**Gibsonville United Methodist Church**

Safe Sanctuary

**Policies & Procedures**

Purpose

Gibsonville United Methodist Church adopts the following policy and procedures to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth and to protect the integrity of the supervising adults.

Statement of Covenant

As a Christian community of faith, we pledge to conduct God’s ministry in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of our children and youth as well as the supervising adults. We covenant to:

1. ***follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of paid and volunteer workers***
2. ***implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events***
3. ***train our workers with children and youth regarding policies and methods such as first aid and discipline***
4. ***implement a clearly defined procedure for reporting suspected incidents of abuse, conforming to the requirements of state law***
5. *Workers with Children & Youth*
6. **Minimum Age:** Volunteers and staff must be at least 18 years old and must be 5 years older than the age of the persons they will be supervising. Persons not meeting this requirement may not be left alone with children.
7. **Six Month Rule:** Volunteers must have been an active participant at GUMC for six months before they are eligible to serve in a supervisory role of children and youth ministries. Persons not meeting this requirement may serve as assistants with another adult.
8. **Volunteer Applications:** Volunteers who have regular and direct contact with children and youth shall be required to fill out a volunteer application which will include an authorization for requesting a criminal records check provided by law enforcement agencies or by an approved investigative agency. This information will be kept confidential and maintained by the Director of Education or Pastor in charge of education.
9. **Paid Staff Applications:** All prospective staff shall be required to fill out an application form which will include a criminal records check. This information will be kept confidential and maintained by the Staff/Parish Committee.
10. **Criminal Convictions:** Any adult who has been convicted of any crime involving a child or youth or any other violent crime will not be permitted to work with the children and youth of GUMC.
11. *Program Procedures*
12. **Two-Adult Rule:** Two adults shall be present at all times during any event involving children or youth. It is preferred, but not required, that the adults be unrelated. When only one adult is present, the door must be open or the room must have a window that allows full view of the entire room.
13. **Designated Roamers:** Random visits to classrooms and nurseries will be made by designated roamers such as the ushers, the Sunday School Superintendent and the pastors.
14. **Release of Children & Youth:**
	1. Infant and Toddler Nurseries will use child claim checks and only release children to parents or guardians.
	2. Daytime events (ie: Sunday School, Children’s Church) children 2nd Grade and younger must be picked up by a parent or guardian. Exceptions will be determined on an as needed basis.
	3. Nightime events (UMYF) – youth 16 years and younger must be picked up by a parent or guardian. We will release youth to ride with others with written permission from parents/guardians or persons specified on youth information forms.
15. **Bathroom Procedures:** When an adult is helping a child use the bathroom, the bathroom doors shall be propped open.
16. **Permission Forms & Medical Releases:** Parents shall always be given advance notice and information regarding any activity in which their child/youth will be leaving the church premises. Children and youth information and medical release forms will be kept on file and updated annually.
17. **Travel:** If at all possible, church vehicles should be used for children/youth transportation. No youth may drive to any youth group activity without prior approval of parents and GUMC staff.
18. **Van Use:** The Trustees will be responsible for the Church Van Policy and its updates (copy kept in church van at all times) including the approval of van drivers.
19. **Lodging:** On overnight trips, it is preferred that children/youth have separate bedrooms from adults. If all males share one room and all females share another room, there will be a minimum of 3 persons when youth and adults share the same room. No children/youth shall ever share a bed with an unrelated adult without parent permission.
20. *First Aid & Discipline*
21. **Safe Sanctuary Training:** All staff and volunteers who work with children/youth shall receive training on the Safe Sanctuary policies and procedures. Incorporated into this training will be an explanation of GUMC’s Discipline Policy.
22. **First Aid/CPR:** All paid program staff of GUMC will be strongly encouraged to obtain and maintain First Aid/CPR certification. Certification shall be from the American Red Cross or similar organization. Volunteers who routinely work with children are strongly encouraged to obtain and maintain First Aid/CPR certification. Staff/Parish Committee shall insure that this training is made available to all staff and volunteers at least once a year.
23. **First Aid Kits:** GUMC will maintain 6 First Aid Kits which will be located in the following areas:
	1. Workroom across from offices (Room #103)
	2. Toddler Nursery (Room #114)
	3. Narthex Closet (near front doors of Sanctuary)
	4. Kitchen
	5. Resource Room in Children’s Division (Curriculum Room)
	6. Van
24. **Discipline Policy:** GUMC will follow positive discipline practices that seek to build children’s esteem and promote emotional growth and social well-being. We will use positive, age-appropriate, responsive language that allows for a two way dialogue between leader and child. Suggestions for strategies that may help divert a younger child include redirection, seating them next to a leader, or removing them from the group for a short time out. The following forms of discipline are totally unacceptable at Gibsonville United Methodist Church.
	* 1. Physical punishment of any form including spanking, slapping, pinching, shaking, etc.
		2. Psychological punishment such as humiliation by derogatory remarks, harsh or profane language, or actual or implied threats.

Children will not be punished or shamed for bathroom accidents and food that is served to the group will neither be forced or withheld as punishment. If the group leader is not able to control a child or group of children in a constructive, positive manner, then the leader should send for additional help or the parents of the child involved for assistance.

1. *Reporting*

Once an incident of child abuse/neglect or allegations of an incident is made, it is critical that it be dealt speedily and in a clearly outlined manner in compliance with Chapter 7B-101 of the North Carolina General Statues.

A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse in a children/youth activity, the entire staff of that activity shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies.

1. **Reporting:** The employee/volunteer, or helper who observes alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse/neglect is reported, must report the incident immediately to the employee in charge of the children’s/youth activity. This staff member will then report the incident to the Senior Pastor. If the offender is a staff member, then the report is made to the Chairperson of the Staff/Parish Relations Committee. If the allegation is against an employee or volunteer, the custodial parent will be notified immediately by the employee in charge of the event.
2. **Incident Reports:** The employee/volunteer in charge of the children’s/youth activity in which the alleged abuse was observed or disclosed shall immediately attempt to obtain necessary information, such as the name of alleged victim and his/her family information. Upon receiving this information, the employee will assist the volunteer in completing the GUMC Incident Report and making the appropriate report to DSS or law enforcement.
3. **Media:** The Senior Pastor of GUMC or his/her designee is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Senior Pastor.
4. **Cease Contact:** Any person named as an alleged offender in a complaint shall immediately be required to cease any contact with children/youth in GUMC activities. The alleged offender may resume activities at such time the Senior Pastor and Staff/Parish Committee shall deem it appropriate.
5. **Pastoral Care:** Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved with the incident.