

Griffin First United Methodist Church

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Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures

For Children's Ministries ages 3 years old - 5th grade

"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."

The Congregational Pledge to Baptized Children

Taken from The United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44

UMPH, 1989

Griffin First United Methodist Church (GFUMC)

Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures

For Children ages 3 years old-5th grade

Approved August 2015

Introduction

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 for the United Methodist Church – 2000, pp. 180-181. Copyright 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.]

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations and cooperation with the Griffin First United Methodist Church congregation, we adopt this policy for the safety of children and prevention of child abuse in our church.

Purpose

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures for our Children's Ministries, ages 3 years old-5th grade is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children.

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 our children as well as all of the workers with children to the best of our ability. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers. We will educate our workers with children regarding the use of all appropriate policies. We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting accidents and/or incidents including suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of Georgia state law.

Conclusion

In all of our ministries with children this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so each child will be "surrounded by steadfast love...established in faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal." ("Baptismal Covenant II," United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44)

GFUMC SAFE SANCTUARIES

Children's Ministries ages 3 years – 5th grade

Policies and Procedures

In order to provide as safe and secure an environment as possible for our Children's ministries participants, and to minimize the ministry's and worker's vulnerability to unwarranted accusation, the following policies and procedures have been adopted and will be enforced:

***Minimum Age:** All volunteers working with children must be at least 18 years old and must be 3 years older than the age of persons that they will be working to serve. Adults may not leave children alone with persons not meeting this requirement.

***Church Attendance:** In order to work directly with children, a volunteer must have regularly attended for 6 months or more at Griffin First United Methodist Church. If a volunteer has attended less than 6 months, they may only work with a staff member or approved volunteer.

***Volunteer Agreements:** All volunteers must agree to uphold Griffin First United Methodist church policies. All volunteers must agree to and sign the Volunteer Covenant. All volunteers that work with children must have a current (3 years or less) background check from Griffin First United Methodist Church. Cost associated with these background checks will be paid by GFUMC. These background checks will be kept confidential and kept secure by the Director of Discipleship.

***Behavior:** The following behaviors are PROHIBITED for All Volunteers:

~Threatening or intentionally inflicting emotional or physical injury

~Committing any sexual offense or engaging in any sexual contact

~Making any kind of sexual advance or making a request for sexual favors

~Engaging in verbal, visual, or physical conduct of a sexual nature i.e. Back rubs, massages, kissing, or similar contact

~Physical discipline, such as spanking

~NO Tobacco, alcohol, illegal drugs, firearms or other weapons, foul or offensive language

***Appropriate Discipline:** Volunteers should work, play and communicate with children in a cooperative manner. At times, discipline may be necessary to maintain order and respect for volunteers within the classrooms and within GFUMC. In these cases, volunteers will take the following steps:

a) Physical discipline is forbidden

b) Verbally redirect the child to a more appropriate behavior.

c) If the child continues to act out, the child will be given a "Time Out", allowing the child to return to the group when the child is ready to act in a cooperative manner.

d) If a child's uncooperative behavior persists, the volunteer will contact the Director of Children's Ministry who will then inform the parent (s) of the behavioral issue. Together, the Director, the parent and the child will agree to a plan that will encourage more cooperative behavior.

***Two-Adult Rule:** Every effort will be made to have two adults in the room, office, or vehicle at all times. If for any circumstance two adults cannot be present, the classroom door, or office door will remain open. Every Children's Ministry door shall have a window that is uncovered and able to see through at all times.

***Transportation for Church-Organized Events:** Volunteers wishing to drive the church vehicle as transportation must be on the approved drivers list. Vehicles must always have more than one child or one adult in a church vehicle.

***Lodging:** Children will room together without an adult. In situations where adults must room with a child, there MUST be two adults and MUST be the same sex as the children. Adults cannot sleep in the same bed with a child unless they are the parent of that child.

***Restrooms:** Changing a diaper and assisting a young child with the bathroom as needed should take place where the worker and the child are in sight with the child's privacy protected. When a child is taken to a restroom outside of the classroom or activity site, a volunteer must first check the bathroom before the child is permitted to enter to ensure it is safe.

***Unattended Children:** No child under the age of 18 should be left unattended in a room or permitted to roam the campus. Children must be supervised at all times while on church property. An unattended child must be escorted to the Director or their parent.

***Training:** Volunteers with children will be offered training in regard to the implementation of the Safe Sanctuary policy, dealing with children, and other training such as Vacation Bible School training. The training will be offered in coordination with the Director of Discipleship.

***Reporting Abuse:** Volunteers who suspect an incident of abuse of children will report it as soon as possible to the Senior Pastor or if the Senior Pastor is involved in the incident, then report to the Griffin District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church.

***Policy Publication:** We will post the Children's Ministries Safe Sanctuary Policy in the church office and website. All paid and unpaid volunteers and staff will be required to review and agree to these policies before working with children.

***Approval and changes to this policy:** Following approval of this policy by the GFUMC Church Council, the Safe Sanctuaries Policy for Children's Ministries to Children ages 3 years old – 5th grade, can only be changed by the Church Council. The Children's Council, overseen by the Director of Children's Ministries, can make amendments to the Procedures when necessary. Evaluation of these policies and procedures shall be reviewed at least annually by the Children's Council.

GFUMC Safe Sanctuaries

For Children ages 3 years to 5th Grade

Procedures for Reporting Incidents of Abuse:

1. According to the laws of the state of Georgia, all persons are mandatory reporters of child abuse. If a person learns of or witnesses an instance of abuse, that person shall immediately report the alleged incident of abuse or suspected abuse to the appropriate county or state authorities.
2. Incidents of abuse or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse of children will also be reported as soon as possible to the Senior Pastor or to the Griffin District Superintendent of the United Methodist Church, if the Senior Pastor is involved in the incident.
3. The person reporting the incident will document, in writing, all known facts and circumstances and will also make a report that documents all steps taken in the course of handling the reported incident using the appropriate forms.
4. The pastor and/or staff member will document all actions taken in reporting the incident of abuse using the appropriate forms.
5. The confidentiality of all persons involved will be safeguarded.

Responding to Allegations of Abuse:

1. Every allegation will be taken seriously. Adequate care and respect must be offered to the alleged victims and alleged perpetrators until the allegation can be substantiated or cleared.
2. The safety and security of the alleged victim must be safeguarded before the person accused of abuse is confronted.
3. The parents/guardian of the suspected victim will be notified immediately.
4. All procedures listed in the previous section on Reporting will be strictly followed.
5. All records relating the matter will be maintained in confidential files by the Senior Pastor.
6. All efforts in handling the situation will be carefully documented.
7. The Senior Pastor will notify the liability insurer and the legal counsel for the Church about the alleged incident.
8. The Senior Pastor or the appointee of the Senior Pastor will be the sole spokespersons to any media regarding the allegations.
9. Any person accused must be treated with dignity and support. That person will be immediately relieved of further responsibilities at Griffin FUMC until the allegation are cleared.
10. The victim and the victim's family shall receive immediate ministry support from GFUMC if needed.

**Griffin First United Methodist Church
Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Procedures**

Volunteer Covenant

As a volunteer in this church, I pledge to observe and abide by all policies regarding the ministry of children. I have received a copy of the policies and have read them.

I pledge that every word said and action taken is for the purpose of glorifying God and furthering His work within this ministry. Not only do I represent my home church and my family, I also realize that I am seen as a role model and Promise to behave as such.

I will not have in my possession firearms, fireworks, drugs, alcohol or tobacco.

I understand that pranks are not allowed.

I agree to observe the two-adult rule at all times.

I agree to participate in training and education events related to my volunteer assignment.

I agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to the appropriate persons. I also pledge that I will not be a part of such behavior.

I agree that all the information listed in this application is true.

Signature_____ Date:_____

**Griffin First United Methodist Church
Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures**

Request for Criminal Records Check

I, _____, hereby authorize Griffin First United Methodist Church to request information regarding any record of charges or convictions contained in its files, or in any criminal file maintained on me, whether said file is a local, state, or national file, and including but not limited to accusations and convictions for crimes committed against minors, to the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law. I do release the Police/Sheriff's Department and any company utilized to do the record checks from all liability that may result from any such disclosure made in response to this request.

Signature

Date

Applicant's Full Name: _____

Print all other names that have been used by the applicant (if any):

Date of Birth: _____ Place of Birth: _____

Social Security #: _____

Driver's License #: _____ State: _____ Exp. Date: _____

List each address at which you have resided in the last ten years:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

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Incident Report

Date of Incident: _____ Time: _____

Location: _____

Child: _____

Adults on Scene: _____

Incident: _____

Actions

Taken: _____

Parent/Guardian

Notification: _____

Comments: _____

Adult Volunteer

Signature: _____

Director

Signature: _____ Date: _____

**Griffin First United Methodist Church
Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures**

**Report of Suspected/
Alleged Incident of Child Abuse**

Name of worker observing or receiving disclosure of abuse: _____

Victim's Name: _____ DOB: _____

Date/location of initial conversation with/report from
victim: _____

Victim's statement/Observer's description of possible
injury _____

Name of person accused of abuse: _____

Relationship of accused to victim: _____

Reported to Director (Date/time): _____

Reported to Senior Pastor (Date/time): _____

Call to victim's parent/guardian (Date/time): _____

Spoke to: _____

Summary: _____

Call to DFCS/law enforcement (Date/time): _____

Spoke to: _____

Summary: _____
