: _____ When Known: _____

Address: _____
Street Address, City, State, Zip

Name: _____ Phone Number: _____

Relationship: _____ When Known: _____

Address: _____
Street Address, City, State, Zip

* For example, supervisor, neighbor, pastor, coworker

** Give span of years this person knew you well, e.g., 1997-2003

Criminal History

Have you ever been arrested? YES NO If yes, describe charges, dates, and disposition

Have you ever been convicted of a crime other than a minor traffic violation?: YES NO
If yes, describe crime, date, and sentence: _____

Have you ever been accused of abusing children or minors? YES NO (circle one)

Certification and Authorization

The facts stated in this application are true and correct. I authorize Plank Chapel UMC to conduct a background investigation on me including a criminal background check and contacting any and all persons identified from my past.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Attachment 2: Sample Parent/Guardian Consent Form

Part 1. Activity Information (completed by the church)

Description of activity* _____

Departure date, time, place _____

Return date, time, place _____

Adult supervisor(s) _____ Cell Phone number _____

*Name of function, activity location and phone number, hotel location and phone number

Part 2. Participant Information (completed by the parent or guardian)

Participant name _____

Primary emergency contact _____
Name/phone number(s)

Alternate emergency contact _____
Name/phone number(s)

Participant allergies and relevant medical conditions _____

Medications and dosages that the participant may need _____

Health insurance company and policy number _____

Other special considerations such as diet, etc. _____

Part 3. Approval and Certifications (completed by the parent or guardian)

As parent or legal guardian, my child has my permission to participate in the Plank Chapel activity described above.

The Plank Chapel supervisors/chaperones have my permission to seek medical attention for my child if it should be required during this activity. Furthermore, if my child does not have sufficient medical insurance, I accept financial responsibility for his or her treatment.

I understand that a breach of the code of conduct may result in my child being sent home.

Name of parent or guardian (please print) _____

Parent or guardian signature

Date

Part 4. Code of Conduct Certification (completed by participant)

I have received and agree to abide by our code of conduct for this Plank Chapel UMC activity. I understand that any breach of this covenant of conduct may, at the discretion of the Plank Chapel adult supervisor, result in my being sent home!

Participant signature

Date

Note: This section applicable to youth activities at other locations and overnight youth activities

Attachment 3: Sample Youth Code of Conduct

Plank Chapel Youth Code of Conduct for (event) _____

Throughout this event, I agree to:

1. Behave responsibly and with consideration for others.
 - a. Refrain from the use of profanity, vulgar and derogatory language.
 - b. Refrain from smoking and use of alcoholic beverages or drugs.
 - c. Be quiet after the specified time so others can sleep.
 - d. Not leave the sleeping quarters after the specified time.
2. Respect the property and privacy of others.
 - a. Leave all facilities in good condition and pay to repair or replace any property damage.
 - b. Not enter the living quarters of the opposite sex.
3. Participate fully in the event.
 - a. Observe by the indicated arrival times and places for the event.
 - b. Remain at the event site with my vehicle parked until the end of the event unless I have written permission from my parent/guardian and approval from the Plank Chapel adult supervisor for this event.
 - c. Participate in the full program and attend all scheduled activities.
 - d. Refrain from the use of cell phones, or any electronic devices during programs and scheduled activities.
4. Wear modest clothing appropriate for a Christian youth function.
 - a. Boys: Shoes, shirt, shorts or pants. Clothing will completely cover underwear and skin of belly and buttocks at all times.
 - b. Girls: Shoes, top with modest neckline, slacks, modest shorts or skirt with modest hemline. Clothing will completely cover underwear and skin of upper thigh, belly, and buttocks at all times.

I understand that any breach of this code of conduct may, at the discretion of the Plank Chapel adult supervisor for this event, result in my being sent home!

I make this covenant of conduct.

Participant Signature

Attachment 4: Safe Sanctuaries Policy Receipt

This form is intended to be printed on 3 by 5 cards for easy filing

Printed Name:

_____ *Last Name*

_____ *First Name*

I received a copy of the Plank Chapel UMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy

_____ *Signed*

_____ *Date*

Plank Chapel Safe Sanctuaries Policy Receipt