

# Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church

## Safe Ministry with Children and Youth Policy

### **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. Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse at Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church.

### **Purpose:**

Hawthorne Lane United Methodist church's purpose for establishing the Safe Ministry with Children and Youth Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

### **Statement of Covenant and Policy:**

As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church pledges to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of the workers with children and youth. Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church will follow reasonable procedures in all programs and events; will educate all of those who work with children and youth regarding the use of all appropriate policy, procedures and methods; Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law and will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident should occur. It is the policy of Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church to provide all children and youth a safe and secure atmosphere to encourage the spiritual growth of children, youth, and those adults who are called to work with children and youth.

### **SAFE MINISTRY WITH YOUTH AND CHILDREN PROCEDURES**

In furtherance of the 'Safe Ministry with Youth and Children Policy', Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church adopts the procedures detailed below. These procedures are intended to provide a safe environment for youth and children and to protect adults from unfounded allegations of misconduct. "Youth" or "child" shall be deemed synonymous and shall be defined as any person less than eighteen (18) years of age for purposes of these procedures. "Adult" shall be defined as any person at least eighteen (18) years of age for purposes of these procedures.

#### *Procedures to Protect Children, Youth and Adults during Church Activities*

- The "Two-Adult" Rule: at least two adults shall be present at all times during any church sponsored program, event or ministry involving children or youth one of which may be a designated floater and it is preferred that they be unrelated by blood or marriage. Sunday school classes, nursery activities, Bible study groups, youth and children's fellowship and all other youth and children's activities shall follow this procedure. A floater, which may be an usher, is a designated adult whose responsibility it is to drop by at unannounced intervals to check on any group which includes children or youth.
- The "Six Years Older" Rule: All adults who supervise activities for youth and children shall be at least six years older than the oldest child or youth. This procedure does NOT prohibit adults who are less than six years older than the youth or children in an activity from participating as "counselors" or "helpers" for the

activity. This rule DOES require that the two-adult rule be met by persons at least six years older than the children or youth in any activity. Infants under the age of 1 year may only be cared for by adults.

- All youth and children's activities shall be supervised by adults who are present for all aspects of the activity. A child or youth shall not be placed as a supervisor of any activity.
- Windows shall be placed in the doors of all rooms where youth or children's activities are routinely held or are likely to be held. Windows shall be at least ten inches by ten inches and shall be installed as soon as it is financially practical to do so. If a youth or children's activity is held in any room not having a window in the door, then the door to the room shall remain fully open during all aspects of the activity. A window shall be placed in the door of the Pastor's Study and any other room where pastoral counseling or consultation are common. It is recognized that there may be times when the Senior Pastor, Associate Pastor or other pastor serving Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church will find it necessary to protect the identity of the person or people being counseled. With this understanding in mind, it is acceptable under this procedure for a Pastor to cover the window of the study or other room used for counseling by the Pastor if the person being counseled requests the Pastor to do so. It is, however, the preferred practice that a Pastor not obstruct the window of a room utilized for counseling.
- Overnight trips: All overnight trips are subject to the same rules as the in house safe sanctuary policies. All details of transportation and sleeping arrangements must be shared with parents prior to leaving church campus. Sleeping arrangements: One adult may be in the room (or a nearby room) with youth of the same gender but not with one youth alone. In traveling to and from church events, the church bus will be used primarily but if carpooling is needed, prior permission will be sought from parents. No youth shall drive another youth to church sponsored youth away trips without written permission of all parents involved.
- Open doors shall be utilized for non-pastoral counseling of youth and children. It is preferred that such sessions take place where other people are nearby even though not within hearing distance. Pastoral counseling is expected to be confidential in nature so it is anticipated that such counseling will take place behind closed doors. It is preferred that a pastor insure that pastoral counseling take place where and when other people are nearby.
- Parents shall always be given advance notice and information regarding any activity in which their child will be participating. Parents will be required to give permission for their child before the child's participation in any activity. Permission shall NOT be required for a child's participation in ordinary Sunday School classes. Permission shall be required for any Sunday school activity that deviates from the traditional classroom instruction and permission shall be required for all other youth and children's activities. Parents may give a single "blanket" permission for standard activities or programs such as Vacation Bible School and fellowship activities so long as the permission statement lists the anticipated activities of the program. This permission statement must be renewed annually at the beginning of the school year.

#### *Procedures for Training Staff and Adult Volunteers*

- All paid staff working directly with children and youth at Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church, and the volunteer coordinator positions of Nursery, Children's, and Youth, shall obtain and maintain First Aid/CPR certification/registration as a condition of their employment/volunteer assignment. Certification shall be from the American Red Cross or similar organization. Volunteers who routinely work with youth and children are strongly encouraged to obtain and maintain First Aid/CPR certification. There shall be at least one (1) CPR certified adult in attendance of off-campus events with either the Children and/or Youth.

- All staff and all volunteers who work with youth and/or children shall receive annual training on the Safe ministry with Children and Youth Policy and Procedures. All adult volunteers shall be required to complete a course of training on this policy and these procedures prior to supervising or assisting with any youth or children's activity. The Safe Sanctuary oversight committee<sup>1</sup> shall insure that annual training requirements are met.
- All staff and adult volunteers shall sign a pledge to follow this policy and these procedures prior to being permitted to participate in activities with children or youth.
- The Safe Sanctuary Oversight Committee shall insure that an educational program is offered annually to families who desire to review this policy and these procedures or who have suggestions for the policy or procedures.
- In the event of an incident requiring the administering of First Aid or CPR an incident report shall be filed. Copies should be made for a Pastor and the area ministry coordinator to be kept on file in a secured location.

#### *Procedures for Responding to Allegations of Abuse*

- Any person who receives a complaint alleging that a child or youth has been subjected to physical, sexual or other abuse by a Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church staff member or volunteer shall immediately communicate the complaint to the pastor unless that pastor is named as the offender in the complaint. If a pastor is named as the offender, then the complaint shall be immediately communicated to the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee. The complaint shall be communicated to the District Superintendent as soon as is practical. The Pastor or Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee shall communicate the complaint to the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services as required by the North Carolina General Statutes.
- If any complaint comes to the attention of the media, the Senior Pastor, or if the Senior Pastor designates, the Associate Pastor, will make releases of information to the media. In the case of a complaint about the Senior Pastor, the District Superintendent or the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee will make releases of information to the media.
- After any complaint is received, the Pastor or Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee shall communicate the complaint to the insurance carrier providing liability insurance for Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church as soon as is practical.
- Any person named as an alleged offender in a complaint shall immediately be required to cease any contact with children or youth through Hawthorne Lane United Methodist Church activities. The alleged offender may resume activities with youth and children at such time as the District Superintendent, the Pastor and Staff Parish Relations Committee shall deem it appropriate.

#### *Policy for Background Checks for Staff and Volunteers*

- All staff and volunteers shall submit to criminal record checks as permitted by the North Carolina General Statutes. A staff member assigned to Safe Sanctuary Policy shall insure that criminal record checks have been obtained on all current volunteers. The staff member shall insure that this task is completed with ninety (90) days of these procedures being adopted. The staff member shall insure that a criminal records

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<sup>1</sup> The Safe Sanctuary Oversight Committee is comprised of a Pastor, a representative from Staff Parish Relations Committee and Trustees, Director of Age Level Ministry, Coordinator of Youth Ministry, Nursery Coordinator, Children's Area Coordinator, Adult Representative from Youth and Children Sunday School.

check is obtained on all prospective staff and volunteers prior to the person being approved for any staff position or for a volunteer position that will engage in youth or children's activities.

- Background checks will be completed again every 5 years if a person remains in active children's ministry service.
- All prospective staff who will be engaged in youth or children's activities shall provide references to the Staff Parish Relations Committee. The Staff Parish Relations Committee shall be responsible for checking the reference and reporting the results to the Pastor.
- All volunteers will be a member of HLUMC for 6 months before accepting a position working with children or youth. Upon request from a new member and upon subsequent approval of the Safe Sanctuary Committee, the six month waiting period can be waived if the new member has been an active visitor for at least 6 months.
- All staff and volunteers who work with children and/or youth shall complete an annual review and training on these procedures. Staff and volunteers shall also complete any other training deemed to be appropriate to the staff member and the Staff Parish Relations Committee.

#### *Procedure for Background Checks*

- Ask the person to fill out a background check form and return it in a sealed envelope directly to the staff member over children's ministry or to a member of the Safe Sanctuary Oversight Committee.
- The Membership Coordinator emails/faxes information to the company doing the background checks and then reports to the staff member over children's ministry.
- When the background check is received by the staff member over children's ministry, it is printed and then deleted from that staff member's computer.
- If no "red flags"<sup>2</sup> exist, the staff member over children's ministry will file the form and background check in the Safe Sanctuary locked file cabinet.
- If a red flag exists, the staff member over children's ministry will counsel with the person and make a decision about how they can serve.
- In the unlikely event of a disagreement regarding eligibility to volunteer, the staff member or the potential volunteer has the right to call a special meeting of the Safe Sanctuary Oversight Committee to have the case reviewed.

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<sup>2</sup> Examples of "red flags" are as follows, history of pedophilia or other "predator" behavior, history of domestic abuse, DUI or DWI, felony, drug related arrest or conviction.

## Hawthorne Lane Church Photo Release

*Please read and complete:*

While your child is participating in activities at Hawthorne Lane, the staff/volunteers may use digital and/ or film cameras to take photographs of your child. Such photographs are intended to illustrate the enriching environment of Hawthorne Lane ministries and to preserve memories of the time your child spends here. From time-to-time, Hawthorne Lane may desire to use such photographs for one or more of the following purposes: (1) publication in marketing materials relating to Hawthorne Lane (which publication may include use of electronic images on the website); (2) general use in Hawthorne Lane, including use on bulletin boards in the classroom and hallways and use in art projects; and (3) special projects relating to Hawthorne Lane , including special projects and slide shows to promote and celebrate the Church. Please note that to the extent photographs are published in marketing materials, identifying information relating to your child will be excluded. Your child will be identified by first name only.

Yes       No      Hawthorne Lane has permission to use photographs of my child and use their first name only

Yes       No      In lieu of a photo, a likeness can be published with their first name.

These permissions shall remain in effect until such time as I have rescinded them.

Child's Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or Legal Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Participation Covenant for Children & Youth Workers

The congregation of Hawthorne Lane Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all youth and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. In accordance with the Safe Sanctuary Policy, the following statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving the church as a holy place of safety and protections for all who enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual, physical, or emotional) should volunteer to work with children or youth in any church sponsored activity.
2. All adult volunteers involved with children or youth must either be members of HLUMC or have been active in the congregational activities and worship for at least six months prior to accepting an assignment.
3. Adult volunteers shall abide by the "Two Adult Rule" as specified within the Safe Sanctuary policy.
4. Adult volunteers shall agree to attend annual Safe Sanctuary training and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children or youth.
5. Adult volunteers shall utilize the Accident Report Form to report accidents or notify the ministry leader regarding incidents of behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

I have read this **Participation Covenant**, and agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above. I also agree to a background check per Safe Sanctuary Policy.

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Signature of Applicant

Date

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Signature of Ministry Leader

Date