



## ***Safe Sanctuary Policy***

revised 9.11.2016

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at eliminating any potential for child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also 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) Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that "...children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse." (para. 162C)

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse (ritual abuse refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be) occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (From The *Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*. P. 384-386)

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

### **Purpose**

Our purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

### **Covenant Statement**

The Adnah United Methodist Church hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of our workers with children and youth. 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 train our workers with children and youth on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of South Carolina law.

### **Staff Selection Policies**

All volunteer and paid staff who supervise children and youth or others working with children and youth at Adnah UMC will be:

- At least 20 years old.
- At least 3 years older than the oldest child/youth they will be supervising.
- A professing member of Adnah UMC for at least 6 months except that non-members may work with children and youth provided that they have completed an acceptable background check and will be in the company of a member who has also completed an acceptable background check.

All volunteer and paid staff who work with children and youth at Adnah UMC will:

- Complete and sign an application and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information and/or driving record.
- Persons who have been members of Adnah UMC for less than 2 years must include 3 personal references.
- If a transfer from another congregation, include the Pastor from their previous congregation in the 3 personal references.
- Undergo a criminal background check by Trak-1, the SC Conference of the UMC approved firm, at no expense if they will have supervisory program responsibility for children/youth. Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children, youth or vulnerable adults.

### **Staff Supervision Guidelines**

Whenever supervising activities involving children and youth at Adnah UMC,

- Two adults will be present on site at all times.
- Children and youth will be checked into and out of a church sponsored activity by their parent or legal guardian or people authorized by parent/legal guardian. See Appendix for sign-in sheet.
- Supervising adults will have access to a telephone or cell phone when groups are at or away from the church facility.
- One-on-one interactions with children and youth will be with an open door and visibility to all.

Whenever Adnah UMC sponsors an activity involving children or youth,

- Parents/guardians have the right to visit and observe the children's/youth activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced.
- All view-lights in doors will be kept free from adornment.

Whenever Adnah UMC transports children or youth away from the church campus,

- No youth may drive another youth to/from events.
- Drivers must go through same screening process as all other paid/volunteer staff.
- There must be access to a phone or cell phone when groups are away from the church property.

Whenever Adnah UMC sponsors an outing away from church campus

- All children and youth participating in out-of-town and over-night outings must have written consent and a medical release form. (Medical release and consent forms may be completed for a one-year period and must be renewed annually).
- In no circumstance is one adult (other than the parent) to take a child or children on an overnight outing alone.
- On youth overnight outings, there will be a 1:7 staff to youth supervision ratio observed.
- Female volunteers and paid staff will supervise female youth/children in their sleeping quarters and male volunteers and paid staff will supervise male youth/children.
- Married couples will not stay together but observe the female/female and male/male sleeping arrangements.
- With the exception of a parent/child combination, a volunteer or paid staff and youth will not occupy the same bed or sleeping bag.
- Children and youth are not allowed to stay in a room un-chaperoned.

Whenever Adnah UMC hosts an activity involving children or youth from another church or community organization,

- The groups using the church facility will follow Adnah UMC's Safe Sanctuary policies and procedures.

Adnah UMC volunteer and paid staff will be given the opportunity to attend training about Safe Sanctuary policies, procedures and child abuse issues on a regular basis.

If a suspected incident of child abuse or neglect occurs at or is revealed to a volunteer/paid staff person at a Adnah UMC sponsored activity, the adult in charge of the activity will

- Ensure the safety of the child or youth
- If an emergency, call 911
- Contact the church pastor who will contact the York County Sherriff's Office and the County Office of DSS.
  - York County Sherriff's Office: 803-327-2023
  - York County DSS: 803-684-2315

### **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).





## Permission Form

As parent or guardian of the minor named below, I hereby authorize my child to participate in the following activity being conducted by the Adnah United Methodist Youth or Children's Ministry:

Name of Event:

Date:

I hereby release and discharge Adnah UMC and their advisors and volunteers for any damage, losses, or injuries to person or property that may be sustained while participating in these activities. I, the undersigned parent or legal guardian of the minor named below, authorize treatment and/or hospitalization that is necessary in the case of accident or illness of my child by a licensed medical physician. However, every attempt will be made to reach me by telephone prior to any treatment. In the event that I cannot be reached in an emergency, I hereby give my permission to the licensed physician selected by the church leader to hospitalize, to secure proper treatment and/or order an injection, anesthesia, or surgery for my child as deemed necessary.

---

PRINT NAME OF YOUTH

SIGNATURE OF PARENT/GUARDIAN

---

SIGNATURE OF YOUTH

DATE

AGE

MALE/FEMALE

---

ADDRESS CITY STATE ZIP

TELEPHONE NUMBERS WHERE I CAN BE REACHED:

IN CASE I CANNOT BE REACHED, PLEASE NOTIFY:

### HEALTH INFORMATION

Any current health conditions we should be aware of? If yes, please explain.

Medications:

Allergies:

Health Insurance Company:

Insurance group #

ID#