

BALDWIN COMMUNITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

5001 Baptist Road
Pittsburgh, PA 15236

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

1. **Statement of Purpose.** The Baldwin Community United Methodist Church (hereinafter referred to as “Church”) hereby adopts this Safe Sanctuary Policy (hereinafter referred as “Policy”).
 - a. **Purpose.** The purpose of this Policy is to eliminate, or limit to the greatest extent possible, the risk of abuse both in the Church and its interface with the community.
 - b. **Intent.** This Policy is intended to serve and protect not only the potential victims of abuse but also to limit the vulnerability of individuals and the Church to loss from litigation arising from real or alleged incidents of abuse.
 - c. **Procedures.** The Church endeavors to protect the accuser and the accused in matters of abuse, in any form, of children, youth, or vulnerable adults, by establishing and implementing methods of prevention and the procedures for reporting alleged abuse and by providing the process for conflict resolution.
 - d. **Application.** This Policy sets forth governing procedures for the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC), the Church Council, the Pre-School Board, the Pastoral Staff, and the Laity of the Church in issues of abuse or potential abuse. The Policy shall apply to all employees and volunteers of the Church.
2. **Definitions.** Whenever used in this Policy, the following definitions shall apply to these terms:
 - a. **Child/Youth.** Child/youth is defined to be from birth through age seventeen (17).
 - b. **Vulnerable Adults.** Vulnerable adults are persons eighteen (18) year of age and over who are not able to take care of themselves, defend or protect themselves from harm or exploitation, or get help for themselves when injured or abused. Persons may be vulnerable because of physical conditions, illness, mental conditions, power imbalance, and/or emotional conditions.
 - c. **Staff/Employee.** The Staff shall include any persons employed by Baldwin Community United Methodist Church.
 - d. **Volunteer.** A volunteer is any person 18 years of age or older who: provides services or holds a position of responsibility over children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults, without compensation.

3. **Scriptural Foundation.** Our relationship to God and our theological orientation as Christians and as United Methodists compel us to reflect on God's Word as the basis for handling matters of abuse. All human beings are created in the image of God, and thus have been made equal in Christ.
 - a. "And anyone who welcomes a little child like this on my behalf is welcoming me. But if anyone causes one of these little ones who trust in me to lose faith, it would be better for that person to be thrown into the sea with a large millstone tied around his neck." (Matthew 18:5-6)
 - b. "But now you must be holy in everything you do, just as God – who chose you to be His children – is holy. And remember that the Heavenly Father to whom you pray has no favorites when He judges. He will judge or reward you according to what you do. So you must live in reverent fear of Him during your time here on earth." (I Peter 1:15,17)
 - c. God's grace, freely given through Jesus Christ, calls us to be channels of grace, not exploitation, and to be agents of healing and redemption. In light of this understanding, when we honor the complete integrity of one another, we honor and remember the Body of Christ.
 - d. In our ministries, The Church is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each person will be "...surrounded by steadfast love...established in the faith and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal." (Baptismal Covenant, United Methodist Hymnal, page 44)
4. **Abuse Defined.** Generally, abuse is categorized in five primary forms. Although we typically think of young children when we think of these forms of abuse, youth, and vulnerable adults can be victims of each and every one of the following types of abuse (Safe Sanctuaries, pages 12-23):
 - a. **Physical Abuse.** This is abuse when a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to another person, such as a child, youth, or vulnerable adult. Examples are violent battery with a weapon (such as a knife or belt), burning, choking, fracturing bones, and other nonaccidental injuries.
 - b. **Emotional Abuse.** This is abuse in which a person exposes a child, youth, or vulnerable adult to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the receiver that he or she is worthless, bad, unloved, and undeserving of love and care. Children, youth, or vulnerable adults exposed to emotional abuse may have experienced being deprived of affection, being locked in closets or other confining spaces, being incessantly told that they are bad or stupid, or being forced to abuse alcohol or drugs.

- c. Neglect. This is abuse in which a person endangers the health, safety, or welfare of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult through prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or failure to provide essentials of life. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection to destroy the individual's self-esteem and self-worth.
- d. Sexual Abuse. This type of abuse occurs when sexual contact occurs between a child, youth, or vulnerable adult and an adult or older, more powerful youth. The victim is not capable of consenting to such contact or resisting such sexual contacts. Often, the victim is physically and psychologically dependent upon the perpetrator of the abuse. Additionally, the victim is often psychologically dependent on the perpetrator. Examples of sexual abuse may include fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation and exposure to pornography or prostitution.
- e. Spiritual Abuse. Spiritual abuse is a form of emotional and psychological abuse. It is characterized by a systematic pattern of coercive and controlling behavior in a religious context. Spiritual abuse can have a deeply damaging impact on those who experience it. This abuse may include: manipulation and exploitation, enforced accountability, censorship of decision making, requirements for secrecy and silence, coercion to conform, inability to ask questions, control through the use of sacred texts or teaching, requirement of obedience to the abuser, the suggestion that abusive or coercive actions are "divinely-ordained," isolation as a means of punishment, and superiority and elitism.

5. **Procedures for Screening Employees**

- a. Documents to Be Submitted. All applicants for employment with the Church must complete and submit the following documents and meet the following qualifications:
 - i. Be at least eighteen (18) years of age.
 - ii. Obtain three (3) written references who have known the applicant for at least five (5) years.
 - iii. Upon Hiring:
 - 1. Apply for a new Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (Form CY-113) with a satisfactory report.
 - 2. Apply for a new Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal History Record Check (Form SP4-164) with a satisfactory report.

3. Apply for a Federal Criminal History report from the FBI, which includes submission of fingerprints to the Pennsylvania State Police.
 - iv. Complete a Safe Sanctuaries and Mandated Reporter Training and sign a copy of the safe sanctuary policy. This training must be repeated yearly for the duration of their employment.
- b. Interim Period. An individual will not be permitted to begin employment until such time the actions set forth in Section a, paragraphs i, ii, iii, and iv have been fulfilled. An employee awaiting the reports from Section a, paragraph iii may work for a period not to exceed thirty calendar (30) days.
- c. Responsibility for Files. The Pastor of Administration shall maintain the personnel files for all employees of the Church and shall ensure that all clearances are included within those files. Background checks for staff will need to be updated every 5 years.
- d. Reference Checks. The Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the Senior Pastor and/or the Pastor of Administration shall be responsible for checking references and clearances for applicants for paid staff positions with the Church. For employees in the Preschool Program, the Director of the Pre-School shall be responsible for checking references and clearances. All such references shall remain confidential and shall be placed in a locked file in the Senior Pastor's and/or the Pastor of Administration's office.
- e. Unsatisfactory Information/Hiring Decisions. An applicant's abuse and criminal history information record will be considered and reviewed by Senior Pastor and/or the Pastor of Administration.

6. Procedures for Screening Volunteers

- a. Qualifications to Be Met by Volunteers. All individuals who desire to work as volunteers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults must meet the following qualifications.
 - i. Be at least (18) years of age.
 - ii. Submit the Pennsylvania Child Abuse History Clearance (Form CY-113) with a satisfactory report.
 - iii. Submit the Pennsylvania State Police Request for Criminal History Record Check (Form SP4-164) with a satisfactory report.

- iv. If they have resided in Pennsylvania for less than 10 years, apply for a Federal Criminal History report from the FBI, which includes submission of fingerprints to the Pennsylvania State Police. If they have resided in Pennsylvania for 10 years or longer, they must sign a waiver stipulating that fact.
 - v. Complete a Safe Sanctuaries and Mandated Reporter Training and sign a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy. This training must be repeated once every five years.
- b. Responsibility for Files. The Coordinator of Discipleship of the church and the Office Administrator and Assistant to the Pastors shall maintain the files for volunteers working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and shall ensure that all files are up to date. Background checks for volunteers will need to be updated every 5 years.
- c. Negative Information Options. Any individual who is found to have a prior conviction for abuse or related criminal activity will not be permitted to volunteer in any area that involves direct contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults. Such individual will meet with the pastoral staff to discuss in what manner he or she can be involved in Church programming.
- d. Youth Helpers. Youth that are interested in helping with programs at the church as helpers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults must meet the following qualifications.
- i. Parents/Guardians of youth must complete a permission or registration form specific to the event with which the youth is helping.
 - ii. Youth must be at least 12 years of age.
 - iii. Youth do not count as adult volunteers and must be supervised by at least 2 adult volunteers.

7. Procedures for Implementation

- i. Abuse Prohibited. Employees or volunteers of the church will not engage in abuse of any kind nor will permit abuse to occur in their presence.
- ii. Corporal Punishment Prohibited. The use of corporal punishment, physically punishing a child, or imposition of force for the purpose of discipline shall be prohibited.
- iii. Facility Requirements. Each classroom, activity area, or office or office used for activities, meetings, or programs that involve children, youth or

vulnerable adults as participants should have a window or viewing device which permits an unobstructed view for observation of the room's interior. In those areas without windows, the door shall be kept open so that activities can be observed.

- iv. Two-Adult Rule. During any Church activity (including on-site, off-site, and digital communication) that involves children, youth, or vulnerable adults, at least two (2) adults who are preferably unrelated, will be present within the room. Additional adult volunteers may be needed if the activities require that the group of children, youth, or vulnerable adults be split into more than one room.
 - v. Adult Supervision Required. All children and youth will be under the supervision of approved adult employees and/or volunteers until such time as they are in the custody of a parent or designated adult.
 - vi. Staff and Volunteers. Safe Sanctuary and Mandated Reporter Trainings will be offered at least once a year. All staff shall attend this training once per year and all volunteers will attend once every five years. All staff and volunteers shall be required to sign a form indicating that they have attended the training, and have read, fully understand, and agree to comply with the Safe Sanctuary Policy.
 - vii. Failure to Follow Policy. Employees and volunteers who fail to comply with section 7, subsections iii-vi of the Safe Sanctuary Policy will be met with a verbal warning. Continued failure to abide by the policy will be marked by a certified letter from the Senior Pastor. In the event of subsequent failure to abide by the policy, the staff or volunteer member will receive a certified letter from the Senior Pastor which outlines precisely where and how they can maintain limited participation in the events and activities of the Church.
8. **Reporting Procedures by Employees and Volunteers.** Abuse that goes unnoticed or unreported will continue and probably worsen. Reporting suspected abuse enhances the efforts to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The following procedures will be used to report suspected abuse:
- i. Duty to Report. In accordance with the provisions of Pennsylvania Act 151 of 1994 ("Child Protective Services Act"), members of the clergy; any individual paid or unpaid, who, on the basis of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, is a person responsible for the child's welfare or has direct contact with children; and anyone supervised or managed by any of the above, and who has direct contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults are mandated reporters. A mandated reporter must make a report if they have (1)

witnessed abuse, (2) suspect abuse, (3) are told by a child/youth/vulnerable adult that they have experienced abuse, or (4) someone 14 years or older discloses that they have committed abuse. In addition to those persons and officials who are required to report suspected child abuse, “any person may make such a report if that person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is an abused child.” A person or official who is required to report a case of suspected child abuse who willfully fails to do so commits a summary offense for the first violation and a misdemeanor of the third degree for any subsequent violations.

- ii. Reporting Information. If an employee or volunteer participating in any Church program involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults has reason to suspect that an individual has been abused (whether inside or outside the Church), they are obligated, as a mandated reporter, to file a report to ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313. Additionally, staff and volunteers are to file a written report of these suspicions immediately to a member of the Pastoral Staff (Senior Pastor, Pastor of Administration, Youth and Discipleship Coordinator). In the case of the Pre-School Program, a report shall be made to the Director of the Pre-School. In all instances, the information shall be reported to the Senior Pastor. In the absence of the Senior Pastor, information shall be reported to the Pastor of Administration or in the event of their absence, the Youth and Discipleship Coordinator.
- iii. Abuse to Vulnerable Adult. If the alleged abuse is to a vulnerable adult, the Senior Pastor shall report such alleged abuse to Protective Services in the Area Agency on Aging in the Allegheny County Department of Human Services at 412-350-6905 or 1-800-344-4319 (24 hours per day).
- iv. Abuse to Child or Youth. If the alleged abuse is to a child or youth, the mandated reporter shall contact the ChildLine either electronically at www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis or by calling 1-800-932-0313.
- v. Documentation. Documentation of all such reports and actions taken shall be retained in a locked confidential file in the Office of the Senior Pastor or the Pastor of Administration.
- vi. Notification to Family. After having received a report of abuse, the Senior Pastor will notify the victim’s parents or legal guardian of the child and/or youth or the responsible family member of a vulnerable adult, unless the parent, guardian, or responsible family member is the indicated perpetrator.
- vii. Notification to Accused. The Senior Pastor shall notify the employee or volunteer who allegedly committed the abuse. The accused shall be treated with dignity. The accused will be notified that an investigation will be

conducted and that during the investigation, they will be relieved from their position as an employee or volunteer. The investigation will be conducted with as much confidentiality as possible. All parties will refrain from making any premature judgments about the guilt of the accused. The Church will offer support and care throughout the period for investigation. This applies to any investigation whether it is inside the Church or outside of the Church.

viii. Reporting to Agencies. The Senior Pastor will file reports with the following individuals and agencies as appropriate:

1. Superintendent of the Pittsburgh District of Annual Conference.
2. Chair of the Leadership Council.
3. Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee (if it involves an employee of the Church).
4. Pastor of Administration and Youth and Discipleship Coordinator (if applicable).
5. Allegheny County Department of Human Services – Office of Children, Youth, and Families or Area Agency on Aging.
6. Chief of Police, Borough of Whitehall.

9. Support Services for Family and Victim. Pastoral resources and support for the victim and family shall be extended. The care and safety of every child, youth, and vulnerable adult is the first priority of the Church.

10. Actions During Investigations. All individuals involved with the investigation shall comply with the following procedures:

- a. All representatives of the Church will cooperate with all social service agencies and police authorities throughout the investigation.
- b. All information regarding the allegations and accusations is extremely sensitive and shall be kept confidential as far as possible. Information shall not be shared with any unauthorized person or with the media. All inquiries concerning the investigation shall be referred to the Senior Pastor.
- c. If contacted by the media, the Senior Pastor shall be the spokesperson and will issue a prepared statement for the Church; however, interviews will not be granted. No other member of the Church leadership or staff shall have any contact with the media in any manner whatsoever.

- d. All written information regarding the investigation shall be retained in a locked file in the Senior Pastor's or Pastor of Administration's Office.
 - e. If the alleged abuse involves the actions of family members or third persons, the investigation will be directed by Allegheny County CYF, the Whitehall Borough Police or the Allegheny County District Attorney, and these agencies will be responsible for deciding actions to be taken regarding the alleged abuse.
11. **Effective Date and Review.** This policy shall become effective upon the first day of the month following approval by the Church Council. This policy shall be routinely reviewed by Staff Parish Relations Committee with recommendations to the Church Council.

Printed Name

I have read the above policy and commit to uphold it:

Signature

Date

I have completed a Safe Sanctuary and Mandated Reporter training:

Signature

Date training was completed