
Damascus United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures

Final

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**9700 New Church Street
Damascus, MD 20872**

Table of Contents

I.	Introduction and Background	4
A.	Resolution.....	4
B.	Requirements for Local Churches	4
II.	Purpose and Statement of Covenant.....	6
A.	Purpose	6
B.	Statement of Covenant	6
III.	Safe Sanctuary Policy.....	7
IV.	Procedures for Adults Working with Children or Youth.....	8
A.	Questionnaire and Covenant Statement.....	8
B.	Abuse Survivors.....	8
C.	Employment with Damascus United Methodist Church	8
D.	Safe Sanctuary Basic Procedures	8
1.	Supervising Workers.....	8
2.	Occasional Workers	9
3.	Visitors.....	9
4.	Required Forms for the Participation of Children and Youth.....	9
5.	Dismissal	9
6.	Advance Notice and Full Information	9
7.	Age Appropriate and Safe Equipment and Materials.....	9
8.	Safe Sanctuary Orientations.....	10
9.	Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect	10
10.	Two-Adult Goal	10
11.	Overnight Activities.....	10
12.	Discipline	11
13.	Window/Open Door Policy	11
14.	Diaper Changing Policy and Child/Youth Departures from Rooms	11
15.	Substitute Workers.....	11
16.	Attendance.....	11
17.	Emergencies	11

18. First Aid/CPR Training	12
V. Procedures for Youth Working with Children	13
A. Covenant Statement	13
B. Safe Sanctuary Basic Procedures	13
1. Attending Orientations	13
2. Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect	14
VI. Education on Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures	15
A. Annual Orientations	15
B. Points To Be Made at Church Orientations	15
C. List of Orientations To Be Conducted	16
VII. Physical Facilities and Insurance	17
A. Annual Facilities Evaluation	17
B. Evaluate Safety Aspects of New Building's Plans	17
C. Liability Insurance	17
VIII. Procedures for Allegations of Child Abuse and Suspicions of Neglect	18
A. Procedures for Allegations of Child Abuse	18
B. Procedure for Suspicion of Neglect	21
C. Reporting Incidents of Suspected Neglect or Child Abuse	22
IX. Required Forms	25
Questionnaire	26
COVENANT STATEMENT	28
X. Discipline Policies	30
A. Discipline Policy for Children	30
B. Discipline Policy for Youth	30
C. Conflict Resolution Process	31
Appendix A.....	32
Glossary	38

I. Introduction and Background

A. Resolution

In 1996 and again in 2004, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted resolutions aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The resolution includes the following:

“Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes [a] child . . . welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

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

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse occur in churches, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church, and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

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

B. Requirements for Local Churches

In response to this challenge, the General Conference of The United Methodist Church requires each local church to develop its own Safe Sanctuary Policy in accordance with the following recommendations:

1. Develop and implement an ongoing education plan for the congregation and its leaders on the reality of child abuse, risk factors leading to child abuse, and strategies for prevention;
2. Adopt screening procedures (use of application forms, interviews, reference checks, background clearance, and so forth) for workers (paid and unpaid) directly or indirectly involved in the care of children and youth;
3. Develop and implement safety procedures for church activities such as having two or more non-related adults present in classroom or activity; leaving doors open and installing half-doors or windows in doors or halls; providing hall monitors; instituting sign-in and sign-out procedures for children age ten or younger; and so forth;
4. Advise children and young persons of an agency or a person outside as well as within the local church whom they can contact for advice and help if they have suffered abuse;
5. Carry liability insurance that includes sexual abuse coverage;
6. Assist the development of awareness and self-protection skills for children and youth through special curriculum and activities; and
7. Be familiar with annual conference and other church policies regarding clergy sexual misconduct.

(The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church—2004. Copyright © 2004 by The United Methodist Publishing House. [Paragraph 65])

II. Purpose and Statement of Covenant

A. Purpose

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we, the Damascus United Methodist Church, adopt this Policy Regarding Safety of Children and Youth in our church.

This Safe Sanctuary policy demonstrates our absolute and unwavering commitment to the safety and spiritual growth of our children and youth. This commitment is reflected in our denomination's statement of purpose which says the purpose of the church is to make disciples of Christ.

B. Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we, the Damascus United Methodist Church, pledge to:

1. Conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth participating in church-sponsored activities, as well as the safety and growth of the paid staff and volunteers who work with them;
2. Follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of all paid and volunteer workers;
3. Implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events;
4. Ensure the church's physical facility is as safe as possible for children and youth;
5. Instruct all of our paid and volunteer workers regarding child neglect, child abuse and the use of appropriate procedures to protect against child abuse;
6. Provide a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected or confirmed incident of child abuse or neglect that conforms to the requirements of Maryland state law; and
7. Be prepared to respond to media inquiries, if an incident occurs.

III. Safe Sanctuary Policy

The Damascus United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy includes:

1. The screening of all persons who work with children or youth,
2. Maintaining appropriate liability insurance for the church,
3. Evaluating and maintaining our physical facilities to keep them as safe as possible, and
4. Instructing all persons who work with children or youth, as well as informing parents and the congregation on our policy and procedures.

This policy requires all church groups that sponsors activities for children or youth to follow the procedures contained herein.

Also, all outside groups that use our church on an on-going basis must follow the procedures contained herein or provide documentation of their own safety procedures that are deemed to be equivalent by the Pastor Parish Relations Committee.

All persons who work with children or youth must sign a Covenant Statement agreeing to follow the policy and procedures contained herein.

IV. Procedures for Adults Working with Children or Youth

A. Questionnaire and Covenant Statement

Adults working with children or youth, either as paid staff or volunteers, must complete and sign an annual Questionnaire (contained in Chapter IX Required Forms) and provide references to the Pastor Parish Relations Committee. References may be checked via telephone, or sent by mail using the forms provided in Chapter IX Required Forms. The Pastor Parish Relations Committee will safeguard the Questionnaires and reference forms, and maintain the confidentiality of the information contained therein.

Adults working with children or youth, either as paid staff or volunteers, must sign the Covenant Statement (contained in Chapter IX Required Forms) that indicates the adult agrees to observe and abide by the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures contained herein.

B. Abuse Survivors

Any adult who is an abuse survivor and is interested in working with children or youth is encouraged to discuss his/her abuse experience with a pastor prior to accepting an assignment. Survivors of abuse need the love and support of our congregation.

C. Employment with Damascus United Methodist Church

The Pastor Parish Relations Committee will handle all employment applications, reference checks, and background checks on all persons to be employed by Damascus United Methodist Church. The Pastor Parish Relations Committee will safeguard the applications, reference forms, and background checks, as well as the confidentiality of the information that emanates from them. Background checks are required for all prospective and current paid employees of Damascus United Methodist Church.

D. Safe Sanctuary Basic Procedures

1. Supervising Workers

A person may be designated a Supervising Worker only if he or she (1) has signed the Questionnaire, (2) has signed the Covenant Statement, (3) either has been a professing member of Damascus UMC for 6 months or is known to the church community by other church members as a caring and nurturing person, and (4) has attended a Safe Sanctuary Orientation. At all Church Group activities, at least one (preferably two) qualified adult(s) should be designated as Supervising Workers. (See Two-Adult Goal paragraphs below.)

2. Occasional Workers

The church should use its best efforts to have all Occasional Workers complete and sign the Questionnaire and the Covenant Statement. At least one Supervising Worker must be present when an Occasional Worker is present with the children or youth.

3. Visitors

An adult who is simply visiting a Church School activity as a guest speaker, observer, or one-time helper need not complete and sign a Questionnaire. However, one or more Supervising Workers must be present while the visitor is there.

4. Required Forms for the Participation of Children and Youth

Each Church Group will require a parent or guardian of a child or youth to complete any forms needed for the participation of that child or youth in that Church Group's activities, such as a Sunday School registration form, a Vacation Bible School registration form, permission slips, consents and releases. Permission forms are mandated for any activity that takes place away from the church property, or involves an overnight where the parent or guardian is not present.

If the person in charge of a particular Church Group activity has not received the required forms with respect to any child or youth, that child or youth will not be allowed to participate in that Church Group activity.

5. Dismissal

Each Church Group will establish and publish dismissal procedures. A child in 3rd grade or younger may only be dismissed to a person who has been authorized in writing to pick up that child.

6. Advance Notice and Full Information

Each Church Group will give written advance notice and full information to all parents with respect to any event in which children or youth are participating. In this way, a parent or guardian will have the option not to allow his or her child or youth to participate if the parent or guardian feels uncomfortable.

7. Age Appropriate and Safe Equipment and Materials

Each Church Group will use their best efforts to ensure all equipment used is age-appropriate and safe. The Church Group will instruct its Workers to immediately report to the Supervising Worker or Director of Education any unsafe equipment or conditions.

8. Safe Sanctuary Orientations

On an annual basis, the church will conduct orientations for all persons working with children or youth, including Supervising Workers, Occasional Workers, youth aides, and the parents and guardians of children or youth participating in church-sponsored activities. At a minimum, the orientations will include instruction in:

1. Appropriate interactions with children;
2. Permissible methods of discipline;
3. Realities of child abuse and neglect;
4. Possible indicators of child abuse and neglect;
5. Basic Procedures Regarding Safety of Children and Youth;
6. All other applicable procedures.

9. Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect

When a Worker becomes aware of an allegation of child abuse, or reasonably suspects child neglect, that Worker should report the allegation or suspicion immediately to the Supervising Worker, the Director of Education, or a pastor.

10. Two-Adult Goal

Each Church Group should have at least two unrelated adult Workers present during any child or youth activity (the "two-adult goal"). The 2-adult goal is mandatory for any activities with child/youth participation held away from the church facility. An adult Worker should be at least three years older than the oldest child or youth participating in the activity (the "three-years-older rule"). Youth aides (ages 10 to 17) should not be used to meet the two-adult goal. In addition, a Worker who is under 21 and working with high school youth should not be considered an adult Worker for purposes of the two-adult goal.

11. Overnight Activities

Notwithstanding the two-adult goal, at least three adult Workers must be present for overnight activities (regardless of whether the overnight activity is held at or away from the church facility). At least one adult Worker of each gender will be present for the entire duration of the activity. Wherever possible and safe, adult Workers should sleep in a space that is separate and apart from the space where the youth sleep. Although overnight activities may be in one room at the church facility, each youth participant should have his or her own sleeping bag and the adult Workers should sleep in a space that is as far apart from where the youth are sleeping as is possible and safe.

Youth aides will not be used to reach the three-adult Worker requirement for overnight activities.

12. Discipline

Each Church Group will adhere to the appropriate Damascus United Methodist Church Discipline Policy for children or youth. The discipline policies will be presented at the annual orientations. Copies of the discipline policies are contained in chapter X.

13. Window/Open Door Policy

Every room used for children or youth activities should have at least one window. Pastoral or other counseling of children or youth will not occur behind an entirely closed door.

14. Diaper Changing Policy and Child/Youth Departures from Rooms

Any Worker changing a child's diaper will ensure that there is at least one other adult present. If for any reason, including going to the restroom, a child or youth leaves the room where a Church Group activity is being held, the Supervising Worker should monitor that child or youth to the maximum extent possible. The Supervising Worker will use his or her best judgment in deciding how closely that child should be monitored.

15. Substitute Workers

Each Church Group will create a list of approved substitute Workers for its activities. When a Supervising Worker is unable to participate in a scheduled activity, he or she should arrange for someone on the approved list to substitute. If unable to find a substitute, he or she should call the Director of Education to make other arrangements.

16. Attendance

Each Supervising Worker should take attendance for each activity and keep written records as to which Workers or other adults are present, as well as the names of the children and youth.

17. Emergencies

Each Church Group will annually review its emergency procedures. Each Church Group should familiarize its Workers with the evacuation plan and the specific route applicable to their activity. In addition, each Church Group should instruct its Workers that in the event of an evacuation, the Worker should take his or her attendance sheet and take attendance once outside and safely away from all hazards.

18. First Aid/CPR Training

Each Church Group will designate at least one person to take First Aid and CPR training on an annual basis. DUMC will pay for this training.

V. Procedures for Youth Working with Children

A. Covenant Statement

Youth (ages 10 to 17) working with children at Damascus United Methodist Church must sign the Covenant Statement (contained in Chapter IX Required Forms) that indicates the youth agrees to observe and abide by the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures contained herein.

B. Safe Sanctuary Basic Procedures

Youth between the ages of 10 and 17 may occasionally serve as aides for certain designated activities and in specific circumstances where an adult Supervising Worker will oversee the activity.

Youth aides need not comply with the three-years-older rule. Youth aides should not be used to meet the two-adult goal.

Youth aides will not be used to reach the three-adult Worker requirement for overnight activities.

1. Attending Orientations

Youth aides should attend orientations to understand DUMC's Safe Sanctuary policy and to be instructed on appropriate interactions with children. The orientations will include instruction on:

1. Appropriate interactions with children;
2. Permissible methods of discipline;
3. Realities of child abuse and neglect;
4. Possible indicators of child abuse and neglect;
5. Basic Procedures Regarding Safety of Children and Youth;
6. All other applicable procedures.

2. Reporting Child Abuse or Neglect

When a youth aide becomes aware of an allegation of child abuse, or suspects child neglect, that youth aide should report the allegation or suspicion immediately to the Supervising Worker, the Director of Education, or a pastor.

VI. Education on Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures

A. Annual Orientations

Damascus United Methodist Church will conduct annual orientations for all persons working with children or youth, including Supervising Workers, Occasional Workers, youth aides, and all parents and/or guardians of children or youth participating in church-sponsored activities.

As a minimum, the orientations will instruct attendees on:

1. Appropriate interactions with children;
2. Permissible methods of discipline;
3. Realities of child abuse and neglect;
4. Possible indicators of child abuse and neglect;
5. Basic Procedures Regarding Safety of Children and Youth;
6. All other applicable procedures.

B. Points To Be Made at Church Orientations

The individuals conducting the orientations of the Damascus United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures should ensure that the provisions listed below are emphasized:

1. The Safe Sanctuaries policy is not a response to any particular incident at the church;
2. The Safe Sanctuaries policy is geared toward the general safety of children, not just protection against child abuse;
3. The Safe Sanctuaries policy is intended to ensure that our church remains a volunteer-friendly place;
4. Changes made under the Safe Sanctuaries policy are designed to protect not only the children and youth of our church, but the people who work with them. Although there are many, many cases of child abuse each year, there also are many false allegations. Many of the new rules will minimize the possibility of a false allegation by providing, among other things, that there is another adult present whenever there is interaction between an adult and a child or youth.

5. Child abuse unfortunately is a reality in our society and within some churches.
 - In 1997 there were over 3,000,000 child abuse or neglect cases.
 - Approximately 1 out of 3 girls is sexually abused before the age of 18.
 - 2,000 deaths attributable to child abuse and/or neglect occur each year.
6. There are many types of child abuse: physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and ritual abuse.
7. Abusers are usually familiar adults trusted by children. Less than 20% of child abuse occurs at the hands of a stranger.
8. The child victim is never responsible for causing the abuse.
9. Review the Indicators of child abuse and neglect.
10. Review the Safe Sanctuary Basic Procedures.

C. List of Orientations To Be Conducted

Damascus United Methodist Church will conduct orientations to instruct our congregation concerning the safety of our children and youth:

- Orientation for Damascus United Methodist Church staff
- Orientation for Sunday School teachers and youth group leaders
- Orientation for parents of Sunday School students and youth group members
- Orientation of youth aides working with children
- Short orientation of congregation when the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures are introduced

At new member orientation, the DUMC's Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures will be provided, as well as the requirement that any volunteer working with children or youth must sign a Questionnaire and a Covenant Statement.

VII. Physical Facilities and Insurance

A. Annual Facilities Evaluation

In an effort to make the physical facilities as safe as possible for our children and youth, the Board of Trustees will review the physical facilities to identify any changes needed to maintain the facility safety for children and youth.

Additionally, the Board of Trustees will perform an annual facilities evaluation and will provide to the Charge Conference all proposed physical changes for the coming year that will enhance safety for children and youth.

B. Evaluate Safety Aspects of New Building's Plans

For the new building that will be added to the Damascus United Methodist Church campus, the Safe Sanctuary Task Force and the Building Committee will review the plans to ensure that adequate safety measures have been addressed in the building's design (e.g., all classroom doors should have windows.) These groups will apprise the Board of Trustees on this matter.

C. Liability Insurance

The Board of Trustees will review the liability insurance policy for the church annually to ensure it provides an adequate amount of protection with respect to child and youth safety, and specifically with respect to sexual misconduct claims.

VIII. Procedures for Allegations of Child Abuse and Suspicions of Neglect

A. Procedures for Allegations of Child Abuse

The procedure to be followed after an allegation of child abuse is set out in paragraph 2820 of the Manual on Policies and Procedures, Baltimore Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church; the manual is located in the church office. Appendix A of this document provides a copy of the pertinent pages from paragraph 2820 to aid in following the required procedures.

Damascus United Methodist Church procedures following allegation of child abuse include requirements that are more specific to our church, as well as the local reporting requirements. Everyone involved with an allegation of child abuse must comply with both sets of procedures.

The Damascus United Methodist Church Procedure is as follows:

1. The person first hearing the allegation should immediately contact a pastor¹ and give her/him a full description of the allegation.

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

2. The pastor should notify the parents of the child or youth. If applicable, the pastor should assure the parents that their child or youth will be kept safe until they arrive.

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

3. The pastor should immediately remove the alleged abuser from contact with other children.

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

4. The pastor should promptly call the District Superintendent or the bishop.

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

¹ If a pastor is the one accused of child abuse, another pastor or the District Superintendent must be contacted.

5. The pastor should contact by phone the Child Welfare Services Division of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (the "local department") to give them a verbal report of the allegation. The phone number (available 24 hours) is: 240-777-4417.

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

6. The pastor should contact the Montgomery County Police Department and give them a verbal report of the allegation. Phone number is: 301-279-8000.

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

7. The pastor should notify the church's insurance agency and give a verbal report of the allegation. The agency will submit a claim with our insurance company, which will assign an adjuster and their legal department will contact the church about what should be done next.

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

8. The pastor should call a meeting of the Administrative Board as soon as possible. The Administrative Board should designate a spokesperson and agree on any statement to the congregation or media with respect to the allegation. The statement should not mention the names of any parties involved.

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

9. The pastor should contact an experienced attorney in the field pertaining to the present issue.

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

10. Within 48 hours of the alleged incident, the pastor should fax and mail a written report (see REPORT of INCIDENT) to the local Child Welfare Department. Fax number is: 240-777-4161. Mailed copies should be sent to:

Child Welfare Services
Department of Health and Human Services
1301 Piccard Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

and to:

Montgomery County State's Attorney
50 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, MD 20850

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

11. The pastor must keep a written record of the steps the church has taken in response to the allegation.
12. In performing all of the above, all persons involved should keep in mind that the confidentiality of the all parties involved is of utmost importance.

B. Procedure for Suspicion of Neglect

This Procedure for Suspicion of Child Neglect establishes local reporting requirements should someone at the church suspect child neglect with respect to children or youth.

1. The person first having a suspicion of child neglect should immediately contact a pastor and give her/him a full description of the suspicion.

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

2. The pastor should contact by phone the Child Welfare Services Division of the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services (the "local department") to give them a verbal report of the allegation. The phone number (available 24 hours) is: 240-777-4417

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

3. Within 48 hours of the alleged incident, the pastor should fax and mail a written report (see REPORT of INCIDENT) to the local department. Fax number is: 240-777-4161. The mailed copy should go to:

Child Welfare Services
Department of Health and Human Services
1301 Piccard Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Done ____ Date/Time: _____

4. The pastor must keep a written record of the steps the church has taken in response to the suspicion.
5. The pastor should notify the District Superintendent of the alleged incident.
6. In performing all of the above, all persons involved should keep in mind that the confidentiality of the all parties involved is of utmost importance.

C. Reporting Incidents of Suspected Neglect or Child Abuse

A Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse or Neglect form must be completed after an allegation of child abuse or neglect is reported to an employee, Supervising Worker, or a pastor.

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) who observed, or received a report of, alleged child abuse or neglect:

2. Date/time/place of worker's observation or receipt of report:

3. Does the allegation involve any church employee, Supervising Worker, Occasional Worker, volunteer, youth aide, youth or other child at our church? _____

If so, name of that person: _____

4. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) who had initial conversation with the child concerning alleged child abuse or neglect:

5. Date/time/place of initial conversation with child:

5. Child's name: _____

6. Child's age/date of birth: _____

7. Child's address: _____

8. Mother's Name: _____

9. Mother's Address (if different from child's): _____

10. Father's Name: _____

11. Father's Address (if different from child's): _____

12. Name and address of any other individual responsible for the care of the child:

13. Present location of the child: _____

14. Names and ages of other children in the home: _____

15. Name of person accused of abuse: _____

16. Relationship of accused to child (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other): _____

17. Specific nature and extent of injury, abuse or failure to provide proper care of and attention to the child, and any information concerning possible previous abuse or neglect:

18. Any other information that might aid in establishing the cause of injury, assist in identifying the individual(s) responsible for the abuse or neglect, or relate to the identification of risk:

19. If suspected child abuse or neglect involves a mental injury, a description of the substantial impairment of the child's mental or psychological ability to function that was observed and identified:

20. If suspected child abuse or neglect involves a mental injury, an explanation of why the reporter believes the mental injury is attributable to maltreatment or failure to provide proper care and attention:

Signature of Person Filling Out Report _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

IX. Required Forms

The following sheets provide the forms to be completed by persons who will be working with children and youth at Damascus United Methodist Church.

Questionnaire

If more space is needed, please use an additional sheet of paper.

Name _____ Home Phone _____

Address _____

Occupation _____ Employer _____

Work Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

1. Have you ever been accused, in a written and signed statement, of sexual misconduct with a child or a youth? ___Yes ___No
2. Have you ever been accused, in a written and signed statement, of sexual misconduct with an adult? ___Yes ___No
3. Have you ever been dismissed from any position, volunteer or salaried, because of accusations of sexual misconduct on your part? ___Yes ___No
4. Have you ever resigned from any position, volunteer or salaried, because of an accusation of sexual misconduct on your part, or to avoid being dismissed because of an accusation of sexual misconduct on your part? ___Yes ___No
5. If your response to any of the foregoing questions (1 through 4) is "yes", please provide on a separate sheet of paper all details regarding each accusation of sexual misconduct that has been made with respect to you, including a description of the alleged conduct, the name of the person who made the accusation, the date of the alleged misconduct, and the name of your employer at the time of the alleged misconduct.
6. Have accusations of sexual misconduct on your part ever resulted in civil or criminal court proceedings at any level (e.g., indictment, arrest, trial, etc.)? ___Yes ___No

If yes, please provide the complete details of those proceedings (including dates, circumstances, the jurisdiction where the proceedings occurred, the nature of the accusations, and the result of the proceedings) on a separate sheet of paper.

- 7a. Have accusations of sexual misconduct against you resulted in civil or criminal court proceedings on more than one occasion? ___Yes ___No
- 7b. Other than the above, is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance and care of young people? ___Yes ___No

- 8 Please provide three adult references (names, addresses, phone numbers) of persons who are not related to you by blood, marriage or other family relationship and are not employed or supervised by you, who can, to the best of their ability, provide statements in support of your good character and clean record in regard to sexual misconduct with children, youth, and adults.

	Name	Address	Phone
1.			
2.			
3.			

Questionnaire Response Form

(To be signed by all adults who work with children or youth at one or more church programs at Damascus United Methodist Church.)

I verify that the answers I have provided on this Questionnaire are true and accurate to the best of my ability. I understand that false answers, as well as the failure to sign this Response Form, will result in my being denied the position for which I am being considered, and I will not be allowed to work with children or youth.

Signature

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

COVENANT STATEMENT

The congregation of Damascus United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children and youth, as well as all paid staff and volunteers who participate in children and youth ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect 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.

1. No paid staff person or volunteer who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) may work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.

2. Survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any survivor of child abuse who desires to work as a paid staff person or volunteer in some capacity with children or youth is encouraged to discuss his/her experience with the pastor before accepting an assignment.

3. All paid staff and volunteers involved with children or youth of our church must abide by the Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures.

4. All paid staff and volunteers involved with children or youth must attend regular training and educational events provided by the church related to their job or volunteer assignment, including those providing information about church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.

5. All paid staff and volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor or the pastor any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

Please answer each of the following questions:

1. As a paid staff person or volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to inform the pastor of this congregation if you are convicted of child abuse?

___Yes ___No

2. Please answer the following question only if you are a survivor of child abuse. As a paid staff person or volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to discuss with the pastor of this congregation your experience as a survivor of child abuse?

___Yes ___No

(Answering yes to this question does not automatically disqualify you from volunteering with children or youth.)

3. As a paid staff person or volunteer, do you agree to observe and abide by the Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures?

___Yes ___No

4. As a paid staff person or volunteer, do you agree to participate in regular training and educational events provided by the church related to your job or volunteer assignment, including those providing information about church policies and state laws regarding child abuse?

___ Yes ___ No

5. As a paid staff person or volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to your supervisor or the pastor?

___ Yes ___ No

I have read this Covenant Statement, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above.

Signature

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian signature: _____
(if under 18)

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

X. Discipline Policies

A. Discipline Policy for Children

Discipline is viewed as a process of learning self-control, respect for others and responsibility. To help children learn this process, the following guidelines are to be in place in our Sunday School classes and other church activities with children:

- It is important to have clear and concise rules and limits;
- Adults should anticipate and redirect inappropriate behaviors;
- Adults should remind children of expectations, rules and limits;
- Adults should help children use words to express anger, resolve conflicts and express needs and desires;
- Adults will assist children in the conflict resolution process;
- Children are spoken to in a friendly (never angry) but firm voice when necessary;
- Adults may remove a child from an activity if inappropriate behaviors persist and help the child to find an appropriate activity to engage in;
- Adults may remove a child from an activity if inappropriate behaviors persist by placing the child in “Time Out” for a short period of time;
- If a child physically hurts another child, he/she will be removed from the activity, the hurt child will be comforted, the children will then be assisted with the conflict resolution process, and the parents will be informed at the end of the session;
- A conference will be held with parents if serious inappropriate behaviors continue.

B. Discipline Policy for Youth

Discipline is viewed as a process of learning and demonstrating self-control, respect for others and responsibility. To help youth learn this process, the following guidelines are to be in place in our Sunday School classes and other church activities with youth:

- It is important to have clear and concise rules and limits;
- Adults should remind youth of expectations, rules and limits;
- Adults will assist youth in the conflict resolution process;
- Youth are spoken to in a friendly (never angry) but firm voice when necessary;
- If inappropriate behaviors persist, adults may ask a youth to call his/her parents for immediate pick up and the youth is asked to leave the activity;
- A conference will be held with parents if serious inappropriate behaviors continue.

C. Conflict Resolution Process

These steps describe the conflict resolution process to be used by adults working with children or youth at Damascus United Methodist Church.

- Adult calmly approaches the children/youth in conflict and stops any hurtful actions in progress;
- Acknowledge children/youths' feelings;
- Gather information;
- Restate the problem;
- Ask for children/youths' ideas for solutions and choose one together;
- Give follow-up support.

Appendix A

The following pages are a copy of paragraph 2820,
pages 2-35 to 2-39, from the Manual on Policies and Procedures,
Baltimore Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church.

- 2) When a written and signed grievance alleging sexual misconduct against a lay person is made, it shall be presented to the pastor and to the chairperson of the Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations. The grievant, after consultation with the pastor and chairperson of the PPRC and under conditions of complete confidentiality, may decide to share the allegations with the members of the PPRC. If the allegations are to be investigated in the church, this information, in summary form, shall be provided for sharing with the congregation(s) or any other appropriate entity of the Annual Conference.
- 3) If the accused lay person confesses guilt in such cases, or when it has been determined that the lay person is guilty, the pastor shall seek to forward such information to new congregations with which the lay person may affiliate. By so doing, churches in the Baltimore-Washington Conference agree to insure the health of the whole church, to the best of their ability.

2. Protocol.—

a. *Procedural Assumptions.*

- 1) All written and signed allegations of sexual misconduct will be taken as worthy of full investigation.
- 2) Presumption of innocence of the accused lay person(s) shall be maintained until such time, if any, as the lay person confesses guilt or is proven to be guilty.
- 3) The rights of those involved, including the grievant(s)/victims(s) and their families, the accused lay person and his or her family, and the congregation or institution, shall be maintained until all facts have been carefully considered and appropriate actions determined.
- 4) The bishop shall have the right of final approval over and supervise the implementation of all decisions and agreements reached in the process.
- 5) Whenever an allegation made against a lay person involves misconduct that may be subject to mandatory reporting requirements, such as the sexual abuse of a minor or a vulnerable adult (e.g., the developmentally disabled), upon receiving such information, the pastor in consultation with the district superintendent and/or the bishop and the chairperson of the PPRC, shall consult legal counsel as to whether the allegations are in fact subject to these requirements and shall notify the civil authorities where appropriate.

b. *Procedures When Sexual Misconduct Is Alleged.*

When sexual misconduct is alleged, the following procedures shall be in effect as the Procedural Policy of the Baltimore-Washington Conference:

- 1) Written and signed grievances may be received or initiated by the pastor, the district superintendent, or the bishop. A grievance may be brought by a grievant(s) or by others who have verifiable knowledge and who are willing to pursue a resolution. If a grievance is submitted to a pastor, the pastor shall promptly share the grievance with the district superintendent and/or bishop.
 - a) In situations where sexual misconduct is perceived to have occurred, but where the grievant does not believe that a written and signed grievance is immediately necessary, the grievant may seek informed consultation with the pastor, the superintendent, and/or the bishop;
 - b) In situations where the pastor initiates the written and signed grievance, the pastor shall excuse him or herself from the case; in such situations, the district superintendent shall administer the Protocol.
- 2) The pastor and/or district superintendent in consultation with the bishop, shall meet with

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the grievant(s) and shall:

- a) explain the process and the procedures to be followed in response to the grievance;
 - i. the grievant(s) shall be encouraged to bring one support person with him or her to any meeting or hearing at any point in the process;
 - ii. this explanation shall also be completed in the presence of the chairperson of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, and/or PPRC members, who shall be present whether or not the grievant(s) chooses to bring a support person; one of these persons chosen by the pastor shall be of the same gender as the grievant(s).
 - iii. complete and total confidentiality is expected of all persons who attend any meeting or hearing during the process;
 - b) encourage and assist the grievant(s) to provide a written and signed statement alleging sexual misconduct, and the related facts, making it clear to the grievant(s) that this information will be shared with the accused lay person;
- 3) The pastor shall be authorized to suspend the lay person accused of sexual misconduct (i.e., "administrative leave"), from all responsibilities and duties within the church which shall be confirmed by the Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations within ten days. When the lay person holds positions of responsibility within the Annual Conference, the district superintendent and/or bishop shall be authorized to likewise suspend lay persons accused of sexual misconduct from all responsibilities within the Annual Conference.
- 4) The pastor, in consultation with both the district superintendent and the chairperson of the PPRC, shall make contact with the accused lay person to inform him or her that allegations of sexual misconduct have been made. A meeting with the pastor and the PPRC chairperson and the accused lay person will be held as soon as possible to share: the allegations of sexual misconduct; the meaning of suspension (i.e., "administrative leave"); and the process to be followed and its purpose. The pastor and the PPRC chairperson shall emphasize the presumption of innocence and the right to fair process:
- a) having been informed that the meeting shall deal with allegations of sexual misconduct, the accused lay person shall be encouraged to bring one support person with him or her to any meeting or hearing at any point in the process;
 - b) this explanation shall also be completed in the presence of another person or persons chosen by the pastor in addition to the PPRC chairperson, who shall be present whether or not the accused lay person chooses to bring a support person; one of these persons chosen by the pastor shall be of the same gender as the accused lay person;
 - c) complete and total confidentiality is expected of all persons who attend any meeting or hearing during the process.
- 5) At this meeting with the accused lay person, the pastor, in consultation with the district superintendent, shall:
- a) provide the lay person the opportunity to read the grievant's written and signed statement, as well as any other supporting materials; these are to be read in the presence of the pastor and the PPRC chairperson and shall be returned to the pastor before the end of the meeting;
 - b) ask the lay person for a written and signed response to the allegations which is to be returned to the pastor's office within twenty-four hours;
 - c) inform the lay person that his or her suspension (i.e., "administrative leave") from all areas of responsibility, salaried or volunteer, is effective immediately. This suspension will be submitted to the full membership of the Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations for confirmation within 10 days.

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- 6) Suspension (i.e., “administrative leave”) shall be in place for all lay persons accused of sexual misconduct, whether or not the accused lay person confesses to the grievant’s written and signed complaint. Suspension is not intended, nor is it to be interpreted, as punitive action toward the accused lay person; it is to be understood as a “neutral category” during which the procedures of this Protocol are followed:
- a) during the suspension, all salary benefits for lay persons employed by a local church or by the Annual Conference will continue at a level no less than on the date of suspension; the congregation(s) or institution of employment shall assume these costs;
 - b) during the suspension, the accused lay person shall not communicate in any formal capacity about the accusations, verbally or in writing, with members of the congregation where he or she is a member or with members of the congregation where he or she is employed or with members of the Annual Conference agency where the lay person is employed; specifically, the accused lay person may not present his or her case in any format outside of this Protocol during the period of suspension; all communication between the suspended lay person and any other party shall be through either the pastor and the PPRC chairperson or the bishop and district superintendent, depending upon the circumstance;
 - c) in cases where the local congregation chooses to make use of the Sexual Misconduct Response Team, the Administrative Board or Administrative Council of such congregation shall be responsible for providing the team’s consultation fees; such fees shall be commensurate with fees used in the Policy and Protocol on Clergy Sexual Misconduct; when the Sexual Misconduct Response Team is requested by any other agency or committee in the Annual Conference in cases of lay sexual misconduct, such agencies or committees shall assume responsibility for providing the team’s consultation fees;
 - d) if a settlement or agreement satisfactory to all parties is achieved at any point during the sixty days, the pastor shall immediately remove the lay person from suspension; in cases where the lay person is employed by the Annual Conference, the bishop or district superintendent shall remove the lay person from suspension upon such settlement.
- 7) Following the suspension of the accused lay person, the pastor and/or the chairperson of the PPRC, in consultation with the bishop and/or cabinet, shall communicate to the congregation:
- a) that the accused lay person has been suspended from all areas of responsibility within the congregation because of the filing of a complaint of sexual misconduct; the meaning of suspension (a period of time not to exceed sixty days during which procedures will be followed to examine the complaint and reach a determination in regard to it); and that neither the pastor, the chairperson of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, nor any other member of the PPRC shall provide any further information or details to the congregation, or to any other party, about the nature of the allegations; and
 - b) that the exact format of this communication shall be as follows: “Within our congregation, a written and signed complaint alleging sexual misconduct has been made against (*name of accused lay person*). According to the Policy of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, (*name of accused lay person*) has been suspended from all areas of responsibility within our congregation during the period of suspension. Suspension implies neither innocence nor guilt but is a period of time not

to exceed sixty days during which the PPRC shall make a determination of the matter. Neither the pastor nor any member of the PPRC shall provide any further information to the congregation, or to any other party, about the nature of the allegations. If you have a question or concern about this process, a confidential telephone contact with the Sexual Misconduct Response Team from the conference is available. The number is: *(telephone number)*.”

- 8) The pastor, in consultation with the district superintendent and/or the bishop, shall provide the grievant(s) the opportunity to read the accused lay person’s written and signed response, as well as any other supporting materials; these are to be read in the presence of the pastor and shall be returned to the pastor by the end of the meeting:
 - a) when appropriate, the pastor shall bring the grievant(s) and the accused lay person together in a face-to-face meeting to explore the possibilities of resolution and/or reconciliation;
 - b) when resolution occurs in the process, the pastor shall communicate with the congregation or other appropriate entity, that a resolution between the parties has occurred.
- 9) The Pastor-Parish Relations Committee shall be the body within the local church charged with making a determination in cases where allegations of sexual misconduct are made against a lay person. When allegations against a lay person arise from settings within the Annual Conference, the bishop and/or the district superintendent shall designate the particular district or conference committee which shall make a determination in such cases.
- 10) In seeking to make a determination in cases of alleged sexual misconduct against a lay person, Committees on Pastor-Parish Relations, or other committees of the Annual Conference, are encouraged to make use of the Sexual Misconduct Response Team:
 - a) the Sexual Misconduct Response Team shall serve as the designated trained neutral mediation team within the Baltimore-Washington Conference of The United Methodist Church;
 - b) in such cases, the Sexual Misconduct Response Team shall provide consultation to the PPRC, or other Conference committee, regarding: justice for and reconciliation between all parties; suggested approaches for the PPRC, or other Conference committee, as it seeks to make a determination; and possible mediation in which all parties are assisted in reaching a settlement or agreement satisfactory to all parties;
 - c) upon request, members of the Sexual Misconduct Response Team will be available to any of the parties throughout this process. Grievants, victims, and accused lay persons are strongly encouraged to initiate steps for personal healing, especially through counseling and therapy. The Sexual Misconduct Response Team will be particularly available to any of the parties for appropriate referrals and support.
- 11) In making a determination in cases where lay persons have been charged with sexual misconduct, the PPRC, or other appropriate Conference committee, shall seek to arrive at a consensus (“an opinion held by all or most”) within the committee. While this is not always possible, great care shall be taken within the Committee to ensure: that all facts in the case have been presented clearly and fairly; that all parties have had the opportunity to express their most deeply-held responses to the case; and that all feelings and opinions of Committee members in closed session shall be fairly and sensitively received by the PPRC.
 - a) In cases where a settlement or agreement satisfactory to all parties has been reached, the pastor and/or the chairperson of the PPRC, or other appropriate committee, shall

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report to the congregation, or other body, that such a settlement has been reached; specific details of such settlements or agreements shall not be revealed to the congregation;

- b) in cases where the lay person has confessed to the allegations of sexual misconduct, or has surrendered church membership as a result of allegations of sexual misconduct, the pastor and/or the chairperson of the PPRC, or other appropriate committee, shall so inform the congregation;
- c) in cases where the PPRC, or other committee of the Annual Conference, determines that the allegations of sexual misconduct are either true or not true, the pastor and/or the chairperson of the PPRC shall report the nature of the determination to the congregation;
- d) in cases where the PPRC, or other committee of the Annual Conference, is unable to make a determination, the pastor and the members of the PPRC shall discuss other options with both the grievant and the accused lay person; when discussing such options, the pastor and the PPRC shall make clear to each party that the committee's inability to make a determination neither validates nor invalidates the nature or substance of the grievant's allegations or the nature and substance of the of the lay person's response to the allegations.

12) In cases where the lay person has submitted a written and signed confession to allegations of sexual misconduct, or in cases where the lay person has been found guilty of charges of sexual misconduct through the civil courts ("due process"), the pastor, in consultation with the bishop and/or the district superintendent and the chairperson of the PPRC, shall relieve the lay person of all areas of oversight and responsibility within the local church. When the lay person who submits a confession and/or who has been found guilty of such charges is serving in either a volunteer or salaried position at any other level with the conference, the bishop and/or district superintendent shall remove the lay person from all areas of oversight and responsibility within the conference.

13) Notwithstanding any of the above, in any of the communications by the pastor, the chairperson of the PPRC, members of the PPRC, or the Sexual Misconduct Response Team to the congregations, or any other entity, the identity of the grievant(s) shall not be disclosed except upon written permission of the grievant(s).

c. Reconciliation and Rehabilitation in Cases Where Sexual Misconduct Has Occurred.

1) "Understanding Forgiveness."

Lay persons within the life of the church must be subject to discipline if they have not adhered to the standards and expectations of membership. It is important in this regard to distinguish the concept of "discipline" from the concept of "forgiveness." As the Body of Christ, the Church proclaims God's forgiveness to all who have sinned and who ask for forgiveness. A lay person involved in sexual misconduct receives this forgiveness like anyone else. However, the fact that a lay person is forgiven does not mean that he or she can avoid the consequences of actions which amount to professional misconduct, especially in situations where the lay person is employed by the local church or by an agency of the Annual Conference. When such lay persons' behavior is determined to be "disqualifying", he or she shall not continue in any staff position within the Baltimore-Washington Conference.

2) "Permanent File."

In cases where the lay person makes a confession as a result of the allegations, or is found to be guilty of the charges, the Committee on Pastor-Parish Relations, or the

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Glossary

Terms and Definitions

Church Group – any group within our church that involves children or youth.

Covenant Statement – a form required to be completed and signed by persons within our church who work with children or youth. By signing, the person commits to comply with the Damascus United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures.

Emotional Abuse – Abuse in which a person exposes a child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty.

Neglect – Failure to give proper care and attention under circumstances that a child's health and or welfare are significantly harmed, or the child is placed at risk of significant harm. This is perhaps the most common form of abuse.

Occasional Worker – a paid or volunteer adult who works with children or youth on only an occasional basis in a non-supervisory capacity, such as the parent volunteers who occasionally help with youth or church events.

Questionnaire – a form required to be completed and signed by adults within our church who work with children or youth. The adult answers questions about sexual misconduct accusations, and provides three character references.

Physical Abuse – Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child.

Ritual Abuse – refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be.

Sexual Abuse – Abuse in which sexual contact between a child and an adult (or another and more powerful youth) occurs.

Supervising Worker – a paid or volunteer adult who works with children or youth in a supervisory capacity on a part-time or fulltime basis, such as Sunday School teachers.

Worker – a Supervising Worker or an Occasional Worker.