Revised May 14, 2018 and Adopted

Mason United Methodist Church

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**Safe Sanctuary Policy**

**Introduction**

 The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church states that “...children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse.” (Book of Discipline, 2012) 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.” (From 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, youth and vulnerable adults, as well as those who are committed to ministering to them as volunteers and employees.

Thus, in covenant with God and all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy to protect and care for all children and youth.

**Statement of Covenant**

 As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to engage in the ministry of the Gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as the workers of children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; and we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of policies; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirement of state law; and we will be prepared to respond if media inquiries concerning an incident.

**Covenant Agreement**

This agreement will be read, agreed to, and signed by all persons who wish to be workers with children and**/**or youth. The congregation of Mason United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all people 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.

1) No adult who has been convicted of abuse (sexual, physical or emotional abuse) and whose MUMC background check has revealed the conviction(s)may work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.

2) We will have at least two unrelated adults present at all times when working with children and/or youth. This may include the presence of an adult “roamer” who moves in and out of rooms/ministry activities..

3) Only adults who are safe sanctuary approved will have sole responsibility for children and**/**or youth.

4) No person shall have sole responsibility unless he/she is at least 18 years of age or older and is at least 5 years older than the children/youth being supervised.

5) No youth/child shall be transported in a vehicle with only 1 adult unless written permission is granted by parent/guardian.

6) Classrooms and offices will have windows either in the door or beside the door to the hallway.

7) Parents will be provided advance notice and full information about activities involving the children and/or youth. Ministry events involving transportation shall require written/signed permission from parents/guardians

8) Appropriate equipment and supervision will be provided for activities.

9) Adequate insurance will be held for the scope of church ministries.

10) Adults working with children and/or youth will receive an annual document providing education and/or training on such topics as:

* Church policies for prevention of child abuse,
* Procedures to be used in ministry with children and youth,
* Appropriate steps to report an incident of abuse,

Each adult worker will affirm, in writing or electronically, that the document has been read.

11) All persons who have regular and direct contact with children and youth must be safe sanctuary approved.

12) The process for becoming safe sanctuary approved is as follows:

* Applicants will be screened through a process which includes application forms, references, and background checks.
* Applicants shall consent in advance to the initial background check and to all subsequent checks.Subsequent checks will occur at a minimum of every five years thereafter**.**

13) All records will be confidential and secured and managed by the Safe Sanctuary Director.A list of safe sanctuary-approved persons will be made available to leaders in the areas of children and/or youth ministry.

14) This policy will be reviewed at least annually by the Safe Sanctuary ministry team. Any needed modifications may be recommended to the Leadership Board for adoption.

15) Any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate shall be reported immediately.

Please refer to the Steps to report Abuse page for the reporting process to be followed.

16) The Senior Pastor in cooperation with the District Superintendent and West Ohio Conference Crisis Communication team will designate a spokesperson for media requests.