

Jefferson United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuaries

Child, Youth, & Vulnerable People Protection Policy & Procedures

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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 following is a reflection on the adopted resolution *Book of Resolutions*, 2016 #3084).

A central tenet of the Christian faith is the inherent value and worth of all children, youth, and adults. Children, youth, and other vulnerable people are least able to protect themselves in our society and are particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect. Jefferson United Methodist Church is eager to do all it can to protect the youth, children, and other vulnerable people who participate in the life of this congregation.

We believe that implementing a policy and adopting procedures to protect our children, youth, and other vulnerable people shows recognition that our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to our children, youth, and other vulnerable persons. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state, “. . . children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse.” The social principles also state, “...all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God.”

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children, youth, and other vulnerable people. Neglect, sexual abuse, and exploitation occur in churches, whether large or small, urban or rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, racial, and ethnic lines. God calls us to make our churches safe places and to protect children, youth, and other vulnerable people from abuse.

Abuse prevention and ministry protection policies and procedures are essential. Congregations must provide for not only the protection and safety of our children, youth, and other vulnerable persons, but also for our volunteers and staff working with them.

The Gospel calls us to be engaged in ministry with children, youth, and other vulnerable persons (*Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth*, page 10). Jesus taught, “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me” (Mark 9:37 NRSV) and, “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 NRSV).

We should not allow possible risks to undermine or stop our ministry. Rather, we must:

- Acknowledge the risks and develop a practical plan to address these issues;
- Take steps to prevent harm to our children, youth, and other vulnerable persons; and
- Continue to answer the Gospel’s imperative to be in ministry with children, youth, and other vulnerable persons, thus making a difference in their lives (adapted from *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth*, page 10).

Safe Sanctuaries policies and the implementation of practices that reflect those policies seek to fulfill this call for Jefferson United Methodist Church.

Definitions

Child: Anyone age eleven or younger.

Youth: Anyone not a “child” and under the age of eighteen.

Adult: Anyone who has reached the age of legal majority and has finished high school.

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

Paid staff person: Someone paid by the church with oversight provided by the Pastor or the Leadership Board.

Protected groups: With respect to Safe Sanctuaries, these groups of people may include (but not be limited to) children, youth, or other vulnerable people.

Unscreened adult: A helper who has not been “screened” (see definition below). The individual may work in a room with a screened adult. He/she should never be alone with protected groups. Unscreened adults may or may not be church members, but they must be regular attendees and active in the church for at least six months. Use of unscreened adults should be exceptions rather than normal practice.

Screened adult: A helper who has gone through the screening process involving a criminal background check, reference check, screening questionnaire, and risk reduction training. These people may or may not be church members, but they must be regular attendees and active in the church for at least six months. They may also be parents or guardians of children and youth who attend family activities regularly.

Youth helpers: People under the age of eighteen who are assisting with child or youth activities. They may assist with activities but should not be considered adult helpers and should always be supervised. Youth helpers should be at least four years older than the oldest child or youth they are helping. A youth helper will normally be considered “unscreened.”

Roving Monitor: A Safe Sanctuaries trained/screened 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.

Ministry supervisor: A screened individual, staff or helper, responsible for a particular ministry under the oversight of the leaders in that ministry.

Physical abuse: Any intentional act causing injury or trauma by way of bodily contact.

Sexual abuse: Intentional sexualized behavior involving a child for the adult’s own purposes.

Emotional abuse: A pattern of behavior that creates fear and/or control and that may result in psychological trauma.

Neglect: A lack of supervision to the degree that the person’s health, safety, and well-being are threatened with harm.

Ritual Abuse: Sexual abuse, physical abuse, or murder of people supposedly committed as part of a religious ritual.

Elder Abuse: Encompasses all of the same types of abuse with children (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect, ritual). Additional types of elder abuse may include

- financial abuse --stealing money or belongings, forging checks, taking retirement or Social Security benefits, using credit cards or bank accounts, changing wills, bank accounts, life insurance policies, titles, etc.
- healthcare fraud--committed by doctors, hospital staff and/or healthcare workers through overcharging; duplicative billing, falsifying Medicaid or Medicare claims, etc.

Selection and Screening of Church Staff and Adult Helpers

The pastor in charge or his/her designee and the Leadership Board are charged with the responsibility of developing, implementing, and evaluating the process for recruiting, screening, selecting, training and supervising non-appointive church staff (§ 258.12 *Book of Discipline*, 2016).

All adults who regularly work with the church's children, youth, and other vulnerable people, and each church paid staff person (including clergy) will be screened. Adults who occasionally serve as a second person in a classroom or group and those who work regularly with children/youth/other vulnerable people are encouraged to receive training with respect to child/youth/other vulnerable people's protection issues prior to beginning their regular involvement with these groups.

Screening Procedures

- Each person being considered to work regularly with children, youth, and/or other vulnerable people, whether as a helper or paid staff person, shall submit a screening questionnaire (See Appendix I). This screening form is good for three years, after which time a re-screening will be necessary.
- Before placing a paid staff person in a position of responsibility with children, youth, or other vulnerable people, a designated paid staff member or person charged with specific responsibility will interview the applicant, review the written application, and document the use of screening questions (see INTERVIEW GUIDE for possible questions, Appendix II). This documentation shall be placed in that staff member's personnel file.
- References provided will be contacted. A written record of such contacts will be retained in that staff member's personnel file (see REFERENCE CHECK RESPONSE FORM, Appendix III).

Each person desiring to work with children, youth, and/or other vulnerable people shall authorize Jefferson United Methodist Church to conduct a criminal background check using a commercial vendor authorized by the Leadership Board. This background check will expire three years from the originating date (see AUTHORIZATION AND REQUEST FOR CRIMINAL RECORDS CHECK, Appendix IV).

Before beginning work with children, youth, or other vulnerable people, each paid staff member and screened helper will sign a form stating that he/she has read, understood, and agrees to abide by this Protection Policy (see LEADER COVENANT, Appendix V).

Upon completion of the screening process outlined, a person must be recommended by the Safe Sanctuaries Oversight Team to serve in ministry with children, youth or other vulnerable people at Jefferson UMC. This recommendation will be documented and placed in a confidential file. Persons will be considered on a case by case basis. A person may not be included who has a reported incidence of

- abuse or neglect of a child, youth, or vulnerable person
- domestic violence
- other violence

The Oversight Team Will be guided by the North Carolina DHHS Criminal Background Check Review Policy (Current Effective Date: March 1, 2022).

Where it has been determined that a person should not be approved, those people involved with the decision should handle it in a sensitive manner. The pastor in charge or her/his designee should inform the applicant in person. The specific reasons for the decision should be provided, whenever possible.

It is important that all records be kept in a locked cabinet designated by the Pastor to assure confidentiality.

Although not required to accomplish the above tasks personally, the pastor in charge shall be responsible for ensuring compliance by the Safe Sanctuaries Oversight Team.

Training

The pastor in charge (or the Safe Sanctuaries Oversight Team) and the Leadership Board shall ensure that regularly scheduled training (focused on foundational and current issues of child protection) is available to and received by those working with children, youth, and other vulnerable people. At the minimum, training must occur on an annual basis. Onsite, in-person training may be offered annually by the pastor or his/her designee. Participation in training shall be required prior to involvement in all affected areas of ministry by all paid staff members and screened adults. Unscreened adults and youth helpers who work consistently with children, youth, and/or other vulnerable people are encouraged to participate in training opportunities.

Supervision

General

Church responsibility for children, youth, and other vulnerable people will begin when the first child, youth, or vulnerable person arrives and ends when the last one is picked up. All activities involving children, youth, and other vulnerable people will be supervised by at least one screened adult and will have at least two leaders present. A designated roving monitor shall monitor the room when it is not possible to have two leaders present.

When reasonably feasible, each room set aside for protected groups should have a door with a window. Half doors should be considered for toddlers to second-grade children to keep them from wandering outside the classroom. Windows shall remain free from obstruction; avoid covering or adorning them. If there are no windows in the door, the door shall remain open.

The “two-person rule” is defined as having at least two people in any classroom or setting, at least one of which must be a screened adult. When the two adults are related or are immediate family members, a third adult must be present. When the “two-person rule” is not possible, a designated roving monitor should visit the room regularly. If using a roving monitor, doors without windows must remain open.

Classroom Activities

- **Crib/Toddler to Second Grade**

At least one screened adult and a second screened or unscreened adult will be present for all classroom activities involving infants, toddlers, and children in grades K-2. When feasible, there should be two screened adults present; when the two adults are related or immediate family members, it is preferable that a third adult be present. In addition, a designated roving monitor should check each classroom on a regular basis. Two adult leaders in the classroom is the expectation; at least one of them must be a screened adult. Children should be escorted to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the adults or by a designated roving monitor who checks on all classrooms.

- **Grades 3–6**

At least one screened adult and a second screened or unscreened adult will be present for all classroom activities; in addition, a designated roving monitor should check each classroom on a regular basis. Two screened adults are preferred. Children should be escorted to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the adults or by a designated roving monitor who checks on all classrooms. Where two adults are not available, the classroom doors are to remain open, and a designated roving monitor should visit the classroom regularly.

- **Grades 7–12**

Classroom activities will be led by at least one screened adult with at least one screened or unscreened leader present. Youth should be monitored when moving to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the adults or by a designated roving monitor who checks on all classrooms. A designated roving monitor shall monitor the room when it is not possible to have two leaders present.

Open Door Policy

Parents, volunteers, or staff of the church will be permitted, as reasonableness dictates, to visit and observe all programs and classrooms at any time.

Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure

Adults responsible for children who are infants through toddlers should sign their children in and indicate the names of authorized person(s) to whom the child may be signed out. Adults responsible for children and youth should sign their child in and out of Sunday school and other activities. For pick up and sign out, each responsible adult must make physical eye contact with the person who comes to pick up the child/youth. When this contact is made and church approval is documented, the young person will be released from the church's responsibility. Avoid non authorized adults picking up children. Older siblings, parents, and other adults may be authorized to pick up children when they are identified on a child's care and information records. This record of authorized adults with pick up privileges should be updated annually. Each ministry team will develop pick-up procedures for each event and assign a church designee to oversee the sign-in/sign-out procedures. When a digital application or other software is used for sign-in and sign-out procedures, parents and guardians will receive training and must provide documented permission for use.

Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities

At least two screened adults will be present for all non-classroom activities involving children, youth, and/or other vulnerable people. Any meetings held in an individual's home will be supervised by at least one screened adult, with two adults present who are not members of the same family. Meetings held in an individual's home must be pre-approved by the child's/youth's/vulnerable person's parent or guardian. JUMC encourages adults and protected groups to maintain personal attire and grooming standards that promote safety, health, and acceptable standards of social conduct. The expectation is that all clothing will be modest, comfortable, and casual.

Counseling of Youth, Children, and Other Vulnerable People

In instances where circumstances dictate that counseling would be most effective on a one-on-one basis, an appropriate paid church staff person may meet individually for one-on-one conversations with the knowledge of at least one other paid staff member and with permission of a parent or guardian. During any one-on-one conversation with children, youth, or other vulnerable people, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session, unless there is glass in the door or a wall that gives a clear view into the room. If another adult is not in the building when the counseling occurs, the session should be moved to a public place, such as a restaurant or outside where other people are present.

Additional Considerations:

- At the initial meeting, the adult should first determine if he/she is qualified to address the child's/youth's/other vulnerable person's needs effectively. Counseling should be limited to no more than three sessions. Referral to another more qualified counselor should always be considered.
- This section is not meant to govern a licensed professional counselor in a paid counseling relationship with a child, youth, or other vulnerable person.

Time Following Group Events

Following group events, it is inevitable that occasionally a child's/youth's/or other vulnerable person's transportation arrives after all other participants have departed. Two screened leaders shall be scheduled to be present until all participants have been picked up. In some circumstances, a child/youth/other vulnerable person may unavoidably be supervised by one screened adult. When this occurs, the screened adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the participant's well-being as well as his/her own. An example of this would be to have the parent/guardian on the phone with you until they arrive.

Transportation

General Rules

Transporting children, youth, and other vulnerable people is an important concern. Their safety can be at risk in a variety of ways. Therefore, certain discretion must be used depending upon the event attended, the locale of the event, and the age group participating. This policy includes both requirements and guidelines. When feasible, there should be adherence to the recommendations and the guidelines. It is expected that the requirements will always be followed.

Requirements

1. Church drivers must be known to the designated screened adult leader of the event.
2. When a child/youth/other vulnerable person is transported in any vehicle, the driver must be

- either the parent/guardian, a screened adult, or a paid staff person who is at least 21 years old.
3. When a child/youth/other vulnerable person is transported in a church-owned vehicle, the driver must be at least 21 years of age.
 4. Drivers must have a valid driver's license for the vehicle being operated. For example, if driving a church bus, a commercial driver's license is required. A copy of the driver's license and current auto insurance coverage shall be on file in the church office.
 5. Drivers must require that passengers wear seat belts; the number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts.
 6. Drivers should be advised of a designated route and should not deviate from it except in cases of emergency or road detours.
 7. Drivers should not use cell phones unless required for communication with other drivers. Any use should be hands-free and in accordance with state law. Drivers shall not text/message while driving.
 8. No church youth will drive his/her own car for a church-sponsored event. They may, of course, drive to the church in their own car, where the church's responsibility for that person will begin. If the parent/guardian wants to accompany the youth on the church trip, the youth may drive; however, that youth will not be able to provide transportation for anyone else under the supervision of the church leaders.
 9. When a trip is planned and the destination is expected to be 100 miles or more from the point of departure, drivers are to be listed on an "approved driver list" maintained in the church office.
 10. People who regularly drive vehicles (either owned, leased, or rented by the church) are to be listed on an "approved driver list" maintained in the church office.
 11. To be listed on the "approved driver list," a motor vehicle record search must have been conducted, and the pastor in charge or his/her designee must determine if the record is satisfactory. An unsatisfactory review may include (but will not be limited to) charges of DUI/DWI, reckless driving, vehicular homicide. Minor infractions (such as speeding) are not intended to exclude drivers.
 12. Drivers will read and sign an acknowledgement form indicating that the Child, Youth, and Other Vulnerable People Protection Policy has been read and will be followed (See Appendix V).

Guidelines

1. Drivers shall be accompanied in the vehicle by at least one other non-related adult.
2. Drivers should receive training for any church-owned vehicle being operated.
3. Youth are expected to ride with screened adults to all events. If a parent/ guardian choses to allow the youth to drive, the parent/guardian must ride in the same car as the youth. Of course, a parent/guardian may also allow a sibling to ride in that car; the designated leader of the church event should receive notification of this situation before the church trip begins.
4. When using a ride-share service for drop-off (carpool, taxi, uber, etc.), the parent/guardian must alert the church leader in charge and receive church confirmation of prior notification. Sign-out and pick up procedures will still be in effect, such that the child/youth/vulnerable person will be released to a person previously documented by the parent/guardian and previously approved by the church designee.

Trips and Retreats

Trip and retreat settings can call for different child/youth/other vulnerable people protection requirements, depending on the circumstances. The requirements should always be implemented. Depending on the circumstances of the setting, who is in attendance, etc., some or all of the guidelines should be implemented as needed. Those in charge of the trip or retreat should be mindful of both requirements and guidelines, in addition to applying their own wisdom to the needs of a given occasion.

Requirements

1. There will be at least two screened adults present for all trips, retreats, and other events where the children, youth, and /or other vulnerable people gather overnight at, or away from, the church campus.
2. There will be at least one male screened adult and one female screened adult present at coed overnight events. If the majority of the children/youth are of one biological gender, at least one of the two screened adults shall also be male or female, reflecting the majority of the youth.
3. The person in charge of youth/children/other vulnerable people for each overnight trip and/or retreat shall carry parental permission forms, including permission for emergency medical care (see Appendix VI).

Guidelines

When a hotel-type setting is used, rooms should be assigned as follows:

1. Separate rooms for adults and child/youth/other vulnerable people (where applicable) should be assigned with at least two participants per room except where specific situations dictate a different arrangement.
2. Assignments should be made so that an adult room is between two children's/youth's/other vulnerable person's rooms.
3. Adults should make random monitoring hall trips and room checks at night. This should be done by two adults of the same biological gender as those being checked.
4. A hotel should be selected where the rooms open to the interior of the building (i.e., doors do not open to the outside).

Online Safety

Upon arrival at a church sponsored activity or event, adults and protected groups will be expected to place their cell phones, other electronic devices, or media communications in a basket or container near the interior area of the activity. The use of electronics or media communications may be useful tools in supporting child and youth ministries. However, in such circumstances, the following requirements shall be met:

1. The church helper or staff person shall never initiate a connection (friending, following, etc.) on social media. The use of social media is discouraged, unless it is planned for an activity or content.
2. If a child, youth, or other vulnerable person initiates a connection, that individual's parent or guardian as well as the volunteer or staff member's supervisor shall be notified.
3. If an adult leader receives a private text from a child, youth, or other vulnerable person that

- seems questionable, the leader should immediately end the conversation in the virtual space and offer opportunities to have the conversation in person and in compliance with the earlier guidelines for one-on-one conversations. The ministry supervisor and/or parent/guardian should be made aware of the incident immediately.
4. Adult leaders should post photos on social network sites only 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.
 5. All in-person protection policies apply to online platform meetings like Zoom, Skype, Messenger, and so on. *(For example, two unrelated adults should be present in the virtual room just as they would be in a physical room.)*
 6. Communication about online meetings should be shared with parents/guardians as well as with children, youth, and other vulnerable people.
 7. Adult leaders and participants shall use their real names as usernames.
 8. Attendance of online meetings shall be documented.
 9. All should be aware that electronic communications may be documented and retained.

Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

1. Immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children, youth, and/or other vulnerable people. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the alleged victim is secured, the pastor in charge or other designated people should inform the accused that abuse has been reported. (See Appendix VIII for NC Mandatory Reporting Law)
2. If abuse is observed by, disclosed to, or suspected by a church helper and/or paid staff member of the church, the observer shall report the incident immediately to the ministry supervisor and the pastor in charge. If the pastor in charge is not available or is implicated in the abuse, the matter shall be immediately reported to the district superintendent and the proper authorities, as required by state and local law. The district superintendent will take responsibility, acting in accordance with the established rules of *The Book of Discipline* with respect to claims against a pastor. If the district superintendent is not available, the incident shall be reported to the bishop's office immediately.
3. Notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and well-being of the child, youth, or other vulnerable person until the parent(s) or guardian(s) arrive.
4. Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.
5. The church should provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing can take place.
6. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the pastor in charge is to report the incident immediately to the district superintendent if he/she has not already done so. If the district superintendent is unavailable, the incident should be reported to the bishop's office.
7. Keep a written report of the steps taken by the church in response to the reported abuse. (See

Child/Youth/ Other Vulnerable Person Protection Incident Report Form, Appendix VII). The report should be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It should be kept in a locked file.

8. Any contact with the media should be handled by the pastor in charge or the Chairperson of the Leadership Board.

*******The moral imperative is to do what will best protect children. *******

Participation of Known Sexual Offenders

There are state sex offender registries in each state of the United States. Reasons for being listed on the registry are varied, and each situation is different. As people, created by God, those on the registry need God's love and grace through the ministry of the church. Given the sensitive nature of sex abuse and the mandate for the church to create safe spaces for ministry, special consideration should be given if a church is to safely and effectively include sex offenders in their faith community. The recommendations below are offered for guidance. When a registered sex offender requests being a part of the congregation:

- Someone in church leadership should have a conversation with the sex offender's parole officer, if possible, to understand better the offender's situation.
- Likewise, there should be a candid conversation with the offender, so all involved have a clear understanding of the situation and what will be required for participation in the church.
- A representative of the church and the offender will need to agree to a covenant of participation (See COVENANT OF PARTICIPATION, Appendix IX).

Overall Implementation of this Safe Sanctuaries Protection Policy and Procedures

Unless otherwise specifically stated, it shall be the responsibility of the Safe Sanctuaries Oversight Team to work with the pastor to implement this policy, to design and conduct future training, and to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of this policy.

Congregational Covenant and Adoption

Jefferson United Methodist Church's purpose for establishing this Child, Youth, and Vulnerable People Protection Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical wellbeing, emotional safety, and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable people.

We adopt this policy in accordance with the statement we as a congregation make at each baptism that we will "nurture children and youth in the Christian faith and life and include them in our care." With this policy, we renew our baptismal pledge to "live according to the example of Christ" and surround children, youth, and other vulnerable people with a "community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be thus confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" (Baptismal Covenant II, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, p.96).

This policy coordinates and supersedes the previous policies used by Jefferson UMC.

As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we are committed to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable people, as well as all the helpers with the children, youth, and vulnerable people. By this policy and its accompanying procedures, we implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events.

1. **Training**: We will conduct training on this policy and its procedures to assure that adults involved in children's, youth's, and vulnerable people's activities are aware of these standards and will abide by them.
2. **Screening**: All adults who have a direct involvement with activities covered by this policy and its procedures will be screened in accordance with Western North Carolina Annual Conference policy. All people who are subject to this policy will be re-screened every three (3) years. Any person who was screened but, for whatever reason, has been absent from the Jefferson UMC community for more than one (1) year and thereafter returns, will be re-screened.
3. **Supervision**: All activities covered by this policy and its procedures will be supervised by the appropriate number of screened adults.

Conclusion

In all its ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable people, Jefferson United Methodist Church is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each of God's children here 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*, pg. 44)

This Child, Youth, and Other Vulnerable People Protection Policy is adopted by action of the Leadership Board of Jefferson United Methodist Church this 15th day of August, 2023.

	Signatures:
Appointed clergy and/or supply pastor(s):	Kristy H. Burnette
Leadership Board Member (Staff/Parrish Relations)	Donna Weaver
Leadership Board Member (Trustees)	Paul Bailey
Leadership Board Chair:	Donna Weaver

Appendix I

Adult Helpers/Paid Staff Screening Questionnaire

Full Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Previous Experience with Children, Youth, and/or Other vulnerable people: _____

Why do you want to work with children/youth/other vulnerable people? _____

What gifts, education, training, or interests do you have that would contribute to our church's work with children/youth/other vulnerable people? _____

What are your views on appropriate ways to discipline? _____

What ages do you prefer to work with? _____ Why? _____

Do you have any reservations about working with children of different ages/abilities? If so, why?

Do you think there are any reasons to treat boys and girls differently? _____

If you saw another helper, one you liked and respected, strike a child, what would you do? _____

Have you ever been charged with, convicted of, or pled guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a felony (including but not limited to drug-related charges, child abuse, or other crimes of violent, theft or serious motor vehicle violations)? ☐ Yes ☐ No; If yes, please explain below.

References

Please list two references (i.e., people who are not related to you by blood or marriage) and provide a complete address and phone number for each.

Personal/Professional References

(1) Full Name of Reference:	
Cell Phone:	Other Phone:
Email:	
Relationship to Applicant:	

(2) Full Name of Reference:	
Cell Phone:	Other Phone:
Email:	
Relationship to Applicant:	

Do we have your permission to contact these references ___ Yes ___ No

Do we have your permission to share this information with JUMC leadership? ___ Yes ___ No___

Please share any social media usernames you feel would be helpful in learning more about you or that you would consider linking to participants you would also interact with in a ministry-related capacity:

Platform:

Username:

Signature of Applicant

Date

Appendix II

Interview Guidelines For Potential Paid Staff

There are a number of interview questions that can help in determining the motives behind why people want to work with children/youth/other vulnerable people. Other questions can help identify traits often found in child abusers. By asking questions, keeping notes, and sharing your concerns and thoughts with other interviewers, you may be able to screen out potential abusers in the early stages of the pre-employment process.

- **Tell me about yourself.**

This begins the interview with less threatening, open-ended questions. It allows the candidate some control in what he/she wants to share. The candidate often reveals information in response to this question that you could not or would not think to ask.

- **Summarize your employment/volunteer history.**

Look for frequent moves, gaps in employment/volunteer service, and reasons for termination/departure.

- **Tell me about your experiences with children/youth/other vulnerable people. Have you worked or volunteered for other organizations in this same capacity?**

Watch for adults whose lives seem to revolve around spending time with children.

- **What strengths can you bring to this position?**

- **Why do you want to work with children/youth/other vulnerable people?**

Once again, watch the candidate who is too child-focused or those who want to work with children because they are “pure,” “innocent,” “trusting,” “nonjudgmental,” “clean,” and so on. Adults should want to work with children because they have something to offer children. Beware of the adult who wants to work with children because children meet their adult needs for control, love, or affection.

- **What do you do in your spare (leisure) time? What are your hobbies or interests?**

Watch for those who prefer to spend their free time with children and those whose hobbies are more appealing to children than they are to most adults (i.e., excessive video games, emerging social media, models, magic, imaginative role-play, and so on). Those who have a significant and specific focus of juvenile or child-like interests and hobbies may find serving as a mature leader a greater challenge than adults who have a mixture of juvenile and adult interests. They may also connect very well with children and youth and thrive as a volunteer with other adults for support.

- **What ages do you prefer to work with? Do you have any reservations about working with children of different ages/abilities?** Sexual abusers generally have a specific age they prefer. Does the candidate indicate a preference for sex, age, certain traits?

- **Do you think there are any reasons to treat boys and girls differently?**

Listen closely to their reasons or rationale. Does it feel right?

- **What do you consider acceptable discipline?**

Watch for the adult who needs to control or those with positive attitudes toward corporal punishment. Listen for signs that the candidate may use psychological abuse to punish. Does the candidate’s response indicate that he/she lacks respect for children’s thoughts and feelings?

- **How do you tend to deal with stress?**

Can the candidate recognize when he/she is under stress? Does the candidate have a plan for dealing with stress? Is it acceptable?

- **What makes you angry? How do you deal with anger?**

Same as above.

- **If you saw another teacher/staff/volunteer, one you liked and respected, strike a child, what would you do?** Make sure at some point the candidate plans to tell a ministry supervisor.

- **Have you ever been reprimanded at work? For what?**

Was the reprimand related to the person's ability to deal with children?

- **Who are your best friends?**

An adult's best friends should be other adults.

- **Do you relate better with adults or with children? Why?**

Be cautious of anyone who relates better to children than adults.

- **How would you react to any accusation of child abuse?**

Watch for a comfort level, a reasonable response, a panic look, a carefully thought out manipulative response.

- **What would you do if a child told you a secret?**

Make sure the candidate does not make a promise not to tell.

- **What would you do if a child asked you a question about sex?**

Is the candidate comfortable with the topic? Does he/she share only what the child is asking?

- **Ask other "what if" questions.**

Watch for a candidate whose responses are consistent with your philosophy, who asks other staff/ volunteers for help and support; one who is a team player. Note how quickly the candidate resorts to punitive punishment and how realistic or honest the responses are.

- **Ask other interview questions pertinent to the position.**

Be cautious of candidates who seem overly anxious to be hired/approved, those who seem "too smooth," and those who try to take over the interview.

Appendix III

Reference Check Response Form

Applicant name: _____

Reference name: _____

What is your relationship to the applicant? _____

How long have you known the applicant? _____

How would you describe the applicant? _____

How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children/youth/other vulnerable people?

How would you describe the applicant's leadership abilities? _____

How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to other adult helpers when working with these groups? _____

How would you feel about having the applicant as an adult helper with your child, youth, and/or other vulnerable person? _____

Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with children, youth, or other vulnerable people? If so, please describe. _____

Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been charged with or convicted of a crime? If so, please describe. _____

Is there anyone else you feel we should contact before making a decision on whether or not the applicant should work with children, youth, or other vulnerable people? How would I contact them?

Please list any other comments you would like to make on the reverse side.

Reference inquiry completed by: _____

Signature

Print name, please

Thank you very much for your response! You may return this form to:

Jefferson United Methodist Church, 115 E. Main Street; PO Box 236, Jefferson, NC 28640

Appendix IV

Authorization and Request for Criminal Records & Background Check

I hereby authorize Jefferson United Methodist Church to obtain a background check through "Checkr," which is integrated with The Planning Center, a consumer reporting agency. I acknowledge and understand that this request for my background check is being done in compliance with the church's Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures and is a requirement for all persons who work with children and youth, whether adult helper or employee.

I attest that the following is accurate and complete information required in order for Jefferson United Methodist Church to request Checkr to perform a background check.

Full Legal Name : _____
(First Name, Full Middle Name, Last Name)

All Previously Used Former or Other Names: (Maiden Names, Married Names, Surnames, Etc.)

Current Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Prior Street Address 1 (if at current address less than 3 years): _____

Dates Resided Here: _____ to _____

Prior Street Address 2 (if at prior address less than 3 years) _____

Dates Resided Here: _____ to _____

Current Email Address: _____ Gender: _____ Race: _____

Social Security Number: _____ Date of Birth: _____

Driver's License Number: _____ Issuing State: _____ Exp. Date: _____

Your signature below indicates the following:

- 1) You authorize, without reservation, The Planning Center or any third party to obtain and/or furnish to Jefferson United Methodist Church any records or information referenced in the provided disclosure statement for children and youth volunteer related purposes;
- 2) You authorize ongoing procurement of any records or information, reports and records at any time during your relationship with Jefferson United Methodist Church to the extent allowed by law;
- 3) You authorize the use of a fax or photocopy of this authorization as having the same authority as the original;
- 4) You authorize and request, without reservation, any present or former employer, school, police department, financial institution, division of motor vehicles, consumer reporting agency, or other entity, person or agency having knowledge about you to furnish Jefferson United Methodist Church and/or The Planning Center with any and all background information in their possession regarding you for these stated children and youth purposes;
- 5) You understand and agree that in connection with your volunteer application consumer report information, whether investigative or otherwise, will be held in strictest confidence in a locked file drawer and will only be shared with the church leadership as deemed necessary;
- 6) You have read and fully understand the foregoing disclosure and this authorization;
- 7) You certify that all the information you have provided on this form is true, complete, correct and accurate.

Applicant Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix V

Leader Covenant Statement

The congregation of Jefferson United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, other vulnerable people, staff, and helpers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statement reflects our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

- ❖ No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) may work with children, youth, or other vulnerable people in any church-sponsored activity.
- ❖ All adults involved with children, youth, or other vulnerable people of our church must have been active participants of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment.
- ❖ All adults involved with children, youth, and/or other vulnerable people of our church shall observe the Child, Youth, and Other Vulnerable People Protection Policy at all times.
- ❖ All adults involved with children, youth, and/or other vulnerable people of our church shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and laws regarding abuse and neglect of children, youth, and other vulnerable people.
- ❖ All adults involved with children, youth, and/or other vulnerable people of our church shall immediately report to the pastor or ministry leader any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.
- ❖ Confidentiality is of the utmost importance. There may be times when a staff/volunteer is privy to information that must remain confidential (for example: criminal background information, a child's learning disability, a person's illness). Only in the case of suspected abuse may a volunteer share confidential information and only with the pastor or other ministry leader.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. Do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children, youth, and other vulnerable people? ____Yes ____ No ____
2. I have read this Leader Covenant, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.
____Yes ____ No ____

Signature of Applicant _____ Date _____

Appendix VI

Parental Consent and Medical Authorization

Name of child/youth: _____

Grade (if applicable): _____ Age: _____

Home Address of young person: _____

Name of parent/legal guardian: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

Secondary/Emergency contact name: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____

As the parent (or legal guardian) of: _____ the following persons may pick-up my child in my absence:

I understand that my child/youth will be participating in a number of activities for the calendar year _____, which carry with them a certain degree of risk. Some of the activities are swimming, hiking, field trips, sports, and other activities that the church may offer. I consent for my child to participate in these activities.

	Please Initial
I represent that my child/youth is physically fit and has the necessary skills to safely participate in the activities listed above.	
I represent that my child/youth has restrictions on the following particular activities: (please list on reverse side of form).	
I understand and give consent for my child to travel to and from these events in transportation provided by volunteer drivers.	

Medical Treatment Authorization

It is my understanding that the church will attempt to notify me in case of a medical emergency involving my child/youth. If the church cannot reach me, then I authorize the church to hire a doctor or health-care professional, and I give my permission to the doctor or other health-care professionals, to provide the medical services deemed necessary. I will pay for any medical expenses so incurred. I will notify the church if I feel there are any health considerations that would prevent my child's/youth's participation in any of the activities listed above.

Initial Here

Allergies, diet restrictions, or other health considerations:

Medical Insurance Company _____

Policy/Group #: _____

Signature of Parent or Guardian: _____

Photo/Video Release

I give Jefferson United Methodist Church permission to post pictures and/or videos of my child taken at church events for publicity purposes, including, but not limited to the local newspaper. I understand names will not be used.

If Yes
Initial Here

I give Jefferson United Methodist Church permission to post pictures and/or videos of my child taken at church events on closed group social media sites of Jefferson United Methodist Church.

If Yes
Initial Here

I give Jefferson United Methodist Church permission to share pictures and/or videos of my child for the purpose of updating and applying for grants.

If Yes
Initial Here

Is there anything else you would like us to know about your child?

Appendix VII Incident Report

Reason for report: _____

Date of incident: _____ Time: _____

Place of incident: _____

Name of reporter: _____ Title: _____

Name(s) and Age(s) of Child(ren)/Youth/Other vulnerable person(s): _____

Briefly describe what happened: _____

_____ (continue on reverse side if needed).

Were there any witnesses? ____ Yes ____ No; If Yes, list. What action did you take? _____

Has the incident been resolved? ____ Yes ____ No; If no, explain. _____

	Yes/No	Date
Pastor		
District Superintendent		
Bishop's Office		
Leadership Board		
Parent		
Police		
Sheriff		
Other:		

Have the following people been notified?

Please provide dates as the notifications are completed.

Signature of reporter: _____ Date: _____

Signature of parent/guardian: _____ Date: _____

Appendix VIII

NC Mandatory Reporting Law

§ 7B-301. Duty to report abuse, neglect, dependency, or death due to maltreatment.

(a) Any person or institution who has cause to suspect that any juvenile is abused, neglected, or dependent, as defined by G.S. 7B-101, or has died as the result of maltreatment, shall report the case of that juvenile to the director of the department of social services in the county where the juvenile resides or is found. The report may be made orally, by telephone, or in writing. The report shall include information as is known to the person making it including the name and address of the juvenile; the name and address of the juvenile's parent, guardian, or caretaker; the age of the juvenile; the names and ages of other juveniles in the home; the present whereabouts of the juvenile if not at the home address; the nature and extent of any injury or condition resulting from abuse, neglect, or dependency; and any other information which the person making the report believes might be helpful in establishing the need for protective services or court intervention. If the report is made orally or by telephone, the person making the report shall give the person's name, address, and telephone number. Refusal of the person making the report to give a name shall not preclude the department's assessment of the alleged abuse, neglect, dependency, or death as a result of maltreatment.

(b) Any person or institution who knowingly or wantonly fails to report the case of a juvenile as required by subsection (a) of this section, or who knowingly or wantonly prevents another person from making a report as required by subsection (a) of this section, is guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor.

(c) Repealed by Session Laws 2015-123, s. 3, effective January 1, 2016. (1979, c. 815, s. 1; 1991 (Reg. Sess., 1992), c. 923, s. 2; 1993, c. 516, s. 4; 1997-506, s. 32; 1998-202, s. 6; 1999-456, s. 60; 2005-55, s. 3; 2013-52, s. 7; 2015-123, s.

For more information visit:

<https://www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/social-services/child-welfare-services/child-protective-services/about-child-abuse-and-child-neglect>

Appendix IX

Covenant of Participation by Known Sex Offenders

Jefferson United Methodist Church, hereafter referred to as the church, affirms the dignity and worth of all people. We are committed to being a religious community, open to those who wish to worship with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your background and personal history, we need to covenant together about your contact with children, youth, and other vulnerable people in our congregation. Although we welcome you to our congregation and our membership, your participation in events involving the children/youth of the church and those considered vulnerable adults will be limited to ensure the safety of these people and to reduce risks to you. The following guidelines have been established to that end.

The congregation welcomes your participation in church activities and affirms that you must act within the guidelines set forth herein when attempting to serve in any role that includes children, youth, or other vulnerable populations:

1. You shall comply fully with all restrictions and requirements placed upon you as a result of any legal actions—past, present, and future.
2. You shall not be alone at any time with any child, youth, or vulnerable adult.
3. You shall participate in professional counseling throughout the duration of your involvement with the church.
4. You shall be a member of an accountability group, made up of at least two members of the JUMC congregation (one of which shall be the same biological sex as you), the senior pastor of the church (or another church leader designated to act as a representative of the senior pastor), and you. This group will be assigned to you for the entirety of your involvement with the church.
 - a. The accountability group will establish a schedule for partnering with you whenever you are planning to be on church property or participate in a church-sponsored event. This schedule will be kept on record with the Safe Sanctuaries Oversight Team and will be posted in the church office.
 - b. One member of your accountability group will be with you at all times when you are on church property or at a church-sponsored event. The accountability group member who is scheduled to partner with you will remain beside you, in close proximity to you, at all times, when you are on church property or participating in a church-sponsored event.
 - c. The accountability group will meet together with you, at least once a month, to offer support, discuss issues you may be having, and to pray with you. If the need to meet more frequently occurs, the frequency will be determined by the accountability group in response to your needs.
 - d. The accountability group will report quarterly to the Safe Sanctuaries Oversight Team, your probation/parole officer, and your professional counselor.
 - e. You shall take the most direct, visible route to your destination with your accountability partner.
 - f. If restroom facilities are needed while on church grounds, use the restroom near the church office. One member of your accountability group will check the restroom facility before you enter to ensure it is vacant. You will be permitted to enter, and the accountability team member will ensure no one else enters while you occupy the restroom. The team member will then accompany you back to your seat or off church property.
5. At no time, even with a member of your accountability group, are you to be in the nursery, children and youth Sunday school classrooms, playground, or anywhere an event for children and youth is being held (for example, the fellowship hall or sanctuary during Vacation Bible School).
6. You are welcome to attend, accompanied by a member of your accountability group, any public worship service; Adult Bible Study; United Methodist Men or United Methodist Women; adult Sunday school classes; and any other public worship service not designated for children, youth, or other vulnerable people. You may also attend those worship services not predominately led and directed by children or youth, as approved by your accountability group.

7. Any church-sponsored activity held off-site from the church campus shall be approved by the SafeSanctuaries Oversight Team prior to participation.
8. Upon arrival at church, you shall report to the church office where you will sign in and wait for a member of your accountability group to escort you to your destination. Once your worship experience or your business is complete, you shall return to the church office to sign out before leaving the church property. The accountability group member escorting you will initial both signing in and out. If the church office is locked and no member of your accountability group is available to meet with you, you are to immediately leave the church property.
9. At no time shall you hold a position of authority with the church or serve as a representative of the church for groups that include ministry with vulnerable populations.
10. At no time will your name be allowed to appear in the church newsletter, the weekly bulletin, or in any item of print associated with the church, excluding the weekly prayer concern list and the church directory.
11. As part of our church family and in an attempt to provide the safest environment possible, you shall inform your accountability group and the Safe Sanctuaries Oversight Team if you become aware of other sex offender(s) who are attending our church.
12. Terms of this covenant will be reviewed with your probation/parole officer, sex offender treatment provider, and any other person involved in your aftercare or treatment prior to your involvement with the church.
13. The covenant must be signed by a representative of your accountability group, your probation/ parole officer, sex offender treatment provider, and any other person involved in your after-care or treatment prior to your involvement with the church.
14. This covenant will remain on file with the church and will be readily available to members of the church. It will be shared with all people involved directly with children, youth, and other vulnerable people working with the church.

By signing this covenant, I agree that if at any time, any item of this covenant is suspected of being broken, I will meet with the Safe Sanctuaries Oversight Team.

- I agree that all findings of the Safe Sanctuaries Oversight Team are final.
- I agree that if the Safe Sanctuaries Oversight Team finds that any item of this covenant at any time was broken, I will immediately discontinue attendance at all church functions.
- I understand and agree that all church members will be made aware of the violation.
- I agree that all violations will be shared with my accountability group, my probation/parole officer, sex offender treatment provider, and any other person involved in my aftercare or treatment.

Any violation that occurs that is illegal in nature will be reported immediately to the appropriate authorities.

_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Accountability Group Rep. Signature	_____ Date
_____ Senior Pastor Signature	_____ Date
_____ Probation/Parole Officers Signature	_____ Date
_____ Professional Counselor Signature	_____ Date

Appendix X

Emergency Contact Information

Pastor	Kristy Burnette	828-246-4954	kburnette@wnccumc.net
Leadership Board Chair	Leigh Bradley	336-977-2779	leighbradley14@gmail.com
Sheriff's Department		336-846-5633	
Ashe County Dept. of Social Service	Main Phone	336-846-5719	
	Child Protective Services & Adult Protective Services, after hours/holidays/weekends	336-846-5600	ask to speak with on-call social worker
Child Abuse Hotline		800-422-4453	

Safe Sanctuaries Oversight Team 2025

Pastor	Kristy Burnette	828-246-4954	kburnette@wnccumc.net
Trustee Chair	Greg Johnson	336-877-0808	gregwj91@gmail.com
Children/Youth Leader	Rebecca Rash	828-773-8547	uncg.bound@gmail.com

Oversight Follow-up:

- Conduct a “Family Focus” overview of the new JUMC Safe Sanctuaries policy for parents, guardians, and potential volunteers. This would not be considered a training session.
- Put the Safe Sanctuaries Oversight Team on the annual Leadership document that comes from the Nominations Committee.
- The signed agreement for outsiders to use our facilities should have a phrase on it that the parties using the facilities will adhere to our policies and procedures.