

Bath United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuary Procedures

On May 14th, 2007, the Bath United Methodist Church Council approved our Safe Sanctuary Procedures. These procedures are intended to provide a safe, secure environment for ministry to all God's people, especially children and youth. A copy of the procedures is listed below.

Introduction

When the disciples tried to keep the children away from Jesus, he was quick to respond, "Let the children come to me." Jesus taught that children were to be included and provided for within the community of faith. Today, the church may be the only place where some children find the unconditional love they so desperately need to grow and thrive. As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our children very seriously. We fail in our responsibilities if we neglect to take adequate precautions against abuse in our churches. It is unlikely that we can completely prevent child abuse in every situation, but it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk by following a thorough and practical policy of prevention. This policy is designed to set procedures for the safety of the children and youth of Bath United Methodist Church.

Statement of Covenant

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers, and we will be responsible in overseeing programs and events and in the training of our staff, so that they are able and equipped to minister to children in Jesus' name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience, and we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and perpetrator.

Safe Sanctuary Procedures

Requirements for Staff and Volunteers:

- All paid staff and volunteers will be interviewed and written permission will be received for a background check prior to that person assuming the position of a volunteer or paid staff member of Bath United Methodist Church.
- Volunteers working with children (birth to 18 years) must attend BUMC for 6 months before they are eligible to begin a direct contact care provider position. Individuals may begin the application, background check process, and any required training prior to the end of the 6 month grace period.

- Volunteers will be required to become familiar with safe sanctuary training and it is recommended that they attend CPR and First Aid Training.
- Whenever reasonable, the “Two Adult Rule” will be the standard of child and youth care. The “Two Adult Rule” requires that no fewer than two adults will be present for the care of children and/or youth. This may be the presence of an adult “roamer” who moves in and out of rooms. At least one of these adults should have some training in sanctuary policies and procedures. Emergency situations may arise when the “Two Adult Rule” is not feasible. However, at no time will an adult be with a child or youth in an isolated or closed situation. In emergency situations, childcare will be relocated to a room near a meeting area and the doors will be left open.
- No person in charge of children’s activities shall supervise a group unless he/she is at least 5 years older than the children and/or youth with whom he/she is working.
- No one shall serve the congregation who, in the belief of the leader, sponsoring agency, or event director may represent a potential threat of committing abuse or violating the Safe Sanctuary Policy.
- No one shall serve if he/she is known to have been previously convicted of, or pleaded guilty no contest to, any crime arising out of any act or conduct involving sexual abuse or any act or guilty conduct which is of a sexual, molesting, seductive, or criminally deviant nature, whether or not such conduct involved a child. This includes, but is not limited to, crimes involving pedophilic behavior, incest, rape, assaults involving adults, murder, kidnapping, pornography, and the physical abuse of an adult with special needs.
- No one shall work or serve as a care provider to children and/or youth, who has had a verdict or judgment rendered against him/her in any civil action arising out of any personal act or conduct related to sexual abuse of an adult or child. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago the civil verdict occurred and judgment was rendered.
- First Aid kits will be available (in the church, fellowship hall, traveling vehicles, etc.) and a plan implemented to keep them stocked.
- Outside groups will not be screened by BUMC and will be asked to sign a user agreement. Outside groups are responsible for ensuring compliance with the Safe Sanctuary Policy while using our facility.

Responsibility for Screening Process:

- The Pastor and/or a representative from the SPRC will be responsible for all screening procedures.

Screening Process:

- The persons noted above will be responsible for receiving, reviewing, confirming, and processing employment or volunteer applications.
- References will be requested on all applicable groups noted above and it will be left to the discretion of the screeners (noted above) to follow up on specific references listed.
- The interview questions may vary depending on the interviewee and the recipient's responsibilities within the church. The results of the interview, especially when sensitive areas have been discussed, should be kept confidential and only discussed with those persons needing this information in order to make a decision as to whether the applicant should be accepted as a volunteer.
- A background check for arrest and convictions will be made for all applicable people, performed by the SPRC. The application form and background check process will be the responsibility of the SPRC.
- The maintenance of application, background, and other forms shall be maintained and secured by the Pastor. The documents shall reside in a locked file or cabinet in the Pastor's office.

Reporting:

- If any incident of abuse is alleged, it shall be reported immediately to the Pastor and SPRC Chairperson. The Pastor and SPRC Chairperson shall be responsible for reporting the alleged incident to the District Superintendent and the Sexual Misconduct Response Team.
- The Pastor and SPRC Chairperson shall notify the appropriate state and local authorities. This may include, but is not limited to, the Maine Child and Family Services Child Abuse Reporting Line (1-800-452-1999) which is staffed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and the Bath Police Department at 443-5563.
- If the abuse happened on church property, by church volunteers or staff, the person(s) shall immediately be removed from contact with children until the incident report has been resolved. This should be handled in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is in process, and persons who are under investigation will be required to refrain from all children and/or youth activities until the investigation has been completed and an administrative decision has been reached concerning the allegation.
- This policy prohibits retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports allegations of child abuse, sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, or assists in

investigating charges. Appropriate administrative action will be taken against anyone found to have participated in retaliatory actions, which may include, but is not limited to, termination as a volunteer or employee.

Responding:

- A quick, compassionate, and unified response by the Pastor and SPRC Chairperson to an alleged incident of child abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously.
- The Pastor, or his/her designee, is the only person/s authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Pastor.
- In the case of an allegation made against the Pastor, the District Superintendent will become the authorized spokesperson to the media.
- Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident.