

Safe Sanctuaries (Revised June 2022)

Safe Sanctuaries, as referred to by Rome First United Methodist Church, encompasses the efforts made by our church, district, and the Upper New York Conference to reduce the risk of abuse to children, youth, and vulnerable adults (a vulnerable adult is someone aged 18 and over; who due to age, illness or a mental or physical condition, is less able to take care of himself/herself, or less able to protect himself/herself against harm or exploitation; including but not limited to physical and sexual abuse, neglect by self or other, financial or material exploitation, emotional or psychological mistreatment. Vulnerable adults are also those adults who work with children and youth who can be in a position where accusations of abuse could mistakenly arise; or, adults who have been abused either as a child or an adult), and also to protect the adult workers (either paid or volunteer) who interact with those individuals in any church activity, whether on-site or away from the church building.

For Rome First United Methodist Church, the physical and emotional safety, as well as the spiritual growth of all God's children at any age, is important. We, as a church, are committed to the holistic well-being of each child, youth, and adult entrusted to us. We believe that we, as a church, must take reasonable steps to love and protect people, especially our children, youth, and vulnerable adults, while they are involved in programs and activities provided in and by our local churches, district, and our conference. In addition, we must take reasonable steps to love and protect those adults who work with our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Rome First United Methodist Church Policies related to Neglect and / or Physical or Sexual Abuse

For the purposes of this document:

An adult is considered to be any person who is 18 and over.

A youth is 13-17 years old.

I. Prevention, Training, and Authorization

- a) All paid staff and volunteers with responsibility for children (i.e., Sunday School teachers or youth leaders) will be instructed to follow proper procedures when reporting suspected neglect or abuse.
- b) Instruction of Safe Sanctuaries policies, as well as reporting procedures for suspected neglect or abuse, for new staff and volunteers in a leadership or supervisory position, will take place prior to the start date or beginning a position. All adult staff, volunteers, and clergy working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults shall receive a copy of the church Safe Sanctuaries Policy before starting their service and shall agree to covenant with the church to fully cooperate with these abuse prevention strategies.
- c) Annually, policies will be reviewed to include training of the current safe sanctuaries procedures.
- d) Background checks are required for all adults who will be working in a supervisory, leadership, regular volunteer position, or for participation in an overnight activity.
- e) "Occasional volunteer workers" who have not been trained in our Safe Sanctuaries policy and have not had a background check must be approved by the appropriate

ministry leaders and will be utilized only in an assisting capacity alongside regular workers.

- f) Adult staff, volunteers, and clergy shall observe the "Two-Adult Rule" at all times so that no adult is ever alone with children, youth, or vulnerable adults at a church/charge, district or conference-sponsored event or activity. The two-adult rule requires that regardless of the size of the group, there shall always be two unrelated adults present. This may include the presence of an adult "roamer" who moves in and out of rooms/ministry activity areas.
- g) Adult staff and volunteers are those who are at least 18 years old and who are at least five years older than the oldest minor present, whom they are leading, ministering to, or supervising. Youth are invited to assist adult volunteers but are not to be considered an adult for the "two-adult rule."
- h) Staff and volunteers are not to be in a 1 adult and 1 child situation out of sight of other adults or youth. No one person is to take a child or youth out of the church to attend an activity, or to give them a ride home.
- i) Those who transport children and youth should be 21 years of age or older (per Upper New York UMC Conference guidelines). Each child or youth being transported must have written consent from a parent or guardian before being transported off site. Each adult who will be transporting children or youth must have a valid driver's license and proof of auto insurance. Drivers and all passengers will comply with NY State driving and seatbelt laws. Permission slips containing important medical information, insurance, emergency contacts, and permission to treat should be filled out for extended out of town trips.
- j) Known facility conditions that pose a health or safety hazard shall be resolved or mitigated in a timely manner.
- k) No one shall be placed in a supervisory role, position of leadership, or a regular volunteer position with children, youth, or vulnerable adults without direct supervision of a leader, until they have been known to the clergy or congregation for at least six months.
- l) If a situation arises where a one-on-one counseling session is sought between an adult and a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, this must be done in an area where other adults are nearby and at least one adult must be made aware of the meeting and take responsibility for verifying the safety of those involved. The room must also have a door with a window in it, or the door must be left open, so that the parties involved may be seen. The adult notified of the meeting must check on the counseling session/meeting, by periodically observing through the door, to insure the safety of those parties involved.
- m) Occasional young adult guests may be allowed to participate in activities under the discretion and direct supervision of the adult supervisor or leader. These young adults (18-20 years old) will be required to fill out a registration form. Participation in church programs will be dependent upon adhering to the behavioral expectations of the ministry supervisor as well as complying with church rules and Safe Sanctuary policies. The privilege of attendance may be revoked at any time by the ministry supervisor.
- n) Groups can be created that have an age range between 17-20 years old. Such a group must be overseen by an adult that is at least 25 years of age, and must adhere to all of the church rules, behavioral expectations, and Safe Sanctuaries policies. Participants under the age of 18 must have written consent of participation from their parents.
- o) There will be age and gender appropriate arrangements made for sleeping, bathing, dressing, and showering. Adults supervising these activities must also be of the same

gender of the children involved. Adults may not shower with, nor become undressed in front of, any children or youth.

- p) No adult should ever sleep alone with a child (or children) or youth in a room. Only children/youth of the same sex are allowed to sleep in the same room. No adult will share a bed with a child or youth unless it is the parent of that child/youth. A grandparent, acting as a guardian at the time, may sleep with a child with permission from the parent. Girls and boys must be divided if sleeping in an open space. At any event where there will be boys and girls sleeping, there must be both male and female chaperones.
- q) Clothing worn by adults is expected to be modest and appropriate for a Christian environment.
- r) Any adult in a supervisory role, leadership position, or acting as a volunteer is prohibited from dating, romantic involvement, or sexual contact, with a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
- s) Physical touch is an important element in the communication of love and care. It is an essential part of the nurturing process that should be characteristic of our ministry. Physical contact should be age and developmentally appropriate.

Inappropriate Touch:

The following are some examples of some types of touch that must be avoided:

- 1) Kissing a child or coaxing a child to kiss you.
 - 2) Extended hugging and tickling.
 - 3) Touching a child in any area that would be covered by a modest bathing suit.
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- t. The possession, distribution, or being under the influence of alcohol, illegal drugs, or the misuse of legal drugs, is strictly prohibited in the presence of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
 - u. New programs involving children, youth, or vulnerable adults must be approved by the pastor.
 - v. No child, youth, or vulnerable adult shall be left unsupervised while attending a ministry program or event.
 - w. All adult staff, volunteers, and clergy shall be observant for unusual behaviors or signs of child, youth, and vulnerable adult abuse. Observed behaviors shall be reported immediately to the appropriate supervisors.
 - x. Corporal punishment is never to be used.
 - y. Written attendance records shall be kept for all ministry events/activities. These records shall include at a minimum, the date and names of all participants and submitted to the church office.
 - z. Children and youth must be signed out of church programming by an authorized person at least 16 years old.
 - aa. In order to provide optimal care, we will strive to follow state mandated ratios of workers to children for all programs and activities. This ratio should be maintained before, during, and after an event.
 - bb. All doors in areas housing children or youth should have clear glass windows that allow for an easy view of the classroom area without interrupting the activity. Doors to classrooms/areas without windows must be left open during use so that people passing by may observe inside. Classrooms/areas should be randomly, but regularly, visited by ministry supervisors or other leaders.
 - cc. Applicants convicted of, or who pled guilty to, sexual or violent (ex. Assault) offense will not be permitted to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults in any capacity. Adults convicted of child abuse or named as the perpetrator in a founded or indicated child abuse report through a designated state or county agency, or who are under

investigation for, or who have charges pending for child abuse, shall not be accepted as paid employees or volunteers to have direct access to children, youth, or vulnerable adults in any church-sponsored activity or setting. This will not however prohibit them from serving in other areas of ministry. The staff overseeing the children, youth, and vulnerable adult ministries must be made aware of persons who have been convicted of these crimes and what area of ministry they are serving.

- dd. Appointed clergy shall be responsible for regular review, and be familiar with, public sex offender registries related to the geographic areas surrounding the church.
- ee. All communication with children/youth must adhere to the two-adult rule, including email, texting, and any other form of social media. Include a parent or another adult in all correspondence.

Recruitment Policy

II. Recruiting Workers:

- a) A written ministry position description that includes the essential functions of the job shall be provided for positions in ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
- b) All individuals seeking employment or individuals seeking a leadership role (adult in charge) in children's, youth, or vulnerable adult ministries will fill out an application form. A personal interview shall be conducted.
- c) The church has a right to check references provided by all applicants. Depending on the position, the reference check may include questions about the applicant's ability to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults (depending on ministry) and leadership ability.
- d) A criminal background check and state central child abuse registry shall be authorized by and completed for all employees, and volunteers who have regular and direct contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. The criminal background check shall be performed at the beginning of service, after every two years of service, and after a break in service of one or more years. Background check results shall be kept in a secure manner.

III. Selecting Workers:

- a) Only workers that have successfully completed the application and screening process shall be eligible to be considered for selection to a ministry position with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults.
- b) In the event that the criminal background check reveals a conviction or other cause for concern, the pastor and/or another ministry leader shall consult with the applicant.

PROCEDURE: Abuse Allegation Handling and Reporting

All staff and volunteers must adhere to the following mandatory abuse allegation handling and reporting procedures:

Contact the pastor and staff person overseeing the ministry area immediately. The alleged victim should be questioned only by law enforcement or other appropriate authorities.

A recommended way to respond to someone who alleges they have been abused is to assure them and their family of your concern for their safety and well-being. Take the alleged victim to an open, safe spot in view of people. Have two safe and familiar adults stay with the alleged victim at all times. Because abuse takes power and control away from the victim, victims need to be informed of what is and will be happening in an age appropriate way.

The Rome First United Methodist Church will not retaliate against any person who brings forward a complaint. Prompt and appropriate investigation and corrective action will be taken, including discipline.

1. The staff person or volunteer who observes alleged abuse or to whom such abuse is reported or disclosed, or who suspects abuse, shall be required to report the incident/suspected abuse immediately to the clergy or staff person in charge of the ministry/activity. The parent/ guardian will be notified of the situation.
2. The clergy or staff person in charge of the ministry/activity will take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and well-being of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult until the parent(s)/guardian(s) arrive. The alleged victim and alleged perpetrator, along with any witnesses, shall be separated so questioning may be done individually without influence.
3. If the person or child is in need of medical attention, call 911 if necessary and then the parents/family members or guardians.
4. If immediate medical attention is not required, the clergy or staff person in charge of the ministry/activity shall immediately call the New York State Child Protective Services Hotline (800-342-3720). If the incident involves an adult, call the New York State Office of Children and Family Services Adult Abuse Hotline at (855-373-2122).
5. In the event of a situation where a staff member or a volunteer is suspected of abuse or neglect, that person will immediately be relieved of his/her duties involving contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults until the person is cleared of the allegation.
6. An incident report shall be filled out. The volunteer and staff will sign the report, indicating it accurately reflects the incident. An appropriate follow-through action as indicated on the incident report shall be taken. Reporting a case of suspected abuse or neglect must be viewed by all involved as a statement of concern, not assumed guilt.
7. The Senior Pastor in charge is to be informed immediately before or subsequent to the making of a report, unless the accused is the Senior Pastor in charge or a member of her/his family. The Senior Pastor in charge shall report the incident immediately to the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent is not available, the incident shall be reported to the Bishop's office.
8. If the accused is the Senior Pastor in charge or a member of her/his family, the incident shall be immediately reported to the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent is not available, the incident shall be reported to the Bishop's office.
9. The person in charge of the ministry/event must make a written report of the steps taken by the church/charge in response to the reported abuse. The report should be kept brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. The report should be kept in a secure location. It should be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed.

10. The incident or allegation will not be discussed with any other people except law enforcement or designated investigators. Any questions should be referred to the pastor or other designated church leader.
11. The suspected abuser will be restricted from contact with children, youth, and vulnerable adults until a full investigation is completed and the incident is fully resolved.
12. Details of the allegations of the abuse should not be discussed with the accused at the time of the removal. The police or other authorities will deal with any further details regarding him or her.
13. In any removal of a staff member or volunteer from any activity/ministry, care shall be taken to handle the removal in a discreet manner, recognizing that there will be an investigation by either state or church authorities, or both. Any incidence of suspected abuse is to be kept in confidence by the parties involved. Information about the incident or persons involved must only be disclosed to those with a need to know.
14. NEVER discuss allegations with any other people except law enforcement or designated county investigators. To do so can cause irreparable harm to the victim, their family, the church/conference and community.

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

Handling Calls and Questions from the Media:

If a member of the media, for example, TV station, radio station, or magazine, asks about the alleged situation, refer that person to the pastor or District Superintendent. Appropriate “hold” statements could be:

- *“I want to make sure you have the most accurate and up-to-date information. If you give me your name and number I will have someone call you back. What is your deadline?”*
- *“I appreciate your question. The pastor or District Superintendent will be in touch with you as soon as we have anything we can share with you about that. If you give me your name and number I will have someone call you back. What is your deadline?”*
- *We appreciate your concern. We’re assessing the situation right now and so have no confirmed information. If you give me your name and number I will have someone call you back. What is your deadline?”*

Then:

- Take a written message.
- Do not transfer to voicemail without taking a message.
- Get reporter’s name, media outlet, direct phone number, and deadline.
- Ask for topic of story.
- Explain that the pastor or District Superintendent will return the call.
- Do not answer any questions. Be polite, but firm.
- Never say “No Comment,” but use the “hold” responses from above as needed.
- Make notes about each Media Inquiry.

Handling Reporters On-Site

- Refer all questions to the pastor or District Superintendent (315)797-1777
- Be polite, but firm. Do not be hostile.
- Do not give your personal opinion.
- Do not speak “off the record.”
- Never say, “No Comment”; and use “hold” responses from above as needed.

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION: NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED

**REPORT OF SUSPECTED CHILD, YOUTH OR
VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE / SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

PREPARE A SEPARATE REPORT FOR EACH INDIVIDUAL INVOLVED

All information included in this report is **confidential**
and may not be discussed with others.

1. Name of Worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of suspected abuse of child or youth: _____

Signature: _____

2. Suspected victim's name: _____

Suspected victim's age _____ Date of birth: _____ / _____ / _____

3. Suspected victim's address: _____

4. Date / Place of initial conversation with / report from suspected victim:

_____ / _____ / _____, _____

5. Description of suspected occurrence (give a detailed summary – use back of form if necessary):

6. Person named in allegation: _____

Age if known: _____

7. Relationship of accused to victim - (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other):

8. Description of person named in allegation:

9. Any comments made by person named in allegation:

10. This report is to be given to the Pastor or the District Superintendent immediately for follow up as required.

11. The designated person reports to the Pastor (if not already notified) upon receipt of information:

Date: ____/____/____ Time: _____

Summary: (use back if needed)

BELOW FOR PASTOR/LEADERSHIP TEAM CHAIRPERSON USE:

1. Call to suspected victim's parent / guardian:

Date: ____/____/____ Time: _____

Spoke with: _____

2. Call to Child Protective Services (800-342-3720):

Date: ____/____/____ Time: _____

Spoke with: _____

3. Call to Local Law Enforcement (911):

Date: ____/____/____ Time: _____

Spoke with: _____

4. **Call to Brotherhood Mutual:**

Date: ____/____/____ Time: _____

Spoke with: _____

5. Call to District Superintendent (315) 797-1777

Date: ____/____/____ Time: _____

CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION: NOT TO BE DISTRIBUTED

First United Methodist Church

Accident Report Form
(Please print all information)

Date of accident: ____/____/____

Time of accident: ____ A.M. P.M.

Name of person injured:

Address: _____

Phone # ____ - ____ - ____

Date of birth ____/____/____

Emergency contact: _____

Phone: ____ - ____ - ____

Parent or Guardian: _____

Phone: ____ - ____ - ____

Location of accident:

Name of person(s) who witnessed the accident:

Phone: ____ - ____ - ____

Phone: ____ - ____ - ____

Phone: ____ - ____ - ____

Describe accident (use back if necessary):

Describe location of accident (i.e. if at church, what part of property/building):

Describe conditions (i.e. icy / wet / no discernable hazard):

Describe action taken, if any (i.e. clean up spill, etc. use reverse side if needed):

Location of injury (be specific – right/left etc.):

Describe injury:

Action taken / was medical treatment provided?:

Where / by whom?:

If not, was medical treatment refused by responsible adult?

Who?: _____

1. Pastor notified:

Date: ____ / ____ / ____ Time: _____

2. Brotherhood Mutual notified:

Date: ____ / ____ / ____ Time: _____

VOLUNTEER APPLICATION
for Supervisory and Leadership positions

Name: _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone: _____ Evening Phone: _____ Mobile: _____

Occupation: _____ Employer: _____

Previous volunteer experience:

Special interests, hobbies, and skills:

How many hours per week are you available to volunteer? _____

_____ Days _____ Evenings _____ Weekends

_____ M _____ T _____ W _____ Th _____ F _____ Sat _____ Sun

Would you be available for periodic volunteer training sessions? _____ Yes _____ No

Have you ever been charged, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, other crimes of violence, theft, or motor vehicle violations)? _____ No _____ Yes

If yes, please explain fully (on back):

List two individuals who are not related to you by blood or marriage as references. List people you have known for at least three years.	
Full Name:	Relationship to reference:
Address:	Daytime phone:
Length of time you have known reference:	Evening phone:
Full Name:	Relationship to reference:
Address:	Daytime phone:
Length of time you have known reference:	Evening phone:

Applicant Signature

Date

**RELEASE FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK FOR
BOTH EMPLOYMENT AND VOLUNTEER APPLICANTS**

AUTHORIZATION AND RELEASE FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK

I _____, hereby authorize First United Methodist Church (Rome NY) to request the agency under contract with the Upper New York Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church to release information regarding any record of charges or convictions contained in its files, or in any criminal file maintained on me, whether said file is a local, state, or national file, and including but not limited to accusations and convictions for crimes committed against minors, to the fullest extent permitted by state and federal law. I do release said police department/ legal record office from all liability that may result from any such disclosure made in response to this request.

I am aware that the background check screening report I consent to have prepared may include information obtained from a variety of sources, including but not limited to government agencies, and others. I am aware that if I choose, I may obtain a complete disclosure of the nature and scope of any report prepared about me if I make a written request to First United Methodist Church (Rome NY) within a reasonable time after I execute this authorization.

I understand that a photocopy or facsimile of this signed document shall be considered as valid as an original.

First Name:	Middle:	Last:
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All other names used (ex: Maiden Name):

Social Security No:	Birthdate (month/day/year):
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Address:

City/State/Zip:	
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County:	Gender (circle one): Male Female
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Race (check one)

American Indian or Alaska Native ____ Asian ____ African American (Black) ____
Caucasian (White) ____ Hispanic/Latino ____ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander ____
Two or More Races ____ Other/Unknown ____

Applicants Signature:	Date:
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Witness to Signature:	Date:
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Safe Sanctuaries Participation Covenant

First UMC is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, vulnerable adults, volunteers, and staff who participate in ministries sponsored by the church. We are committed to preserving the church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

I understand that my presence with children, youth, or vulnerable adults means that I am to be an example and witness of Jesus Christ. I understand that ministries are for the Christian nurture and growth of every individual and all instructions given by staff or adult group leaders are for the safety and benefit of all present. I will show respect for everyone, serving where the needs are greatest, and will follow the direction of the program leader. I will prayerfully enter ministry with an open heart, willing spirit, and positive attitude so that Christ may be glorified through my actions.

Please answer the following questions:

1. As a volunteer/employee in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, contained within the Safe Sanctuaries Policy, as well as policies within individual ministries?
Yes No
2. As a volunteer/employee in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "Two Adult Rule" at all times?
Yes No
3. As a volunteer/employee in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment?
Yes No
4. As a volunteer/employee in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor(s)?
Yes No

I have read this SAFE SANCTUARIES COVENANT STATEMENT, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Signature

Print Name

Date

SAFE SANCTUARY CERTIFICATION CHECKLIST

DATE _____

NAME OF PERSON BEING RECOMMENDED: _____

PLEASE CHECK THE APPROPRIATE BOX

COMPLETED BY

APPLICATION COMPLETED	YES____	NO____	
JOB DESCRIPTION PROVIDED	YES____	NO____	_____
INTERVIEW CONDUCTED	YES____	NO____	_____
REFERENCES CHECKED	YES____	NO____	_____
CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKED	YES____	NO____	_____
PAPERWORK SUBMITTED TO OFFICE	YES____	NO____	_____
SAFE SANCTUARY TRAINING	YES____	NO____	_____
APPLICANT RECOMMENDED FOR CERTIFICATION	YES____	NO____	_____

AUTHORIZED LOCAL CHURCH DESIGNEE MAKING RECOMMENDATION

NAME _____

EMAIL _____

PHONE _____

SIGNATURE _____

CHURCH: ROME FIRST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

DISTRICT: UPPER NEW YORK CONFERENCE

PLEASE SUBMIT TO CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR UPON COMPLETION