



Covenant Statement

Grace United Methodist Church pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that ensure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults. We will follow all safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers. Appropriate operational procedures in all areas of care will be implemented. We will train all staff on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse.

Our Responsibility

Throughout the gospels, Jesus provides teachings on providing a peaceable kingdom. Our calling and our mandate is to ensure safe sanctuary for all God's people. Jesus taught that "Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me." (Mark 9:37). This church recognizes the need to have a formal, written policy with procedures in place to help prevent the opportunity for the occurrence and/or the appearance of abuse of anyone. The scope of this policy and its provisions shall apply to all persons including paid and unpaid adults, whether lay or clergy who have any direct or indirect contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults and who participate in any activities or events sponsored by this church. The following policy and procedures are not based on a lack of trust in workers, but are intended to protect our preschoolers, children, youth, workers, employees, volunteers and the entire church body. Careful and confidential documentation is essential to show compliance with policies, to verify information as needed, and to have an accurate record in the case of an incident.

We adopt this policy in accordance with the statement we as a congregation make at each Baptism; that we will "nurture children and youth in the Christian faith and life and include them in our care." With this policy, we renew our Baptismal pledge to "live according to the example of Christ" and surround children and youth with a "community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be thus confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal." (Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Book of Worship, p.96).

Administrative Council will review annually and revise as needed to address concerns and meet any requirement changes from Annual Conference Policy. This Policy along with amendments has been approved and adopted by the Grace United Methodist Administrative Council.

Approved/Adopted March 10, 2015.



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Application Process

1. **All** employees and volunteers interested in **any** position described in this policy must read and sign the Code of Ethics.
2. All adults shall complete an application/consent form. By signing the form, the applicant gives permission to have references checked and background screening completed by the appropriate authority.
3. The Back ground screening will be performed by the company recommended by the district. All references will be checked and the application will be reviewed by S/PPRC.
4. All applicants must attend Local Church Safe Sanctuary training.
5. Teenagers (under 18) who desire to assist with the children and youth programs are not subject to criminal background checks. However, they must understand and agree to Basic Procedures for Safe Ministries and The Code of Ethics.
6. The cost of this program has certain budgetary and records obligations. The Criminal background checks cost will be covered by Grace Church. Each person must have a “supervisory file” made up which must be kept in a secure (locked) location accessible only to the Safe Sanctuary Committee.

Recruitment and Hiring Guidelines

Any employees and adult volunteers interested in the following positions in ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adults shall complete an application that includes:

1. Identification
Name, Date of birth, Address, Social Security Number
2. Employment/ Volunteer history for the past five years
3. Prior church membership (if any)
4. Personal references (not related to the applicant) with address and contact information
5. Waiver of any right to confidentiality and of any right to pursue damages against the church/charge caused by the references’ responses
6. Certification that the information provided is true and correct
7. Voluntary disclosure of past criminal convictions
8. Authorization to conduct a criminal background check.



The following positions fall under and will adhere to Grace United Methodist Safe Sanctuary Policy.

Pastor

- The pastor is the primary leader for our church's ministry and Sunday school strategy.
- The pastor works with the Sunday school director and the Sunday School Team to set goals and evaluate the Sunday school's effectiveness in engaging people in evangelism, discipleship, ministry, fellowship, and worship
- The pastor facilitates and participates in various meetings. These include Bible study, committee meetings and visitation of shut-ins as requested.
- To counsel persons with personal, ethical, or spiritual struggles.

Sunday School Director

- The Sunday school director serves as the general administrative leader for our church's Sunday school ministry.
- This person is responsible for coordinating the work of all Sunday school classes, departments, toward the overarching objective of Sunday school.
- The Director leads the Sunday School Planning Team in organizing, enlisting and equipping leaders and in mobilizing members.

Adult Teacher

- Is a volunteer that is at least 18 years of age.
- Must ensure that a positive ministry environment is provided during the session that facilitates the work of the Holy Spirit.
- Adult Teacher plans a lesson that is age appropriate for the participants in their Bible Study class.
- Responsible for leading people toward faith in Christ and guiding them to serve Him through evangelism, discipleship, fellowship, ministry, and worship.

Music Director

- Work with the Pastor to select and play appropriate music for the worship services
- Organize music for Choir performances

Adult Volunteer

- Talking to and interacting with the children, keeping a watchful eye on the children's behavior and maintaining discipline
- Insure all those in your care leave only with the authorized Parent or Adult

Youth Assistant

- Any volunteer under 18
- Provides adult teachers with assistance during Sunday school, nursery, or any other church sponsored event



Screening employees and adult volunteers

1. References provided by the applicant shall be checked by the pastor or a designated member of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee.
2. A personal interview shall be conducted.
3. A criminal background check shall be authorized by and completed for all clergy, paid workers, and volunteers who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
4. The criminal background check shall be performed after every two (2) years of service and at the beginning of service and after a break in service of one or more years.
5. Background check results shall be kept in a secure manner.
6. Adult volunteers shall demonstrate an active relationship with the local church/charge for at least twelve (12) months before being allowed to be in a supervisory role in activities for children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
7. In the event that the criminal background check reveals a conviction or other cause for concern the Pastor and/or other ministry leader shall consult with the applicant

Selecting Workers

1. Only workers that have successfully completed the application and screening process shall be eligible to be considered for selection to a ministry position with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults.
2. In the event that the criminal background check reveals a conviction or other cause for concern, the pastor and/or another ministry leader shall consult with the applicant.
3. Adults convicted of child abuse or named as the perpetrator in a founded or indicated child abuse report through a designated state or county agency, or who are under investigation for, or who have charges pending for child abuse, shall not be accepted as paid employees or volunteers to have direct access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults in any church-sponsored activity or setting.



Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth and Vulnerable Adults

“Based in part on Safe Sanctuaries - Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church”

Each of the following procedures is important in a congregation’s comprehensive prevention strategy. They are not listed in order of importance!

“Two Adult Rule”

The “Two Adult Rule” requires no fewer than two adults present at all times during a church sponsored program, event or ministry involving children or youth. This can also be achieved by having one adult in the room with a second adult “roaming” between classes. Risk will be reduced more if the two adults are unrelated. Abusers thrive on secrecy, isolation and their ability to manipulate victims. When abusers know they will not be left alone, they lose interest in working with children.

“Five-Years Older Rule”

Leaders of youth ministry should be a minimum of five years older than the oldest youth. Don’t make this mistake!

“No Workers under age 18”

Putting children in charge of children invites disaster. It is common practice in many churches to allow junior or high school aged volunteers to supervise nursery or young children. People under the age of eighteen cannot be expected to have developed the maturity and judgment that is needed to fully respond to young children. However, people under age eighteen can assist a responsible adult, but they should not substitute for an adult under the Two Adult Rule.

“Reporting”

All adult staff, volunteers, and clergy shall be observant for unusual behaviors and signs of child, youth, and vulnerable adult abuse and shall report them immediately as outlined in Reporting and Response.

“Safe Sanctuary Policy”

All adult staff, volunteers shall receive a copy of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy before starting their service and shall agree to covenant with Grace United Methodist Church to fully cooperate with these abuse prevention strategies.

“Windows in All Classroom Doors”

Each room set aside for children and youth should have a door with a window in it or half door. A window removes the opportunity for secrecy and isolation. A half door offers protection against children wandering outside the classroom and allows for full visual access. Adding a window to the pastor’s door study or office protects against false allegations of misconduct. Any classroom doors without windows should remain open at all times.



Rooms Secure and Locked

When a classroom is deemed “No Longer in use” an adult staff member will clear room of any occupants and the door will be locked. This will provide less unsupervised areas throughout the building.

Building Safety

During Church Service, the only available access to the building will be the front entrance. All other access will be secured just prior to the church service.

Open-Door Counseling

At any counseling sessions with children or youth, the doors on the room used should remain open for the entire session, ideally when others are nearby even though not in listening distance. Counseling sessions conducted behind closed doors are a breeding ground for false allegations of abuse. Closed doors make it easy for a child abuser.

First Aid/CPR Training

Having workers who are prepared to deal with bumps, bruises and scrapes with competency goes a long way toward building the confidence of children and parents involved in the children’s ministry. A list of GUMC members with first aid and CPR training will be available. Annual training for all church workers with children and youth will be encouraged.

Advance Notice to Parents

A basic rule with children and youth ministry is to always give parents advance notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will participate. Advance information gives a guideline to parents about scheduling and allows parent and child to decide if the event and its content is suitable for their participation. It also demonstrates that the church has planned thoroughly to provide the safest experience.

Attendance

Written attendance records shall be kept for all ministry events/activities involving children and youth. These records shall include at a minimum, the date and names of all participants and shall be kept on file permanently.

Transportation

Parents must give written permission for their child to participate in events involving transportation. Drivers transporting unrelated children need to be 21 years of age, pass a background check including a MVR prior to event.



Appropriate Equipment and Supervision

It is very important for those planning ministries with children and youth to think through in advance, the advantages and disadvantages of the setting they are considering. If the ministry involves using special equipment, knowledge of its operation should be familiar. Incredible as it seems, children are often left alone on a playground while adults are inside at dinner. A child can be injured or taken by a stranger without a single adult witness. Do not let your church take the risk!

Adequate Insurance for the Scope of Your Ministry

Every local church needs to be adequately insured for the scope of its ministry! Most insurance companies are now cutting back on insurance coverage for sexual misconduct cases. Many insurance companies have specific requirements for a church's safe sanctuaries program which should be consulted. Among those requirements it is becoming increasingly common to require national criminal background checks on certain staff and volunteers. Screening for the driving record of drivers, including volunteers, for church sponsored programs for children and youth is also often required by insurers. Failure to obtain required records checks could jeopardize insurance coverage.

Parent and Family Education

When a congregation has a commitment to a comprehensive plan for the prevention of child abuse with its ministries, it will want to provide information about the plan to the congregation and parents. A family education event or series of events is highly effective in the disseminating of the components of the church plan. An event could include: (1) a speaker from your local law enforcement agency, (2) a speaker from a local child protective service agency, (3) a doctor or counselor who is experienced in treating abused children, (4) an attorney experienced in advising churches about risk management or loss prevention, (5) a video about the incidence of child sexual abuse within churches, (6) printed copies of your churches abuse prevention policies and procedures, (8) a time for worship and prayer.

Parent and Family Education

The Pastor along with a Safe Sanctuary member shall regularly review and be familiar with public sex offenders' registries maintained by New York State law enforcement agencies. This is done by accessing:

http://criminaljustice.state.ny.us/SomsSUBDirectory/search_index.jsp



REPORTING AND RESPONSE

Reporting

Reporting shall be **required** by any staff or volunteer.

- 1) The person in charge of the ministry/activity in which the alleged abuse was observed or disclosed shall immediately attempt to obtain information necessary for making a report to Child Protective Services such as the name of the alleged victim and his/her address and family information. The Pastor and one or both of the Safe Sanctuary contacts are to be informed immediately before or subsequent to the making of a report. Upon receiving the information, the person in charge of the ministry/activity shall **immediately** call the New York State Child Protective Services Hotline at (800) 342-3720. Identification information for the alleged victim and the adult responsible for their care is required for the report.
- 2) If the accused is the appointed clergy, supply pastor or a member of his/her family, the allegations shall be immediately reported to the District Superintendent. The District Superintendent shall immediately report to the proper authorities as set forth in paragraph 1 above. The District Superintendent shall take responsibility and act according to the established rules in The Book of Discipline with respect to claims against the pastor. If the District Superintendent is not available, the incident shall be reported to the Bishop's office.
- 3) All clergy are included in mandatory reporting as required by The Book of Discipline (1).
- 4) After the person in charge of the ministry/activity has reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the appointed clergy/supply pastors shall report the incident immediately to the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent is not available, the incident shall be reported to the Bishop's office.
- 5) The person in charge of the ministry/event must keep a written report of the steps taken by the church/charge in response to the reported abuse. The report should be kept brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. This report should be kept in a secure place. It should be written or typed to prevent it from being changed.
- 6) **NEVER** discuss allegations with any other people except those required by this policy, law enforcement, or designated county investigators.



Response Plan

A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of abuse is expected. All allegations shall be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse there shall be cooperation with all official investigating agencies.

- 1) All media requests for statements shall be directed to the Annual Conference Director of Communications.
- 2) Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.
- 3) Immediately, and with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children, youth, or vulnerable adults and advise the accused that there has been an allegation of abuse. Details of the allegations of the abuse should not be discussed with the accused at the time of the 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.
- 4) When it has been alleged that a member of the church staff or volunteer, has committed an act of abuse or exploitation, the staff member or volunteer shall be required to refrain from all ministry/activities with children, youth, and vulnerable adults until the incident has been fully resolved by the appropriate state authorities and/or in accordance with The Book of Discipline.
- 5) Notify the parents/guardians or the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and wellbeing of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult until the parent(s)/guardian(s) arrive. **NOTE:** If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, follow the advice of the authorities concerning notifications of others.
- 6) The church/charge shall provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing may take place.

(1) The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church ¶341.5, All clergy of The United Methodist Church are charged to maintain all confidences inviolate, including confessional confidences, except in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect or in cases where mandatory reporting is required by civil law.



Education

The Upper New York Annual Conference shall make available a standardized training program to assist each charge, district, agency, and ministry to fulfill the covenant to “educate all of our workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding the use of appropriate policies and methods”.

Sexual Misconduct

Those in position of leadership are prohibited from becoming involved in an intimate relationship with those in a subordinate position. This includes teachers and students, youth group leaders and those they are responsible for, Pastor and members of the congregation he or she serves. Do to the imbalance of power in such relationships there cannot be a mutual consent to this type of relationship. The person in position of authority is required to say NO to any intimate relationship even if initiated by the other person. Entering into an authority/subordinate type of relationship with someone constitutes sexual misconduct regardless of where it occurs and must be reported to that person’s immediate supervisor. In the interest of the Church and being an appropriate role model, intimate behavior or conversations of a sexual nature will not be tolerated on church grounds or at church activities.



Permission Form

YOUTH INFORMATION

Name _____ Grade _____ DOB _____ Male/Female

PARENT/ GUARDIAN INFORMATION

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Email(s) _____

List all phone numbers where the parent/guardian can be reached (type: i.e. home, cell)

_____ Type? _____

_____ Type? _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT

Name _____ # _____ Relation? _____

PARENTAL CONSENT

The undersigned does hereby give permission for my child _____ ,
to attend and participate in any Grace Church children/youth ministry activities, events,
retreats and childcare during the period of _____ thru _____

TRANSPORTATION PERMISSION: The undersigned does also hereby give permission for my
child/youth to ride in any vehicle driven by an approved and licensed ADULT chaperone while
attending and participating in activities sponsored by Grace Church. My child/youth and I
understand that SEAT BELTS MUST BE WORN AT ALL TIMES during transportation.

I agree that Grace Church may photograph and record my child/dependent's likeness and
activities (Images) during church-related activities. I give permission to use and re-use Image(s)
taken during the shoot. Use of the Images for future event promotional purpose and on the
church website and on the Internet.

Signature of parent/guardian _____

Date



Incident Report

Injured Person

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Parent /Guardian: _____

Date and Time of Injury/Incident: _____

Description of Incident: _____

What was the injured person doing at time of incident?

Location of Injury/Incident: _____

Who was Supervising?: _____

Emergency Procedures followed at time of Injury/Incident:

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Was Parent/ Guardian Contacted? _____ By Whom? _____

Time of Contact: _____ Method of Contact: _____

Location of Injury/Incident: _____

Description of Incident: _____

Did Parent/ Guardian request any steps to be taken? If so What?

Was 911 called? _____ When? _____

Child Protective Services Called? _____ When? _____

Was the Pastor Notified? _____

Additional Notes:

Person Making Report: _____ Date _____

Parent/ Guardian Signature: _____ Date _____



Sexual Harassment Has NO Place in Our Church

Sexual Harassment is:

- **Sexual comments**
- **Touching or other physical contact you do not appreciate**
- **Secrets and threats about telling others**
- **Sexual advances or violence**

The policy of our local church, district, and Annual Conference is very clear. These behaviors are **wrong**, and will not be tolerated. If you feel you have been sexually harassed or abused in your local church, or at a district or Conference event, please make contact with someone who can help you understand how to deal with it.

This church has a Safe Sanctuary policy in place to protect children, youth, vulnerable adults, and volunteers in ministry.



**Brought to you by the Sexual Ethics Committee
Upper New York Annual Conference
324 University Ave. Syracuse, NY 13210
1-855-424-7878 (toll free)
www.unyumc.org**



CODE OF ETHICS

Thank you for volunteering to work with Grace United Methodist Church to serve our children and youth. Your contribution is important and much appreciated. We ask that everyone who works with our children, youth, or vulnerable adults read and sign the following Code of Ethics. Adult volunteers must also complete the Application and Screening Forms.

The Book of Resolutions for the United Methodist Church states that we support “methods of education designed to assist every child toward complete fulfillment as an individual person of worth.” Adults and older youth who volunteer to work with our church children and youth are in a position of stewardship, and play a key role in fostering spiritual development of both individuals and community. It is, therefore, especially important that those in leadership positions be well qualified to provide the special nurture, care and support that will enable children and youth to develop a positive sense of self and spirit of independence and responsibility.

The relationship between young people and their leaders must be one of mutual respect, if this positive potential is to be realized. There are no more important areas of growth than those of self-worth and the development of a healthy identity as a sexual being. Adults play a key role in assisting children and youth in these areas of growth.

Children, youth and adults can suffer damaging effects when leaders engage in sexual conduct with young persons in their care. Therefore, it is expected that leaders’ behavior will respect the worth and dignity of each child and youth. To this end, leaders must refrain from engaging in sexual, seductive or erotic behavior with children and youth. They may not sexually harass or engage in behavior with children or youth which constitutes verbal, emotional or physical abuse.

The Volunteer acknowledges by signing this statement that he or she understands and agrees to comply with this Code of Ethics. The Volunteer has read the Basic Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth and agrees to observe them in working with children and youth. The Volunteer agrees to be bound by the Policies and Procedures for the Prevention of Child Abuse of the Church. In addition, the Volunteer represents that he or she has filled out the attached Application and Screening Forms completely and truthfully, and agrees that in the event that he or she has been arrested for or charged in a court with any crime or offense involving a minor, he or she shall immediately notify the Pastor and shall suspend his or her activities with children and youth of the Church.

I have read and understand the above statements of position, expectations and actions.



Signature

Date

Safe Sanctuaries CONFIDENTIAL SCREENING FORM

This form will be reviewed by the Pastor, the Chair of Education Committee, and either the Lay Leader or the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Please answer each question candidly and completely. A “yes” answer will not necessarily disqualify a person from serving as a volunteer. The form will be kept in a confidential file to protect your privacy.

Please circle “yes” or “no”. If you answer “yes” to any of the following questions, please attach an explanation noting the date, nature and place of the incident involved, where the case was litigated or is pending, and the outcome or present status of the case.

1. Have you ever been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or no contest, to a criminal charge of sexual abuse, child abuse, child molestation, or child neglect, in this state or any other state or country?
Yes / No
2. Have you ever been convicted of, or pleaded guilty or no contest, to any other crime, whether a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violations)?
Yes / No
3. Are there any criminal proceedings pending against you?
Yes / No
4. Are you the subject of an indicated child abuse or maltreatment report in this state or any other state or country?
Yes / No
5. Have you ever had a lawsuit alleging actual or attempted sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation or sexual misconduct, physical abuse or child abuse filed against you which resulted in a judgment entered against you, or was settled out of court, or was dismissed because the statute of limitations had expired?
Yes / No .
6. Have you ever terminated your employment or service in a volunteer position, or had your employment or authorization to hold a volunteer position terminated, for reasons relating to allegations of actual or attempted sexual discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual exploitation, or sexual misconduct, physical abuse or child abuse?
Yes / No



7. Employment History (Past Five years)

Your Current employer _____

Contact Name _____ Number _____

Your Previous employer _____

Contact Name _____ Number _____

8. References

Please list three personal references (Not immediate family) and provide complete address and phone information for each. References are confidential.

Name: _____ phone: _____

Email address: _____

Name: _____ phone: _____

Email address: _____

Name: _____ phone: _____

Email address: _____

8. Are you willing to provide transportation for children or youth?

Yes/No (if no, skip to this section)

If yes, please answer the following questions:

a. Has your driver's license ever been revoked or suspended?

Yes / No

b. In the past 3 years, have you been convicted of, or pleaded guilty to, any offense involving a moving vehicle violation in this state or any other state?

Yes / No.

c. Do you experience seizures of any kind?

Yes / No.



If you answered yes, please indicate whether the seizures are controlled by medication.
d. Do you regularly take any medication that could affect your ability to drive?
Yes / No.

Safe Sanctuaries Background Investigation Consent

By signing below, applicant hereby authorizes Grace United Methodist Church and/or its agents to make an independent investigation of my background, references, character, past employment, education, criminal, or police records, including those maintained by both public and private organizations and all public records for the purpose of confirming the information contained on my Application and/or obtaining other information, which may be material to my qualifications as a volunteer or for employment now, and if applicable, during the tenure of my volunteering or employment with the Church. I release the Church and/or its agents, and any person or entity which provides information pursuant to this authorization, from any and all liabilities, claims, or lawsuits regarding the information obtained from any and all of the above referenced sources used.

Full legal name (printed)

Maiden name or other names used

Email Address

Home Phone

Cell Phone

Present street address (5 Year min)

City/State Zip

Former street address

How long?

City/State/Zip

Date of Birth

Social security #

Driver's license #

State of license

Signature

Date

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To assure the protection and preservation of the confidential information regarding the background records and reference checks of current or potential employees and volunteers, undersigned hereby agrees to release any obtained information only to those individuals responsible for the hiring, selection and screening of these individuals and to no one else. At present, this form will be reviewed by the Pastor, the Chair of the Safe Sanctuary Committee, and either the Lay Leader or the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

Grace United Methodist Church

Name:

Title:

Date:

Signature: