

BEL^{LO}VED

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Safe Sanctuary Policy

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Church Covenant with Policy:

As a Christian community of faith, Beloved UMC pledges to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children, youth and vulnerable people, as well as those who serve in ministry with and to them.

Introduction:

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The resolution was readopted in 2004, 2008, and 2016. These are excerpts from the resolution:

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me.”
(Matthew 18: 5)

“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.” (Matthew 18: 6)

Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state that “children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse”
(¶ 162 C).

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.

(From The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church— 2016, pp.182-183.

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This policy implemented by Beloved United Methodist Church states that it is the church's responsibility to provide a safe and secure environment where children, youth, and vulnerable persons can experience God's abiding love and fellowship in the community of faith. The policy is as follows:

Liability Insurance:

Name of Insurance: MGT Insurance Co.

Policy Number: SEL-BOP-0006922

Effective Dates :05/02/2025-05/02/2026

Definitions:

Minor: Anyone under the age of 18.

Adult: Anyone 18 years of age or older who has completed high school.

Vulnerable Person: A person whose ability to protect themselves from violence, abuse or neglect is significantly impaired through social, physical or mental disability or illness .

Paid Staff: Any individual paid by Beloved United Methodist Church.

Volunteer: Any individual not paid by Beloved United Methodist Church but with leadership responsibilities.

Adult Leader: An individual who is regularly involved in ministry at Beloved United Methodist Church and has completed the required training and screening and meets the minimum age requirements as defined in this policy.

Roamer: A Safe Sanctuaries trained adult leader who meets the minimum age requirements as defined in this policy and moves throughout the facility to provide additional oversight and supervision during activities.

Student Helper: A volunteer under the age of 18 serving in a non-supervisory role.

Supervisor: An individual qualified as a leader with responsibility for ministry and adult leader oversight at Beloved United Methodist Church.

Abuse: Sexual contact, physical or emotional harm, or neglect as defined by the relevant statutes of the State of Ohio or other relevant jurisdictions.

Safe Sanctuary Policy: Beloved UMC's policy (this document) - to be reviewed annually.

Safe Gatherings: This is a 3rd party who has an application and training program that Beloved UMC is utilizing to provide applicant screening and background checks (county, state and national criminal and sex offender registries). Safegatherings.com also provides in-depth, online training to cover safe sanctuary policy topics.

Training, Screening, and Selection of Staff and Volunteers:

- ◇ All paid staff and volunteers must complete a Safe Sanctuary policy review (every year), an application and background check and training through safegatherings.com (every 3 years), non-conviction statement, and signed safe sanctuary policy statement prior to working with children, youth and/or vulnerable persons.
- ◇ It is encouraged that volunteers be engaged with the church at least six months before they may work with children, youth, and vulnerable persons. *Rare exceptions may be made in consultation with the senior pastor.*
- ◇ An updated safegatherings.com background check (paid for by the church) will be completed every two years for all volunteers and paid staff. The background check shall include at least the following: 2 electronic reference checks, national criminal background check, 7 year multi-county of residence background check, national and state of residence sex offender registry checks.
- ◇ An additional background check may be requested or required for staff and volunteers, including fingerprinting with local authorities, if pastor or leadership team deems necessary - specifically a BCI and FBI background check. If a volunteer or staff member has this background check completed through other entities a copy of the results will suffice.
- ◇ All adult leaders with youth must be at least one year removed from high school and five years older than the youth they serve. Those not one year removed from high school must have an additional adult leader supervising children, youth, or vulnerable persons with them.
- ◇ Volunteers under the age of 18 are not required to complete a background check, but can only work with children who are at least three years younger than them.

Supervision of Minors and Vulnerable Persons:

- ◇ At least two unrelated and non-cohabiting leaders will be present in a room during ministry programming with children, youth and vulnerable persons. When this is not possible, the door shall remain open and a “roamer” will visit the room periodically. Married or cohabitating adults may serve together, with at least one additional unrelated person present.
- ◇ At no time shall windows be obscured, or doors locked to areas where minors or vulnerable persons are meeting.
- ◇ Adult leaders will never be alone with any child or youth without parent written permission.
- ◇ One-on-one conversations with youth will only happen when necessary and only occur in a room with an open door or eye level window. Another adult will be present in the building and aware of such conversations and location of meeting.
- ◇ All documentation collected in association with the application process shall be maintained in a permanent secure file accessible to the Administrative Assistant and Nurture Team leadership as appropriate.

Transportation and Offsite Events:

- ◇ At this time, parents are responsible for the transportation of their children.
- ◇ For any off-site event, the trip's leader must obtain medical information and liability release forms for all participants and provide parents/guardians with a schedule and contact information.

Social Media/Online Ministry:

Being mindful that developing personal relationships with minors is critical to their spiritual formation, volunteers and staff are not prohibited from interacting with minors on social media. However, in such circumstances, the following requirements shall be met:

- ◇ The volunteer or staff person shall never initiate a connection (friending, following, etc.) on social media.
- ◇ If a student initiates a connection, the child, youth, or vulnerable person's parent or guardian as well as the volunteer or staff member's supervisor shall be notified.
- ◇ Should an adult leader receive a private text from a child, youth, or vulnerable person that seems to be questionable, they should immediately end the conversation in the virtual space and offer opportunities to have the conversation in person and in compliance with the church's Safe Sanctuaries policy. The ministry supervisor and/or parent/guardian should be made aware of the incident immediately.
- ◇ Adult leaders should only post photos on social network sites, with prior written permission granted by a parent/guardian. When posted, PHOTOS MUST NOT BE TAGGED with names or location indicators. All photos must be appropriate and in keeping with the spirit of the ministry event.
- ◇ All Safe Sanctuaries policies apply to online platform meetings like Zoom, Skype, Messenger, etc.
(example: Two unrelated adults should be present in the virtual room just like a physical room. If one adult is late, the mtg. should be recorded. If this is not possible, the online meeting should not begin until two adults are present or be canceled).
- ◇ All online activities should use the official Beloved United Methodist Church account, not a personal account.
- ◇ Communication should be shared with parents/guardians as well as children, youth and vulnerable persons.
- ◇ Adult leaders and participants should use their real names as usernames.
- ◇ Document attendance of online meetings.
- ◇ All electronic communications shall be documented and retained.

The Nurture Team will oversee the implementation of this Safe Sanctuary Policy and review the policy annually. The policy shall be reviewed and approved by the Trustees, Church Council, and Charge Conference annually. All consent forms and records related to the implementation of this policy will be on file at the church.

This policy was adopted by the congregation of Beloved United Methodist Church on December 3, 2023.

This policy was last revised on August 14, 2025

APPENDIX A

Procedures for reporting a suspected case of child abuse at Beloved United Methodist Church

Assumptions

1. All suspicions of child abuse will be taken seriously.
2. Care shall be taken to deal fairly and promptly with all parties involved, including the child, the suspected abuser, the person reporting the alleged abuse, and the congregation. All suspicions and reports will be kept confidential.

General Guidelines

1. All suspicions will be taken seriously.
2. All situations will be handled in a timely manner with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
3. Care will be shown for the well-being of the alleged victim at all times. We will extend whatever pastoral resources are necessary. We will not forget that the care and safety of the alleged victim is the first priority of Beloved UMC and denominational officials.
4. The alleged victim will not be held responsible in any way.
5. The person suspecting the abuse may report on their own, or with the support of church staff.
6. A file will be kept to track the suspicious physical, emotional or behavioral signs. Dates and time will be noted. The file will be kept confidential, but may be made available if courts request it.
7. A Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse form will be completed by those who suspect abuse. Forms are located in the church office.
8. The local child protection services will be called. 855-O-H-CHILD (855-642-4453)
9. We will not attempt to conduct our own investigation. This is the job of The Ohio Department of Family Services.
10. Full cooperation will be given to all civil authorities as requested.
11. Beloved UMC will document all efforts, in writing, and procedures followed in handling the incident reported. The incident will be reported immediately.

APPENDIX B

Procedures for responding to an allegation of sexual abuse/misconduct at Beloved United Methodist Church

Assumptions

1. Persons bringing allegations of sexual misconduct and harassment will be received in a respectful and caring manner. All allegations will be taken as worthy of investigation.
2. Presumption of innocence shall be maintained until completion of the process.
3. Care shall be taken to deal fairly and promptly with all parties involved, including the aggrieved, the accused, the family of the accused, and the congregation. Protection of all involved shall be carefully considered and appropriate actions determined.

General Guidelines

1. All allegations will be taken seriously.
2. All situations will be handled in a timely manner with due respect for people's privacy and confidentiality.
3. Care will be shown for the well-being of the alleged victim at all times. We will extend whatever pastoral resources are necessary. We will not forget that the care and safety of the alleged victim is the first priority of Beloved UMC and denominational officials.
4. The current insurance carrier of Beloved UMC will be notified in writing immediately.
5. Full cooperation will be given to all civil authorities under the guidance of Beloved UMC's selected attorney.
6. The alleged victim will not be held responsible in any way.
7. Beloved UMC will document all efforts, in writing, and procedures followed in handling the incident reported. The incident will be reported immediately, and care will be shown for the well-being of the alleged victim at all times. We will extend whatever pastoral resources are necessary. We will not forget that the care and safety of the alleged victim is the first priority of Beloved UMC and denominational officials. The matter will not be handled without professional outside assistance and guidance.
8. The proper authorities will be contacted following the guidance of Beloved UMC's insurance company and attorney. We will not attempt an in-depth investigation on our own without the assistance of professional advisors.
9. All parents of the alleged victim and accused (if minor) will be notified in writing immediately.
10. At no time will the accused be confronted until the safety of the child is secured.
11. Beloved United Methodist Church's designated spokesperson will use a prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey the news to the congregation. At all times we will safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

APPENDIX C

Application, statement of non-conviction, and policy statement signature sheet are on file for each volunteer and/or paid staff.

ADDENDUM

If a person(s) violates the Safe Sanctuary Policy, the matter will be handled by a Review Board including the Nurture Team Chair, designated member of Staff Parish Relations Committee, and the Pastor. The following process may occur for a paid staff or volunteer:

- ◇ Verbal warning
- ◇ Written warning
- ◇ Termination or dismissal

Each Safe Sanctuary certified person will be held accountable for their actions under the policy.

Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse

Beloved United Methodist Church

1. Name of Adult Leader (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of alleged child abuse:

2. Alleged victim's name:

3. Date/location of initial conversation with alleged victim:

4. Alleged victim's statement:

5. Indicators of alleged abuse (physical, emotional, behavioral):

6. Name of person accused of alleged abuse and the relationship of accused to alleged victim:

7. Reported to Pastor

Date/Time:

Summary:

8. Call to local child protection agency 855-O-H-CHILD (855-642-4453)

Date/Time:

Summary:

Signature Page:

Beloved United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

Place your initials next to the following statements to confirm your agreement.

1. As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and youth. _____
2. As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to always observe the two-adult rule. _____
3. As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to abide by the six-month rule before beginning a volunteer assignment. _____
4. As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to my volunteer assignment. _____
5. As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to my supervisor. _____
6. As a volunteer in this congregation, I agree to inform a minister of this church if I have ever been convicted of child abuse. _____

Print Name: _____

Completed Beloved Safe Sanctuary Training on _____(Date)

This training is valid for one year. This signature page will be kept on file at Beloved UMC.
Staff/Volunteer to keep a copy of policy.

Staff/Volunteer Signature