

## Belmont United Methodist Church

### Safe Sanctuary Policy

#### Purpose

To do our best within our means to protect children, youth and vulnerable adults participating in the programs and activities of Belmont United Methodist Church (BUMC) and to protect those who lead them.

#### Definitions

The following words, when used in this policy and related procedures, have the meanings below:

1. "Abuse" includes any of the following actions taken against a child, youth or vulnerable adult:
  - Physical abuse: Any violent non-accidental contact which may or does result in injury. Examples of contact include striking, biting or shaking and of injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts and burns.
  - Emotional abuse: A pattern of conduct that undermines or attacks the self-worth of a child, youth or vulnerable adult through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, belittling or similar actions.
  - Neglect: Any conduct that endangers the health, safety or welfare of a child, youth or vulnerable adult through negligence.
  - Sexual abuse: Any form of sexual activity between a child, youth or vulnerable adult and an adult or another older and more powerful child or youth. Sexual abuse also includes, but is not limited to, exploitation or exposure of a child, youth or vulnerable adult to pornography.
2. "Adult" means anyone age 18 or older.
3. "Child" or "youth" or "children" or "youth" means anyone in Grade 12 or lower participating in BUMC programs or activities on or off BUMC property.
4. "Parent" or "Guardian" means a person who is legally responsible for the regular care and custody of a child or youth.
5. "Policy" means this document and related procedures as they may be modified from time to time by the BUMC Board of Trustees.
6. "Vulnerable Adult" means an adult participating in BUMC programs or activities on or off BUMC property who is mentally disabled or regularly requires the assistance of others in carrying out daily life activities.
7. "Paid staff and volunteers" mean BUMC employees, paid workers and unpaid workers (volunteers) with regular involvement in BUMC activities or programs for children, youth or vulnerable adults on or off BUMC property.

#### Selection and Screening of Paid Staff and Volunteers

1. **Age**-Paid staff and volunteers will be at least 18 years old and, when working with children and youth, will be at least 5 years older than the age of the children and youth with whom they are working. Anyone not meeting these requirements may assist paid staff and volunteers but will not be left alone with children, youth or vulnerable adults.
2. **Six Month Hospitality Rule for Volunteers**-Volunteers for BUMC programs or activities for youth, children or vulnerable adults will have the opportunity to become acquainted with BUMC's missions and ministries by regularly participating in the BUMC congregation for at least 6 months before applying to be a volunteer.
3. **Application, Reference and Background Checks** – Paid staff and volunteers will complete an application, statement of commitment to this policy, and consent to reference and background checks. Reference and background checks will be conducted on all paid staff and volunteers with re-screening occurring at least every 5 years.

### **Basic Procedures for Programs or Activities for Children and Youth**

1. **Parent or Guardian's Responsibility**-
  - Parents or Guardians are responsible for the safety of their children and youth at all times other than when the children and youth are participating in a BUMC sponsored program or activity for children and youth.
  - Parents or Guardians will complete forms required by BUMC for the participation of their children and youth in BUMC programs or activities.
2. **Two Adult Rule**-At least two adult paid staff or volunteers who are not related to each other will be present at BUMC activities or programs for children and youth. One of these adults may be a "roamer" who moves between activities in a monitoring role.
3. **Clear Visibility Rule**-When BUMC activities or programs for children or youth are conducted indoors, the room door will be kept open or, if closed, a window in the door will provide clear visibility into the room.
4. **One on One Meetings with Children or Youth**
  - BUMC Employees/Paid Staff: One on one meetings between a BUMC employee or paid staff and a child or youth that are an appropriate part of that adult's ministry to the child or youth may occur as long as they take place in a room with an open door or a window in the door that provides clear visibility into the room.
  - Volunteers: There should not be any one on one meetings between a volunteer and a child or youth except when those meetings are (i) a publicized part of the BUMC sponsored program or activity, such as with Prayer or Faith Friends, in which the child or youth participates and (ii) the Parent or Guardian approves the child or youth's participation, the volunteer selected to work with the child or youth in the program or activity and any one-on-one meetings between the volunteer and the child or youth.
5. **Advance Notice to Parents and Guardians and Written Permission**-Prior to children or youth participating in BUMC activities or programs involving sports, sleepovers ,travel to locations outside of the immediate vicinity of BUMC property or similar non-routine

activities, their Parents or Guardians will be given advance notice of those activities and their written permission will be obtained.

### **Outside Groups**

Groups that are not sponsored by BUMC will be required to agree to and accept responsibility for their group abiding by this policy while on BUMC property. BUMC will not be responsible for enforcing their compliance with this policy.

### **Training**

Training relating to this policy will be provided to paid staff and volunteers at least on an annual basis.

### **Reporting Incidents of Abuse or Suspected Abuse of a Child, Youth or Vulnerable Adult**

Belmont United Methodist Church will take all reports of abuse or suspected abuse of a child, youth or vulnerable adult seriously. Under Tennessee law, any person who knows of or reasonably suspects that abuse has occurred is required by law to report it to appropriate authorities, which include the Department of Children Services for children under age 18 (1-877-237-0004) and the Department of Human Services, Adult Protective Services Division for adults age 18 or older (1-888-277-8366).

If any recipient of this policy, including paid staff or volunteers, receives a complaint of or knows or suspects that abuse has occurred in a BUMC program or activity, that person should report the situation to the BUMC staff member responsible for that program or activity or the Senior Pastor immediately. If the appropriate agency has not yet been contacted, the BUMC staff member or the Senior Pastor who has been notified will immediately contact the appropriate agency and, if available, will include the reporting person on that call. If paid staff or a volunteer is engaged in the abuse or suspected to be engaged in the abuse, that person will be immediately removed from contact with children, youth and vulnerable adults in BUMC activities or programs until the reported incident has been resolved.

### **BUMC's WeekDay School and Homeplace**

If laws or regulations that apply to BUMC's Weekday School or Homeplace impose higher standards or requirements than this policy, then BUMC's Weekday School and Homeplace will meet those higher standard or requirements.

### **Interpretation of this Policy**

The BUMC Board of Trustees is responsible for the interpretation of this policy.