

Safe Sanctuary Policy

Pardeeville United Methodist Church

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The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at eliminating any potential for sexual, physical, verbal, emotional and ritual abuse in the church. God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other persons from 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. Pages 395+386). Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, the Pardeeville United Methodist Church adopts this policy for Safe Sanctuaries in our church.

Covenant Statement

The Pardeeville 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 people including children, youth and vulnerable adults. 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, youth and vulnerable adults 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 Wisconsin law.

Section 1: Staff Selection Policies/Safety Selection Measures

All volunteers and paid staff who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults at PUMC will:

1. Be supervised by someone aged 18 or older and
 - a. be at least five years older than the children/youth they will be supervising, and
 - b. there will be another floating adult.
2. Be a member/constituent of PUMC for at least 6 months.
3. All adults who regularly interact with children, youth and vulnerable adults, including staff and volunteers, must submit every 3 years to a National Criminal Database Search and a National Sex Offender Search through PUMC's background check provider and prior to volunteering with youth. If driving to and from an activity, a background check for that purpose is also required. Background checks will be obtained and will maintain the confidentiality of the findings and provide secured, confidential storage for documentation. Background screening may also include contact with previous church affiliations (**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 and vulnerable adults.**)

Section 2: Staff Supervision Guidelines/Operational Procedures

Whenever PUMC sponsors and supervising an activity involving children, youth and vulnerable adults:

1. At least two unrelated adults must be present at all times involving children, youth and vulnerable adults in the church building or grounds for the duration of and until the final participant leaves the activity of event.
2. All activities on church property or sponsored by PUMC which involve children, youth and vulnerable adults will be scheduled through the church office.
3. Supervisors, coordinators or adult volunteers will have access to a telephone or cell phone when groups are at or away from the church facility.
4. All rooms used for any and all activities including one-on-one interactions with adults and children, youth or vulnerable adults will have doors with uncovered, transparent windows or doors remain open at all times unless two or more adults are present.
5. Nursery supervision during church services must have at least one adult and "floating" adult at all times (i.e exception for parents supervising their own children).
6. Restroom expectations - The child should use the nearest restroom available, when possible within sight of the classroom. If a 2nd adult is present, an adult should accompany the child to the bathroom, waiting in the hallway or doorway of the classroom keeping an eye on the bathroom exit ensuring the child returns to class safely in a timely manner. In the event of a bathroom emergency, care will be taken to maintain the privacy of the bathroom users. If help is necessary, the adult in

charge will be authorized to provide age-appropriate assistance and will notify parents of the assistance.

7. Anyone has the right to visit and observe the activity, classroom or church-sponsored program that occurs on PUMC property at any time without announcement.
8. Whenever PUMC hosts an activity involving children, youth and vulnerable adults from another church or community organization, groups using the church facilities will follow all PUMC Safe Sanctuary policies and procedures. The church secretary will provide the group leader a copy of the policy in advance of the event. The group leader will sign an agreement to follow the procedures prior to the event.

Whenever PUMC transports children, youth and vulnerable adults away from the church campus:

9. The activity will be approved by the administrative board and covered by the church's insurance.
10. ONLY adult (25+) authorized drivers transporting children should never be alone in a car with a non related child(ren)/youth or vulnerable adults unless they have written permission by the parents or legal guardian of the child(ren)/youth.
11. All authorized driver(s) are covered by PUMC insurance. The driver(s) will be asked to provide a copy of his/her license.
12. At least two unrelated adults are required to be present in each car/van when transporting children and youth except in the case of an emergency or with parental permission.
13. If there can't be two unrelated adults present in each car/van, a communication system must be established so that both adults can be aware of what is going on before each trip.
14. Parents and/or Guardians are responsible for the transportation arrangements made for children and/or youth coming to or departing from PUMC sponsored activities.

Children, Youth and Adult Leaders/Chaperones Permission/Medical Release Forms:

General permission and medical release forms for youth 12th Grade and younger (**Appendix B**) will be used to cover all activities involving children, and youth. Any adult leaders/chaperones age 18 and over will complete a general permission, behavior covenant and medical release forms (**Appendix C**). The form also covers transportation to designated activities.

The general permission, behavior covenant and medical release forms will be completed once per year at the beginning of December and continue through the next year for any child, youth and adults. For any offsite activities, a specific permission form will be completed by children, youth and adults. These forms will be kept in a confidential, secured file and will be taken to all covered activities by PUMC staff or designated activity leader(s).

Image Use and Communication Release:

An Image Use and Communication Release (**Appendix D**) will be used to inform and give the opportunity to opt out of authorizing the use of images and communication of children, youth and/or adults.

Substances/Illegal Materials:

If the possession or use of illegal substances, the abuse of controlled substances, or underage use of alcohol is observed on the grounds of PUMC or at a PUMC-sponsored activity, the police, parents of the youth involved in the prohibited behavior, the adult leader in charge of the activity, and the Pastor will be notified immediately. The adult who observed or received a report of the event will complete an **Incident/Complaint Report (Appendix E1)**.

Safety Hazard Awareness:

All adult leaders participating in PUMC related activities will be aware of escape routes in case of need for evacuation of the building. They must be familiar with the locations and use of fire extinguishers. They must be aware of necessary safety precautions in the event of severe weather or tornadoes. Escape routes,

including windows, must be free from obstruction (**Map Appendix G** for exit locations, fire extinguishers, and emergency equipment).

Training and Expectations of Adult Leaders:

PUMC adopts a proactive stance regarding the safety of all placed in its care. To this end, all adults who will regularly participate in PUMC programming must become acquainted with the PUMC Safe Sanctuary Policies. This material will be made available via hard copy. **Appendix A** shall be signed by adult participants annually and returned to the Pastor or church office acknowledging receipt and understanding of this safety information. Adults will use language, behavior, and attitudes which are consistent with the Christian faith and the vision of PUMC.

Section 3: Meeting and Activity Guidelines

Arrivals/Departures:

Children and Youth being dropped off should arrive no earlier than 10 minutes before or at the scheduled program start time(s) at the designated location. Adults bringing children or youth to church activities are responsible for confirming that the activity is occurring as planned and that the minimum required adult supervision is present before leaving. There will be a sign-in/sign out form for each event.

Participation Expectations:

While PUMC recognizes that flexibility with regard to participation in scheduled activities is necessary, it is expected that those attending sponsored activities will participate in some aspect of the planned activity. Children or youth leaving scheduled activities to be in another area or engaged in their own chosen activity, especially if that activity requires additional adult supervision, is not permitted unless sanctioned by an adult leader.

Overnight Activities:

It is not permissible for any adult in any circumstances to share the same sleeping space (i.e.: camp cabin, tent, retreat bedroom, or designated sleeping area in a church building) with youth (unless it is a parent/legal guardian). Sleeping spaces without adults must be readily accessible for adult supervision as needed. No connecting spaces (i.e.: common bathrooms) that are not readily available for supervision will be permitted between youth of disparate ages or opposite sex. Whenever possible, youth at overnight activities should be assigned sleeping space with youth of approximately the same age. Under no circumstances will youth of the opposite sex be permitted shared sleeping space in an overnight activity.

Church lock-ins will have designated and segregated sleeping spaces. If for any reason that a youth needs to have separate sleeping arrangements, it should be noted in the “**Miscellaneous**” section of the permission form as well as a conversation with parent or legal guardian in terms of the nature of request. The Pastor will notify the adult leader in charge of the event of the “miscellaneous” occurrence.

Pardeeville UMC strives to create a safe space for all who participate. Youth who violate this policy will not be permitted to participate in future overnight activities. Adults observing or receiving reliable information of such an incident will notify the key adult leader and Pastor and will complete an **Incident/Complaint Report (Appendix E1)**.

Counseling:

One to one counseling sessions between adults/adults, adults/minors and adults/vulnerable adults at PUMC or at PUMC-sponsored activities will be done in an open-door context. Efforts should be made to minimize the risk that conversations may be overheard (i.e.: Conduct in a low traffic area or with a radio outside the room to mask conversations).

Disruptive Behavior:

PUMC is committed to providing activities in which all participants, leaders, and property will be treated with respect and in a safe manner. Any person who violates the spirit of this commitment by inappropriate conduct, significant and willful disruption of activities, willful damage to property, verbal or physical assault on another, or offensive disrespect to another will be asked to leave the activity in custody of his or her parent or guardian or, if warranted, in the custody of the police. An adult witnessing or receiving a report of an incident will complete an **Incident/Complaint Report (Appendix E1)**. Behavior problems that demand a formal response from PUMC will follow the format outlined by the **Critical Incident Report Process (Appendix E)**. The Critical Incident Report will be given to the pastor with any and all additional information for further action.

Discipline:

PUMC views corrective action for inappropriate behaviors of youth to be within the responsibilities and rights of any adult authorized to provide supervision for any activity sponsored through PUMC. To this end, the church endorses the use of verbal correction (without abusive content), removal of offending child or youth from the activity, distraction from inappropriate behaviors via engagement in constructive participation, structuring activities to minimize boredom and conflict, and reinforcement of appropriate behaviors via reasonable verbal or other more tangible reward to promote appropriate behaviors. Parents or legal guardians shall be notified and communicated about any disciplinary actions. Corporal punishment is strictly prohibited.

Definitions of Abuse and Abuse Reporting:

PUMC will actively work to prevent **Physical Abuse** ("in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to anyone"), **Emotional Abuse** ("in which a person exposes a anyone to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty"), **Neglect** ("in which a person endangers another's health, welfare, and safety through negligence"), **Sexual Abuse** ("in which sexual contact between youth and/or adult [or older, more powerful youth] happens"), and **Ritual Abuse** ("in which physical, sexual, or psychological violence is inflicted on any one, intentionally and in a stylized way, by someone [or multiple people] with responsibility for the victim's welfare"). *These definitions are meant to be descriptive and not exhaustive are from: Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in Youth Ministries, Joy Thornburg Melton, Discipleship Resources, 2008.*

In the event that abuse is identified, the staff of PUMC will follow the Safe Sanctuaries recommended **Abuse Response Guidelines (Appendix F)**.