

Safe Sanctuaries Policy Munholland United Methodist Church

We the congregation of Munholland United Methodist Church recognize that there is no human being that falls outside the Psalmist's claim that we are "fearfully and wonderfully made" by God; "knit together in [our] mother's womb"¹ by the Creator of the universe. Further, we cannot deny that humankind has been deemed "very good"² by this very same Creator. This inherent value which we possess, coupled the Scriptures' admonition to avoid "anything that makes your brother or sister stumble,"³ particularly the "little ones,"⁴ calls us to also recognize the grievous harm present in all instances of abuse. Such incidents, whether sexual, physical, emotional or harassing in nature, are devastating to all who are involved. God calls us to make Munholland United Methodist Church a safe place, doing all we can to protect children, teens and other vulnerable persons from the devastating effects of abuse. Thus, in covenant with one another, we adopt this policy for the prevention of abuse in our church.

Purpose

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Risk Reduction/Safe Sanctuaries Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all who come under our care.

Statement of Covenant

Therefore, 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 of who come under our care. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of both staff persons and volunteers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs, ministries and events; we will provide broad education regarding our policies, as well as recognizing the signs of abuse; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will respond immediately and compassionately to any reported or suspected abuse, again following the requirements of state law and the policies of The Louisiana Conference of the United Methodist Church.

Conclusion

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

¹ From Psalm 139:13-15 NRSV

² From Genesis 1:31 NRSV

³ From Romans 14:21 NRSV

⁴ See Matt 18:6-9 or 19:13-15 or Mark 9:16-15 or Luke 18:15-17

PROLOGUE:

Purpose and Implementation:

Sexual misconduct and abuse of any nature (physical, emotional, neglect, sexual, or ritual) is incompatible with biblical teachings of hospitality, justice and healing. Thus, it is the policy of the Louisiana Annual Conference, UMC to conduct our ministry in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of everyone -adults, youth and children - and to expect the same of every congregation and ministry serving within our purview.

By Annual Conference action in June of 2008, every local church/charge, and every United Methodist related ministry, within the bounds of the Louisiana Annual Conference shall prepare, officially adopt (by charge conference/governing board action) and implement a policy to reduce the risk of sexual misconduct or abuse by January 31, 2009. These policies will include procedures to protect adults, youth and children.

Each policy shall:

- ◆ Include the minimum procedures outlined below.
- ◆ Reflect a critical engagement of risks unique to each ministry's setting.
- ◆ Be reviewed annually at a regularly scheduled board meeting or charge conference.

A copy of this policy will be on file in the Office of Connectional Ministries. Though this policy contains the minimum standards listed below, it should be understood that no policy can eliminate all possibility of harm or abuse. These "minimum's" certainly make no such guarantee, even though it represents our best effort at protecting those who have been entrusted to our care.

I. All persons who volunteer with children/teens through the ministries/activities of Munholland UMC shall fall into one of the following categories.

A. Level 1 personnel at MUMC include paid staff. Persons at this level are required to:

1. Attend, at least annually, risk reduction policy training
2. If a volunteer, must have been actively involved in the congregation or ministry for a minimum of 6 months
3. Undergo a criminal background and reference check
4. Undergo a criminal background check every 3 years
5. Be identified at all times while participating in activities involving children/youth through the MUMC by a photo identification badge to be visibly worn upon their person

B. Level 2 personnel –Every volunteer who regularly supervises, or works around, children or youth at Munholland United Methodist Church must be at least at level 2. Persons at this level are required to:

1. Be an active participant in the life of the congregation or ministry for at least six months prior to volunteering.
2. Attend, at least annually, risk reduction policy training
3. Complete a "Volunteer Application Form"
4. Undergo a criminal background check every 3 years

C. Level 3 personnel – are volunteers that are used only in emergency or occasional situations. (For example: drivers, snack providers, etc.) Level 3 personnel must be:

1. Made aware of the risk reduction policy.

2. Agree in writing to abide by the policy to “work” only when level 1 or 2 personnel are present and supervising.
3. Level 3 personnel must be known to, and recommended by, a level 1 or 2 person.

D. Outside Groups Meeting at Munholland—Munholland has various groups (i.e. AA, NA, and Al-anon) that use meeting spaces at our facilities. These groups are responsible for conducting their own background checks in accordance with their organizations. Requirements are:

1. The leader of the organization will receive a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy
2. The leader and co-leader (if applicable) will sign a statement (last page of this Policy) that they have read and understand the policy and will abide by its rules and regulations.

II. All Ministries/activities sponsored by Munholland UMC shall provide for adequate responsible adult supervision of teens and children.

A. **An adult must be at least 18 years of age**, keeping in mind that some circumstances may be subject to a different legal definition.

B. All classes, studies, workshops, fellowship/recreation opportunities, one on one counseling sessions, private meetings or mentoring, etc. with youth or children shall be conducted in a public space or in a space easily observable by others at all times. Thus:

1. **A minimum of two unrelated adults must be present as long as a child or teen is in a church facility or on a church sponsored activity. Other factors that should be considered are that:**
 - a) it is pointless to restrict meetings to public or easily observable spaces without having someone present to observe.
 - b) it is equally pointless to meet in a public space if the child/youth arrive and depart alone in the adult’s vehicle.
 - c) attention should be given to the physical structure of the facilities (whether it lends itself to a roaming adult with one adult in the other rooms, for instance).
2. The presence of both male and female adult leadership (unrelated) for coed overnight activities is required, and it is recommended that two adults of the same sex be present for such overnight activity.
3. For non-overnight, coed gatherings, having both male and female adults present is recommended.

C. Transportation guidelines.

1. Medical information/release forms & Permission slips are required for any activity where children and youth are away from Munholland UMC’s main facilities. Additionally, medical information/release forms & permission slips are also required for physical activities with children while on campus.
2. **Only Level 1 or 2 adults are allowed to transport children and youth while on a Munholland UMC sponsored activity.** Minimally, a driver must:
 - a. Possess a current, valid driver’s license
 - b. Proof of insurance at the State minimum limits.
 - c. Not be otherwise disqualified from driving (i.e., under medication, extremely tired, under the influence of mind-altering substances etc.)
3. Every child/teen being transported on a MUMC sponsored activity must be securely fastened in a seatbelt, whether a church or personal vehicle is being used. At no time shall the number of passengers exceed the number of useable seatbelts.

4. Safe driving is expected. Including:
 - a. Obeying traffic laws.
 - b. No horseplay in vehicles
 - c. A mechanically sound and inspected vehicle.
 5. It is permissible for one adult to transport a child/youth in a vehicle provided:
 - a. Two adults ride in the vehicle when transporting children and youth, **and**
 - b. The vehicle is riding via caravan, **and/or**
 - c. a 3rd party must observe and document accurate departure and arrival times.
 6. Guidelines for driving privately owned vehicles with non-family passengers:
 - a. Driver must be 25 years of age or older
 - b. Driver must have adequate insurance coverage
 - c. Driver is personally responsible for any traffic violations and should notify the church business office of any accidents
 - d. Drivers represent MUMC and are to act in an appropriate manner
 - f. A list of passengers riding the vehicle should be given to the appropriate staff leader
- D. A check in/check-out procedure for all kindergarten aged children and younger is required. This procedure shall include a system ensuring that a child will only be released to an authorized parent or designee.
1. All children in grades 1-4 must be picked up by a parent or designee following Sunday School or Children's Chapel.
 2. Kindergarten aged children and younger must be accompanied by an adult whenever traveling through the facilities of Munholland UMC.
 3. Youth in grades 5 and above may travel to classrooms or other locations throughout the facility unaccompanied by an adult unless otherwise requested by a parent.
- E. Permission forms will be obtained from parents/legal guardians for all overnight events involving children or youth, at which the parent/guardian is not present.
1. Forms will contain parental consent for their child's attendance, but also medical information/release, emergency contact information and a liability release.
- F. Parents will be educated on MUMC's Safe Sanctuaries Policy including:
1. Sharing Munholland UMC's risk reduction policies
 2. When and where children may be unattended (for example: at what age and in which hallways).
 3. Recognizing, reporting and preventing child abuse.
- G. Ratio of adults to children:
1. A ratio of no less than of 1 adult to every 10 children/youth will be maintained at all MUMC activities involving teens.
 2. In the infant and toddler rooms, through the age of three, the ratio of adults to children shall be no less than one adult for every four children or 1:4. The ratio of adults to children up to age 12 shall be no less than one adult for every eight children or 1:8.
 3. However, the 2 unrelated adult rule always applies, even when less than 10 children/youth are present.
 - a. Emergency situations would be considered if the physical structure of the facilities lends itself to a roaming adult.

4. Although the above ratio is adequate in most cases, ratios are also age and activity-driven and should be considered carefully and clearly. Disabilities should also be taken into consideration.

H. It is the policy of MUMC that church staff members and/or trained volunteer observers will make unannounced visits to classes, nurseries, events and gatherings held both on and off campus, for the purpose of monitoring compliance with our policies. Designated staff will be responsible for organizing, implementing and keeping a record of such visits.

I. In addition to the above guidelines, we require at least a five-year age difference between the primary on-site supervisor and the age of those being supervised at any activity involving children or teens. The five-year difference in ages shall apply between the on-site adult in charge and the age of the oldest person supervised. Persons being closer in age to those supervised may be acceptable in assisting the primary on-site supervisor(s). The ratio of those “closer in age than 5 years” to those “meeting the 5-year rule” shall never exceed 3 to 1. Those not meeting the 5-year rule must still comply with all **Level 1 or 2** requirements.

J. Restroom Guidelines:

1. Elementary-aged children shall go in same-sex pairs (the “buddy system”) when they are excused to go to the restroom from Sunday school, children’s choirs, children’s clubs or other church activities where they are unaccompanied by a parent. The Level 1 or 2 person in charge shall supervise such “hall passes”.
2. Since kindergarten and younger children have a restroom in their classroom, they should use the restroom independently, with door ajar with adult supervision outside the door, unless a bathroom “accident” requires additional assistance.

III. Recognizing Child Abuse & Neglect. The first step in helping abused or neglected children is learning to recognize the signs of child abuse and neglect. The presence of a single sign does not prove child abuse is occurring in a family or other setting, but a closer look at the situation may be warranted when these signs appear repeatedly or in combination.

The following are some signs often associated with particular types of child abuse and neglect: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. It is important to note, however, that these types of abuse are more typically found in combination than alone. A physically abused child, for example, is often emotionally abused as well, and a sexually abused child also may be neglected.

If these signs occur repeatedly and/or in combinations so as to warrant investigation, contact a Munholland United Methodist Church Clergy (504.834.9910), or the Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) - 888.452.5437.

A. Signs of Physical Abuse.

1. Consider the possibility of physical abuse **when the child**
 - a. Has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
 - b. Has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
 - c. Seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
 - d. Shrinks at the approach of adults
 - e. Reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver

- 2. Consider the possibility of physical abuse **when the parent or other adult caregiver:**
 - a. Offers conflicting, unconvincing, or no explanation for the child's injury
 - b. Describes the child as "evil," or in some other very negative way
 - c. Uses harsh physical discipline with the child
 - d. Has a history of abuse as a child

B. Signs of Neglect.

- 1. Consider the possibility of neglect **when the child:**
 - a. Is frequently absent from school
 - b. Begs or steals food or money
 - c. Lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
 - d. Is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
 - e. Lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
 - f. Abuses alcohol or other drugs
 - g. States that there is no one at home to provide care
- 2. Consider the possibility of neglect **when the parent or other adult caregiver:**
 - a. Appears to be indifferent to the child
 - b. Seems apathetic or depressed
 - c. Behaves irrationally or in a bizarre manner
 - d. Is abusing alcohol or other drugs

C. Signs of Sexual Abuse.

- 1. Consider the possibility of sexual abuse **when the child:**
 - a. Has difficulty walking or sitting
 - b. Suddenly refuses to change for gym or to participate in physical activities
 - c. Reports nightmares or bedwetting
 - d. Experiences a sudden change in appetite
 - e. Demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
 - f. Becomes pregnant or contracts a venereal disease, particularly if under age 14
 - g. Runs away
 - h. Reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
- 2. Consider the possibility of sexual abuse **when the parent or other adult caregiver:**
 - a. Is unduly protective of the child or severely limits the child's contact with other children, especially of the opposite sex
 - b. Is secretive and isolated
 - c. Is jealous or controlling with family members

D. Signs of Emotional Maltreatment.

- 1. Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment **when the child:**
 - a. Shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
 - b. Is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
 - c. Is delayed in physical or emotional development
 - d. Has attempted suicide

- e. Reports a lack of attachment to the parent
- 2. Consider the possibility of emotional maltreatment **when the parent or other adult caregiver:**
 - a. Constantly blames, belittles, or berates the child
 - b. Is unconcerned about the child and refuses to consider offers of help for the child's problems
 - c. Overtly rejects the child

IV. Ministries Involving Adults

- A. Sexual exploitation within the ministerial relationship as defined below is prohibited:
 - 1. Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader or other position of leadership) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, co-worker or volunteer. Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship involves a betrayal of sacred trust, a violation of the ministerial role and exploitation of those who are vulnerable. Similarly, sexual and gender harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual or gender issue.
- B. One-on-one meetings between adults on behalf of the church/ministry are to be held in an observable, public place where there are others present. This may require open door policies or strategically placed windows that allow both confidentiality and observation.
- C. Language and behavior that creates a hostile environment is prohibited.
 - 1. Unlawful harassment is a form of discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other federal authority.
 - 2. Unwelcome verbal or physical conduct based on race, color, religion, sex (whether or not of a sexual nature and including same-gender harassment and gender identity harassment), national origin, age (40 and over), disability (mental or physical), sexual orientation, or retaliation (sometimes collectively referred to as “legally protected characteristics”) constitutes harassment when:
 - a. The conduct is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create a hostile work environment; or
 - b. A supervisor’s harassing conduct results in a tangible change in an employee’s employment status or benefits (for example, demotion, termination, failure to promote, etc.).
 - 3. Hostile work environment harassment occurs when unwelcome comments or conduct based on sex, race or other legally protected characteristics unreasonably interferes with an employee’s work performance or creates an intimidating, hostile or offensive work environment. Anyone in the workplace might commit this type of harassment – a management official, co-worker, or non-employee, such as a contractor, vendor or guest. The victim can be anyone affected by the conduct, not just the individual at whom the offensive conduct is directed.
 - 4. Examples of actions that may create a sexually hostile environment include:
 - a. Leering, i.e., staring in a sexually suggestive manner.
 - b. Making offensive remarks about looks, clothing, body parts. Telling sexual or lewd jokes, hanging sexual posters, making sexual gestures.
 - c. Touching in a way that may make an employee feel uncomfortable, such as patting, pinching or intentional brushing against another’s body
 - e. Sending or soliciting sexually suggestive letters, notes, emails, or images

5. Other actions which may result in hostile environment harassment, but are non-sexual in nature, include:
 - a. Use of racially derogatory words, phrases, epithets
 - b. Demonstrations of a racial or ethnic nature such as a use of gestures, pictures or drawings which would offend a particular racial or ethnic group
 - c. Comments about an individual's skin color or racial/ethnic characteristics
 - d. Making disparaging remarks about an individual's gender
 - e. Negative comments about an employee's religious beliefs or lack thereof.
 - f. Expressing negative stereotypes regarding an employee's ancestry
 - g. Negative comments regarding an employee's age when he/she is over 40
 - h. Derogatory or intimidating references to an employee's mental or physical impairment
 6. A hostile workplace environment does not include simple teasing, offhand comments, or isolated incidents that are not extremely serious. Rather, the conduct must be so objectively offensive as to alter the conditions of the individual's employment. The conditions of employment are altered only if the harassment culminates in a tangible employment action or is sufficiently severe or pervasive to create a hostile work environment.
- D. Sexual/Gender Harassment as defined below is strictly prohibited:
1. Sexual harassment is any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to:
 - a. the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender (Book of Discipline, par. 1611).
 - b. intimidating or coercive behavior that threatens or results in a tangible employment action.
 2. Gender harassment is behavior that is harassing in nature against a woman because she is a woman or against a man because he is a man.
- E. Harassment of any nature will not be tolerated. Keep in mind that though the language above intimates a working relationship, the prohibitions also apply to any group or gathering held under the purview of a congregation or ministry.
- F. Policies will include a means of reporting abuse/exploitation for volunteers and staff, including clergy and laity.
1. See 'Guidelines for Protective Procedures for Misconduct of a Sexual Nature'
 2. Here are telephone numbers that can be used to report suspected abuse:
 - a. Any of Munholland United Methodist Church's clergy – 504-834-9910
 - b. Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS) – 888-452-5437
- G. Additional Guidelines – while issues are different for adults than for children and youth, there are concerns regarding adults that need to be considered.
1. All classes, studies, workshops, fellowship/recreation opportunities, one-on-one counseling sessions, private meetings or mentoring, etc. with youth or children shall be conducted in a public space or in a space easily observable by others at all times.
 2. Minimum standards for transporting adults in the name of the church are covered under Section II-C, 'Transportation Guideline'.
 3. It is permissible for one adult to transport another adult in a vehicle.

V. Miscellaneous Provisions to be considered.

- A. Reporting abuse is required.
 1. Any suspicious or observed sexual misconduct or other abuse or violation of these policies should be reported immediately to the staff in charge of that ministry and a clergy.
 2. All suspected abuse shall be reported per the state of Louisiana's laws regarding the reporting of suspected abuse. (Regardless of whether or not suspected abuse occurred as a result of church/ministry.) See attached Louisiana Children's Code

- B. Any non-church related entity utilizing any facilities controlled by a ministry covered under these policies shall abide by the risk reduction policies of both entities. Thus policies shall include provisions for the sharing/training on these policies with any entity utilizing church/ministry facilities prior to the scheduled event or normal operations.

- C. Nothing in this policy is meant to conflict any requirements imposed by the State for the licensing of the Kid's Day Out.

- D. The above policies shall apply to all forms of interaction/social media including, but not limited to, photography, computer/internet use, telephone, email, Facebook, Myspace, Snapchat, and IM.

- E. Periodic review (at least every 2 or 3 years) of insurance coverage is recommended to ensure proper coverage for:
 1. Misconduct
 2. Accidents & Injuries
 3. Liability
 4. Offsite activities and transportation

Appendix

Policy Statement on Sexual Harassment

MUMC affirms The 2004 Book of Resolutions, Sexual Abuse Within the Ministerial Relationship and Sexual Harassment Within the Church, which states: "Those in positions of authority in the church, both clergy and lay, have been given much responsibility, vested with a sacred trust to maintain an environment that is safe for people to live and grow in God's love. Misconduct of a sexual nature inhibits the full and joyful participation of all in the community of God. Sexual misconduct in church and ministry settings impedes the mission of Jesus Christ. Ministerial leaders have the responsibility not only to avoid actions and words which hurt others, but also to protect the vulnerable against actions or words which cause harm." In accordance with The 2004 Book of Discipline, ¶161, all human beings, both male and female, are created in the image of God, and thus have been made equal in Christ. As the promise of Galatians 3:26-29, states all are one in Christ, we support equity among all persons without regard to ethnicity, situation, or gender.

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader, or other position of leadership) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, co-worker, or volunteer.

Sexual harassment is "any unwanted sexual comment, advance or demand, either verbal or physical that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive. Sexual harassment must be understood as an exploitation of a power relationship rather than as an exclusively sexual issue. Sexual harassment includes, but is not limited to, the creation of a hostile or abusive working environment resulting from discrimination on the basis of gender." (Book of Discipline ¶161).

Gender harassment is behavior that is harassing in nature against a woman because she is a woman and against a man because he is a man.

Sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship involves a betrayal of sacred trust, a violation of the ministerial role, and exploitation of those who are vulnerable. Similarly, gender or sexual harassment are usually understood as exploitations of power relationships rather than as exclusively sexual or gender issues.

Sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse and misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the church interfere with its moral mission. MUMC prohibits and will not tolerate these behaviors, which are sinful, demeaning, abusive, and wrong. The MUMC commits itself to fair and expedient investigation of any complaint of sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse or misconduct of a sexual nature within the church and to take action deemed appropriate and in compliance with the Book of Discipline. Further, the MUMC bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female, which is free of these sins and encourages respect, equality, and kinship in Christ.

MUMC will not retaliate against any person who brings forward a complaint. All staff leaders and members are expected to immediately report any knowledge of harassment, abuse, or misconduct to any one of these persons: Pastor, Chair SPR, District Superintendent or Bishop. Prompt and appropriate investigation and corrective action will be taken, including discipline. Persons who make false accusations will be disciplined.

While MUMC cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality, it will make every reasonable effort to maintain confidentiality by disclosing information about the complaint only on a "need to know" basis and as necessary to promote God's call for justice, reconciliation, and healing.

Anyone who has any questions or concerns about this policy or the issues addressed is encouraged to air those questions or concerns to the SPRC.

Who are mandated reporters for suspected or observed incidents of child abuse?

The following information comes from the Louisiana Department of Social Services. Three things should be noted:

1. The reporting required here is to the DCFS or an appropriate law enforcement agency. A mandated reporter simply notifying her/his supervisor is not adequate without certainty that the supervisor has reported to law enforcement.
2. Law requires these persons to report anytime they are performing their associated duties. For example, if a public-school teacher is not employed by the church but volunteers as a Sunday School teacher, he/she is still a mandated reporter because of the duty they are performing.
3. Though Sunday School teachers are not specifically named, the “Teaching or childcare provider” category could be widely interpreted to include our Sunday School Teachers, Bible study leaders etc.

The best practice is to always report suspect incidents of abuse to DCFS. The protection of our children should be a primary concern for us whether or not we are “mandated” to report. Policies should contain statements that call for training our volunteers/staff to recognize and report child abuse.

According to the State of Louisiana, mandated reporters are any of the following individuals performing their occupational duties:

- “Health practitioner” is any individual who provides health care services, including a physician, surgeon, physical therapist, dentist, resident, intern, hospital staff member, podiatrist, chiropractor, licensed nurse, nursing aide, dental hygienist, any emergency medical technician, a paramedic, optometrist, medical examiner, or coroner, who diagnoses, examines, or treats a child or his family.
- “Mental health/social service practitioner” is any individual who provides mental health care or social service diagnosis, assessment, counseling, or treatment, including a psychiatrist, psychologist, marriage or family counselor, social worker, member of the clergy, aide, or other individual who provides counseling services to a child or his family.
- “Member of the clergy” is any priest, rabbi, duly ordained clerical deacon or minister, Christian Science practitioner, or other similarly situated functionary of a religious organization, unless the information of abuse/neglect is learned in a confidential communication.
- “Teaching or child care provider” is any person who provides training and supervision of a child, including any public or private teacher, teacher’s aide, instructional aide, school principal, school staff member, social worker, probation officer, foster home parent, group home or other child care institutional staff member, personnel of residential home facilities, a licensed or unlicensed day care provider, or any individual who provides such services to a child.
- Police officers or law enforcement officials.

Background Check Form
Munholland United Methodist Church
1201 Metairie Road
Metairie, LA 70005

DISCLOSURE

By signing below, you acknowledge and understand that in connection with your application to be a volunteer, we may obtain a “criminal background check” on you and on any persons over age 18 living in your home. This will be conducted by TRAK-1 TECHNOLOGY, a consumer reporting agency in strict compliance with both state and federal law.

AUTHORIZATION

By signing below, you hereby authorize, without reservation, TRAK-1 TECHNOLOGY or any third party contacted by this organization to furnish the above mentioned and requested information. You also agree that a fax or photocopy of this authorization with your signature is accepted as having the same authority as the original. You further authorize and request, without reservation, any present or former employer, school, police department, financial institution, division of motor vehicles, consumer reporting agencies, or other persons or agencies having knowledge about you to furnish Munholland United Methodist Church with any and all background information in their possession regarding you, so that your qualifications may be evaluated and/or reassessed.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF RECEIPT OF SUMMARY RIGHTS

By signing below, you certify (1) that you have read and fully understand this disclosure and authorization; (2) that all of the information you are providing is true, complete, correct and accurate; and (3) that you acknowledge that you have received the attached summary of your rights under the Fair Credit Reporting Act (15 U.S.C. §1681 et seq.). The following is information required for Munholland United Methodist Church to obtain a complete consumer report.

PRINT FULL LEGAL NAME (first, full middle name, last name)

STREET ADDRESS

CITY

STATE

ZIP

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (TO BE REDACTED AFTER CHECK)

DATE OF BIRTH

DRIVER’S LICENSE NUMBER/ISSUING STATE

EMAIL ADDRESS

OTHER OR FORMER NAMES (e.g. maiden names, married names, surnames, etc.)

SIGNATURE

DATE

VOLUNTEER COVENANT STATEMENT

Since the congregation of Munholland United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church, we ask all volunteers to willingly, and without reservation, enter into the following covenant. This covenant is based upon our congregation’s commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter as expressed in our Safe Sanctuaries Policy. This is the way, in part, in which we live out our commitment to:

- “reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of both staff persons and volunteers”
 - “implement prudent operational procedures in all programs, ministries and events”
 - “provide broad education regarding our policies”
 - “having a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse.”
1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) should volunteer to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.
 2. Adult survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to volunteer in some capacity to work with children or youth is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with our church minister before accepting an assignment.
 3. All adult volunteers involved with children or youth of our church must have been members of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment, except as noted in the Safe Sanctuaries Policy.
 4. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall observe the “Two-Adult Rule” at all times so that no adult is ever alone with children or youth.
 5. Adult volunteers with children and youth SHALL ATTEND REGULAR TRAINING AND EDUCATIONAL EVENTS provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
 6. Adult volunteers shall immediately intervene and report to their designated supervisor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer each of the following questions:

- Yes No 1. I have read the Safe Sanctuary Policy and completed the training.
- Yes No 2. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by Munholland UMC Safe Sanctuary Policy regarding working in ministries with children and youth?
- Yes No 3. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe the “Two-Adult Rule” at all times?
- Yes No 4. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to abide by the six-month rule before beginning a volunteer assignment?
- Yes No 5. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment?
- Yes No 6. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your designated supervisor?
- Yes No 7. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to privately discuss with the Minister of this congregation any past issues of child abuse that might affect your ability to serve?
- Yes No 8. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to inform the minister of this congregation if you have ever been convicted of child abuse?

I have read this **Volunteer Covenant**, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Signature of Applicant Date

Print full name

WRITTEN RECORD OF CONTACT WITH A REFERENCE OF AN APPLICANT FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH WORK

(COMPLETE ONE FORM FOR EACH REFERENCE CONTACTED)

CONFIDENTIAL

1. Name of Applicant: _____

2. Reference or church contacted; if a church or organization, identify both the church or organization and person or minister contacted.

3. Date(s) and time(s) of contact(s): _____

4. Person contacting the reference or church: _____

5. Method of contact (e.g., telephone, personal conversation, letter (please attach any letters)): _____

6. Summary of conversation (summarize the reference's or minister's remarks concerning the applicant's fitness and suitability for youth or children's work). _____

SIGNATURE

POSITION

DATE

PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO AN ALLEGATION OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT INVOLVING CLERGY

- I. Assumptions underlying procedures
 - a. Allegations will be taken as worthy of full investigation.
 - b. Presumption of innocence shall be maintained until completion of the process. After that, the conclusion reached in the process will apply.
 - c. The protection of those involved, including the alleged victim or victims, the accused and the accused's family, and their congregation or institution shall be sought until all facts have been carefully considered and appropriate actions determined.

- II. Assumptions Investigation when sexual misconduct is alleged.
 - a. Anytime the alleged victim is a child, it is required by law to inform the appropriate authorities immediately.
 - b. The allegation shall be brought to a District Superintendent or the Bishop by the alleged victim or by someone who had knowledge and is willing to pursue a resolution.
 - c. Both the alleged victim and the accused may bring to any meeting or hearing a person to accompany them and shall have the right to advocacy. (§454.1c)
 - d. A District Superintendent shall promptly share the grievance with the Bishop.
 - e. The Bishop or designated representative shall:
 - i. Explain to the alleged victim in the presence of another person chosen by the Bishop the process and the procedures to be followed in response to the grievance. One of these persons shall be the same sex as the alleged victim.
 - ii. Request and assist the alleged victim to provide a written grievance stating the allegations and the related facts.
 - iii. Request permission from the alleged victim to use the written grievance in discussion with accused.
 - iv. Meet with accused clergy (§454.1a) and share the allegations made:
 - 1) Share with him/her the formal written grievance where permission has been given to use it.
 - 2) Explain the process to be followed (§454) and its purpose, emphasizing the presumption of innocence and the right to fair process. (§2622)
 - 3) Request an oral or written response from the accused after informing the accused that he/she may respond to the allegations at a later date, if desired, after consultation with an advisor.
 - 4) Make available a summary of the accused's response to the alleged victim for comment.
 - 5) Seek to substantiate the allegation and ascertain sufficient reason for pursuing or not pursuing the allegations further.

- III. Determination of Sufficient Cause – When the Bishop and supervising District Superintendent determine there is a sufficient cause for a complaint of sexual misconduct, the Bishop or the designated representative shall ask the alleged victim(s) if they wish to participate in or will allow their written grievance to be shared in the Joint Review Process (§454.1c). One of three courses of action shall then be taken:
 - a. If a complaint is to be filed with the cooperation of the alleged victim(s), a written signed complaint shall be filed by the District Superintendent or Bishop, with the Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry (§454.1b);

- b. If there is substantial evidence, but no written grievance from an alleged victim to be used, the Superintendent or Bishop may file a complaint with the Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry (§454.1b);
- c. If the alleged victim, District Superintendent and Bishop choose not to pursue the grievance or complaint procedure, a note to that effect and any written grievance shall be placed in the clergy person's permanent record by the Bishop in the Bishop's office that potentially serious offenses have been alleged, but were neither conclusively substantiated nor disproved. Any written statement by the accused may also be placed in the file. Any clergy has access to his/her file.

IV. After a complaint is formally filed – When a complaint is formally forwarded to the Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry (§454.1), the following steps will occur expeditiously. The Chair of the Board of Ordained Ministry calls the Joint Review Committee into session and refers the complaint thereto:

- a. In order to protect the right of the accused and to protect the alleged victim(s) and congregation from possible harm, the accused may be placed on Leave of Absence (§448.1).
- b. The clergy person is encouraged to use fair process accorded by the Joint Review Committee. However, throughout the process, the clergy person may withdraw from membership in the Annual Conference under (§453.4 & §2628.2). If withdrawal takes place before formal charges are filed, the credential will be inscribed by the Bishop “withdrawn under complaint of sexual misconduct” and deposited with the Secretary of the Annual Conference. After formal charges have been filed, the credentials will be inscribed “withdrawn under charges of sexual misconduct”. This withdrawal is reported to the Board of Ordained Ministry for confirmation by the clergy Session of the Annual Conference at its next session.

V. The Judicial Process of the United Methodist Church

- a. Joint Review Process – The Joint Review Committee is charged with the responsibility of seeking a resolution of complaint brought against clergy. Its duties and procedures are outlined in (§454.1c). The Joint Review Committee is not a trial procedure, but a hearing. Those against whom charges are brought and the aggrieved are urged to use the avenue of resolution.
- b. The Right of Trial – Those against whom allegations or complaints are brought are innocent until proven guilty and may choose a trial when charged with offences. The trial procedure is outlined in (§454.1d and §2622-2627).

VI. Records – When credentials have been surrendered, the Clergy Session of the Annual Conference shall receive a report (§454.11). Full information of sexual misconduct and subsequent actions taken shall be kept in the clergy person's permanent record in the Bishop's office.

PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO AN ALLEGATION OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT/ABUSE INVOLVING LAY STAFF/VOLUNTEERS

I. Assumptions underlying procedures:

- a. Allegations will be taken as worthy of full investigation.
- b. Presumption of innocence shall be maintained until completion of the process. After that, the conclusion reached in the process will apply.
- c. The protection of those involved, including the alleged victim or victims, the accused and the accused's family, and their congregation or institution shall be sought until all facts have been carefully considered and appropriate actions determined.

II. Investigation when sexual misconduct is alleged:

- a. Anytime the alleged victim is a child, it is required by law to inform the appropriate authorities immediately.
- b. The allegation shall be brought to the pastor or his/her designee by the alleged victim or by someone who had knowledge and is willing to pursue a resolution.
- c. Both the alleged victim and the accused may bring to any meeting or hearing a person to accompany them and shall have the right to advocacy.
- d. The pastor shall promptly share the grievance with the District Superintendent.
- e. The pastor or designated representative shall:
 - i. Explain to the alleged victim in the presence of another person chosen by the pastor the process and the procedures to be followed in response to the grievance. One of these persons shall be the same sex as the alleged victim.
 - ii. Request and assist the alleged victim to provide a written grievance stating the allegations and the related facts.
 - iii. Request permission from the alleged victim to use the written grievance in discussion with accused.
 - iv. Meet with accused and share the allegations made.
 1. Share with him/her the formal written grievance where permission has been given to use it.
 2. Explain the process to be followed and its purpose, emphasizing the presumption of innocence and the right to fair process.
 3. Request an oral or written response from the accused after informing the accused that he/she may respond to the allegations at a later date, if desired, after consultation with an advisor.
 4. Make available a summary of the accused's response to the alleged victim for comment.
 5. Seek to substantiate the allegation and ascertain sufficient reason for pursuing or not pursuing the allegations further.

III. Determination of sufficient cause – When the pastor and supervising District Superintendent determine there is a sufficient cause for a complaint of sexual misconduct, the pastor or the designated representative shall inform the complainant and the accused of the conclusion. If the accused is a lay staff member, the following actions, either alone or in combination, may be considered:

- a. Apology to the complainant.
- b. Oral reprimand.
- c. Written warning.

- d. Counseling.
- e. Transfer or reassignment.
- f. Demotion.
- g. Adjustment of salary or bonus.
- h. Suspension.
- i. Discharge.

IV. If the conclusion is that no violation occurred or there is insufficient evidence to make a conclusion, the complainant and the accused each should be notified.

- j. The complainant should be advised that the evidence will be preserved and that another investigation will be conducted if further information is provided.
- k. The complainant should be encouraged to report any future incidents.
- l. Both parties should be reminded that such conduct is not tolerated, that each complaint is investigated, and, if sexual harassment is found, appropriate measures will be taken to alleviate the situation.
- m. Each party should be reminded of the prohibition against retaliation.

V. In the weeks following the investigation, follow-up with the complainant to ascertain whether he/she has experienced any retaliation or further inappropriate behavior from the accused.

VI. In the event discipline was imposed against the accused, follow-up to ensure that the remedial measures imposed have been carried out appropriately.

PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO AN ALLEGATION OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OR ABUSE INVOLVING A CHILD

- I. Take the allegation or incident very seriously, respecting the victim's privacy, as well as providing sympathetic concern for the victim and his/her family.
- II. Notify the proper law enforcement or child protective services agency immediately. If this is a case of known abuse, protect any evidence. Be prepared to cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.
- III. Notify the parents of the victim, provide emergency care (if necessary) for the victim and provide for the safety of the victim until the parents arrive. The care and safety of the victim must be the church's primary concern. Be prepared to follow up with pastoral care for the victim and the victim's family.
- IV. Listen to and record what you are being told. If the allegation is being made by the victim, do not try to elicit more information than is being offered.
- V. The accused must immediately be removed from further involvement with children or youth until the allegations are fully investigated and resolved. Do not confront the accused abuser with anger and hostility. The accused should be treated with dignity, acknowledging that he or she is a person of sacred worth, but also acknowledging that the accused must stop the abusive behavior, prayerfully repent, and turn in a new direction. Be prepared to provide pastoral care for the accused abuser.
- VI. Notify the annual conference authorities (district superintendent or bishop), the church's insurance agency, and the church's attorney. Conference authorities must be kept aware of the congregation's actions throughout the process.
- VII. Keep a written record of the steps taken by the church in response to the allegation. This information must be kept confidential and limited to only those who must know.
- VIII. Call upon your designated spokesperson to make any necessary statements or responses to the news media. The designated spokesperson should have a prepared, written statement. This person may be the pastor, another staff member, the church's attorney, or a lay member of the church. This person should answer questions honestly without adding extra or unnecessary information. The designated spokesperson should be given permission to answer questions by saying, "I don't know at this time." None but the spokesperson should be authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the congregation.
- IX. Prepare a brief and honest statement that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, placing blame, interfering with the victim's privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns. The statement should briefly explain the incident and the initial action taken by the church. The statement should not include the identification of the child victim or that of the accused. The statement should include the actions taken to assure the safety of all the children and assure the congregation of its continuing ability to provide ministry to children and youth. The statement should dispel rumors and innuendo and assure everyone that everything possible has been done to provide for the safety of the victim and to enable the safe continuation of the church's ministry. The statement should be made in a carefully planned Congregation Meeting.

PROCEDURES FOR RESPONDING TO DISCOVERING THAT A VISITOR OR CHURCH MEMBER IS, OR MAY BE, A CONVICTED SEX OFFENDER⁵

The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church declare: “We recognize that family violence and abuse in all its forms-verbal, psychological, physical, sexual-is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the Church to provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the victim. While we deplore the actions of the abuser, we affirm that person to be in need of God’s redeeming love.”⁶

Assuring the safety of children and adults in our care, our facilities and our programs is a sacred duty that must be weighed in the balance of the value of participation in the life of the church by a convicted sex offender. Welcoming a child sex offender, or any sex offender, into a congregation must be accompanied by thorough knowledge, careful planning, and long-term monitoring. It is recognized herein that these guidelines apply not only to sex offenders against children, but all convicted sex offenders.

A convicted and/or registered sex offender may volunteer their status to a church member or leadership, or it may be discovered through different channels. Regardless of how the information comes to the church leadership, such a person who wishes to be part of a church community must expect to have conditions placed on his or her participation. The following guidelines should be followed in order to be faithful to the Social Principles’ commitment both to safety from abuse and to ministry with abusers:

I. “The Person” is the visitor or member who has been identified as an alleged convicted/registered sex offender. The Church should take the allegations seriously, respecting the Person’s (church member or visitor) privacy.

II. Anyone discovering information that a church member or visitor may be a convicted sex offender is strongly encouraged to immediately notify the pastor and senior leadership of the knowledge and its source.

III. The pastor shall immediately take the following steps:

- A. Notify senior church leadership and appropriate staff⁷ of the allegations.
- B. Notify SPRC of the allegations.
- C. Schedule an interview with the Person as soon as possible. The Person shall be required to provide information about the conviction to the pastor, including but not limited to the nature of the conviction, the date of the conviction, the state (if not Louisiana) and court in which the conviction was obtained, the case number, the Person’s probation status and restrictions, if any, and any other information deemed relevant by the pastor. The pastor should inform the Person that senior leadership/SPRC/Safe Sanctuary point person shall conduct a review and investigation of the information provided by the Person.

⁵ “Convicted Sex Offender” includes those persons who have been convicted of a sex crime against either children or adults, in any of the states or territories of the United States, or a foreign country. “Registered Sex Offender” is defined as a convicted sex offender who is required to register with any state or territorial sex offender registry as a condition of his or her conviction, release from custody, or probation.

⁶ <https://www.umc.org/en/content/church-participation-by-a-registered-child-sex-offender>.

⁷ If the allegations concern a child sex offender, all staff in charge of children’s activities shall be notified.

- D. Notify the annual conference authorities (district superintendent or bishop), the church's insurance agency, and the church's attorney. Conference authorities must be kept aware of the congregation's actions throughout the process. The Church shall also follow all directives of conference authorities.

IV. SPRC, senior leadership, the Safe Sanctuary point person, or a combination thereof, shall immediately investigate the information provided to the pastor by the Person in order to confirm the details of the conviction. Investigation includes independent research in public criminal records in order to verify the information provided by the Person in III C, as well as any and all other public resources. The investigation may be conducted by other persons deemed appropriate by the Pastor in the specific circumstances.

V. The Person shall immediately be suspended from attending church or church related activities until the investigation in paragraph IV is complete. The accused should be treated with dignity, acknowledging that he or she is a person of sacred worth. Be prepared to provide pastoral care for the Person during this time.

VI. The Church shall keep a written record of the steps taken by the church in response to the allegation. This information must be kept confidential and limited to only those who must know, which includes the pastor, senior leadership, and SPRC. This record should be kept by SPRC and maintained in the confidential file described in paragraph XI.

VII. Church leadership shall prepare a brief and honest statement that can be made to the congregation without giving unnecessary details, interfering with the Person's privacy, or violating any confidentiality concerns. The statement should briefly explain the situation and the initial action taken by the church. The statement should not include the identification of the accused Person. The statement should include the actions taken to assure the safety of all members of the church. The statement should dispel rumors and innuendo and assure everyone that everything possible has been done to provide for the safe continuation of the church's ministry. The purpose of this statement is to inform the congregation of the matter, and to allow them the opportunity to provide information and concerns to the Pastor, senior leadership, and SPRC. The statement may be made in a carefully planned Congregation Meeting, or by communication such as email.

VIII. The Pastor, senior leadership, and SPRC shall, based upon the results of the investigation and any concerns raised by members of the congregation, determine whether the Person will be allowed to resume attending church and/or church related activities. This determination should also take into account the Person's cooperation and truthfulness in the investigation process. It is recognized that because our Church has a Kid's Day Out program and also a children's ministry, the senior leadership of the church shall always have the discretion to deny a convicted sex offender from continuing to visit or be a member of Munholland UMC.

IX. After conclusion of the investigation, if the Pastor, senior leadership, and SPRC decide to allow the Person to continue visiting or continue as a member, they shall determine the conditions and parameters of such participation, which shall be called the "covenant" between the Person and Munholland UMC. The covenant shall include, but is not limited to, agreements in the following areas:

- A. participation in a professional counseling program for at least the entire time of church membership or participation;
- B. adult "covenant partners" to accompany the offender while on church property or attending church activities;

- C. areas of church facilities that are “off limits;” restrictions on leadership in or on behalf of church;
- D. no role in church that includes contact with children or youth, if applicable;
- E. any additional conditions for the Person’s presence or participation, such as “remote” participation through technology such as “Zoom” meetings, as deemed relevant by the Pastor, senior leadership, and SPRC.

X. The covenant shall be maintained in writing and shall be signed by the offender, the pastor(s), and the chairperson of the church council. The covenant should not be secret. Monitoring of the covenant should be taken seriously as a permanent responsibility by the pastor and senior leadership. This covenant shall be reviewed regularly, at least quarterly, or more often at the discretion of senior leadership, by the pastor, senior leadership, and SPRC.

XI. The covenant shall be included in a confidential file on the matter, along with the written record required in Paragraph VI. This file shall be maintained by the Pastor physically in a secure location where other confidential files are kept. At any change of leadership, including but not limited to the transition to a new pastor, or the hiring of a new senior staff member, the file shall be included in the new pastor’s and/or staff member’s orientation. Each orientation with new staff/leadership shall be noted in the “steps” maintained in the file as required in paragraph VI.

End of Procedures

