

Safe Sanctuaries Policy of the Roseville and Mainesburg United Methodist Parish

The Roseville and Mainesburg United Methodist Churches understand the changing environment in which we find ourselves and place the safety for our children and those placed in our care as paramounts to our ministry in the name of Jesus the Christ. We endeavor to protect every child who is entrusted to us and to minimize the compromising situations which may, innocently enough, present themselves from time to time. This Policy is mandated by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church by the 1996 resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. We also believe that this policy is an extension of our baptismal vows.

This policy includes the following areas: definitions, screening procedures, supervision of children, report, and a comprehensive response plan.

Definitions

- “Adult” means a person 18 years of age or older
- “Child Abuse” as defined under Pennsylvania’s Child Protective Services Law means any of the following.
 - I. Any recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child under 18 years of age.
 - II. Any act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious mental injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
 - III. Any recent act, failure to act or series of acts or failures to act by a perpetrator which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
 - IV. Serious physical neglect by a perpetrator constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a child’s life or development or impairs the child’s functioning
- In sum, abuse may include: physical, emotional, sexual, or ritual abuse as well as neglect.
- No child shall be deemed to be physically or mentally abused based on injuries that result solely from environmental factors that are beyond the control of the parent or person responsible for the child’s welfare, such as inadequate housing, furnishings, income, clothing and medical care.
- For the purposes of this policy, this definition includes vulnerable adults.
- “Child” means any person under the age of 18.
- “Children’s activities” means any activity or program in which children are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers.
- “Parish” means either of the Roseville and/or Mainesburg United Methodist Churches.
- “Staff person” means any person utilized by the Parish who is responsible for children’s activities.
- “Volunteer” means a person 18 years of age or older who assists in conducting children’s activities under the supervision of a staff person.

- “Persons required to report child abuse” means a person, who, in the course of their employment, occupation, or practice of their profession, come into contact with children, shall report or cause a report to be made when the person has reasonable cause to believe a child is a victim of child abuse. Such persons includes, but are not limited to, medical professionals; school administrators, teachers and nurses; social services workers; day-care workers; mental health professionals; peace and law enforcement offices; and clergy.
- “Vulnerable adult” means any person over 18 years of age with diagnosed diminished physical, mental, or emotional capacities.
- “We” means the Roseville and/or Mainesburg United Methodist Churches.

Screening Procedure

- Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse of children and vulnerable adults. It can be time consuming and expensive, but well worth the effort in peace of mind that the most reliable, committed and experienced staff and volunteers are in place for every program that involves children and vulnerable adults.
- We also encourage and participate in the networking with Conference agencies and local churches because staff persons and volunteers may serve in a variety of places and roles.
- We employ these standards:
 - All adults, volunteer or staff persons who have regular and direct contact with children and vulnerable adults shall be required to fill out an application that includes:
 - A. Standard contact information
 - B. Experience and qualifications of the person
 - C. Voluntary disclosure of past criminal history and allegations of criminal history in the form of a Safe Sanctuaries Participation Covenant.
 - D. Waiver of confidentiality allowing the Conference to secure the background checks necessary for the position being applied for
 - E. Listing of three (3) non-related references. This list shall have complete contact information for all references. This portion of the application process is considered incomplete if full contact information is not provided.
 - F. A completed PA Child Abuse History Clearance form
 - G. A completed PA Request for Criminal Record Check (If the applicant has not been a resident of PA for the last 5 years, he/she will be required to complete an FBI national check.)
 - H. A waiver to allow staff to review social media presence
 - I. A driver’s license check for anyone who may be transporting children as a staff position or volunteer
 - J. Personal interviews may be required
- No adult may volunteer to be part of children’s activities as a staff member or volunteer until being a member of either the Roseville or Mainesburg United Methodist Church for six (6) months.
- Demonstration of an active relationship with either of our Parish churches of at least six months before being allowed to be in a supervisory role in children’s activities.
- During the first year of this Policy’s implementation staff persons and volunteers will submit to the screening procedures prescribed by this Policy. Following the first year

of this Policy's implementation, all new applications, persons who have a break in service of one or more years and those with 3 or more years since their last background check shall submit to the screening procedures.

- All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant's personnel file.
- The staff person in charge of the children's activity(ies) and/or their designee is responsible for reviewing and following up on each application prior to service. All applications and related forms must be completed.
- In the event that a reference follow up is accomplished by phone, detailed notes of the conversation should also be included in the personnel file.

Supervision

- The second step for providing a holy place of safety for children, youth, and vulnerable adults is conscientious and intentional supervision. These procedures are designed to reduce the possibility of abuse to the children or vulnerable adults and to protect staff persons and volunteers from unwarranted accusations.
- Training is a requirement for all staff persons and volunteers working with children in any of the Parish's children activities. The minimum training would be an annual orientation that includes information regarding this Policy, procedures for supervision, as well as information on how to identify and report child abuse. This can either be Annual Conference or Parish Training.
- Minimum supervisory standards will include the "two-adult rule". The two-adult rule requires that no matter the size of the group, there will always be two unrelated adults present. This may include the presence of an adult "roamer" who moves in and out of rooms. Please note that related adults include those residing in the same home and those immediately related.
- No person shall supervise an age group unless he/ she is at least five (5) years older than the oldest child with whom he/she is working.
- Note: Youth may help with children's activities in which they abide by the five year rule, but they may not be counted as an adult helper. There still must be two unrelated adults in addition to the youth volunteer.
- Each room or space where children are being cared for shall have a window in the door or the door shall be left open. All activities shall occur in open view. Should the children's activity be an outdoor program or occur in a setting which makes it difficult to comply with this Policy, the person directing the activity should make sure the children are properly supervised.
- Registration materials for activities in which children are outside of the direct supervision of their parents/ guardians shall require signed written permission forms which include pertinent health information in order to participate.
- All participants who can understand a covenant shall sign a participation covenant.
- Adult volunteers and staff persons are strongly encouraged to have first aid and CPR/ AED training.
- All ecumenical ministries involving children that the Parish takes part in and all outside groups using the church facility shall be made aware and covenant to abide by this policy.
- In the event a parolee who was previously convicted of sexual charges of any kind begins to attend worship, the Pastor, staff persons, and/ or safe sanctuary director of

the congregation/ Parish will form a covenant group under the Pastor's direction to support and nurture the convicted individual. See appendix.

Reporting

- Once an incident of child abuse occurs or allegation of an incident is made, it is crucial that it be dealt with speedily and in a clearly outlined manner. The staff person or volunteer who observes alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported shall report the incident immediately to the staff person. The staff person in charge of the children's activity in which the alleged abuse was observed or disclosed shall obtain information necessary such as the name of the alleged victim and his or her address and family information. The child should be removed to a safe place, away from the one who alleged abused them.
- Upon receiving such information, the staff person in charge of the children's activity will first notify the Lead Pastor and then shall call the Pennsylvania Childline and Abuse Registry (1-800-932-0313) to make a report. If the Lead Pastor is unable to be contacted, the staff person shall initiate the call to the Pennsylvania Childline and Abuse Registry and then notify the Lead Pastor at the first available moment. The staff person in charge of the children's activity shall then send the completed PA CY47 form to the local Children and Youth Services agency. This line of reporting shall be followed in all such incidents.
- **The Lead Pastor shall be informed immediately before making of a report. Note: While clergy hold confidence in high regard**, confidential communications can be broken in the case of child abuse or the abuse of vulnerable adults, in which they are deemed mandatory reporters by discipline and state law.
- Persons who are the objects of the report will be required to refrain from all activities where they may be in contact with children or the abused until the incident report is resolved. In any removal of a person from any children's activities, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.
- Note: While the parish cannot report the abuse of anyone 18 or older by law, we still expect those adults working with 18 year old high school students to follow the parish Safe Sanctuary Policy.

Response Plan

- A quick, compassionate and unified response to all alleged incidents of child abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse in a children's activity, the entire staff of that activity shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies.
- The Lead Pastor shall notify the conference director of communications, district superintendent, and director of connectional ministries, after the abuse has been reported to childline, if the abuse took place on church property or it is otherwise deemed necessary.
- The Conference Media Director, or his/ her designee, is the only person/s authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. The Pastor can make statements under the direction of the Conference Media Director. All requests for statements

should be directed to the Lead Pastor. Training in how to handle media requests shall be a regular part of this policy's training procedure. A spirit of cooperation in helping the media find the "official spokesperson" is often helpful.

- If the allegation concerns activities or persons outside any relationship to the Parish related event or activity, it is the responsibility of the staff person in charge of the Parish activity to make initial contact with the Childline and Abuse Registry.
- If the allegation is against a Parish staff person or volunteer or if it occurred in the course of a Parish's children's activity, the staff person in charge of the children's activity and the Conference Crisis Management Team shall be contacted immediately. The Conference Crisis Management Team will advise the Conference's insurance carrier.
- Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved with the incident as indicated.

Internet Policy

We adhere to the Internet Safety regulations set forth by the Susquehanna Annual Conference which are as follows:

The Internet and portable devices allow people to stay in contact with each other more easily than at any other time in the history of civilization. Some incredible ministry can take place using modern technology, but as with all forms of ministry, there are some inherent risks involved with the use of electronic communications. However, following basic Safe Sanctuaries procedures can help to minimize those risks. There is no such thing as privacy in cyberspace. Consider anything and everything on the Internet as public information. Here are some recommendations.

Receive parental/legal guardian permission.

In addition to general permission to participate in a conference ministry or event, it is advisable to receive advance parental/legal guardian permission for children and youth, and personal permission for vulnerable adults in writing for:

1. Posting photos of participants on any websites or sending them e-mail or cell phone messages or making videos for any use.
2. E-mailing, Instant Messaging (IM'ing), calling, texting, or sending data to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult by computer, PDA, or cell phone (keep in mind that "free" minutes and data plans vary tremendously even with the same carrier); and,

Never post easily identifiable information online.

1. Do not use "broadcast" e-mails. Use the "Bcc" option (blind carbon copy) so that each recipient sees only his or her address when a message is received.
2. Be cautious when transmitting easily identifiable information such as event dates, times, locations, or participants.

3. Limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests. When placing a child, youth, or vulnerable adult on an electronic prayer list, consider using only first names. If someone must know the last name or the mailing address of the individual, have her or him call the prayer chain contact person.

Limit individual communications with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

1. Conduct any communications in a professional manner. (Even though you may be a sounding board for a person having a bad day, the reverse is not true.)
2. Save all communications you have with children, youth, and vulnerable adults (i.e. instant messages (IMs), chat room conversations, e-mails, etc.). An electronic "paper trail" can be important.
1. If you are uneasy about any topic addressed in an e-mail or an e-mail in general, send a blind carbon copy to the parent/legal guardian (if appropriate) or another trusted adult. Honor privacy, but not secrecy.
2. If abuse is divulged electronically, follow standard reporting procedures.

Safety Measures for sharing photos electronically

1. When posting photos, refrain from using names, and never use last names or identifiable information.
2. Check photos for vulnerable/compromising situations and to make sure they uphold your mission. Check to make sure nametags are not distinguishable.
3. Use low-resolution photos whenever possible and slightly blur/pixilate photos.
4. Block "save photo as" options on websites. (Ask a web savvy person for assistance.)
5. Limit access to photos by employing the use of a password.
6. Obtain additional permission to use photos elsewhere (i.e. a journal or website, local paper, etc.).
7. Consider or prefer using stock or purchased photos.

Safety measure for using social networking sites.

Social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, 7Villages, Xanga, Friendster, Plaxo, and others are popular with many people.

1. Do not post anything to your social networking site that you would not want attached to your resume or printed in the church newsletter or bulletin. (The same goes for blogs.)
2. Remove or do not post inappropriate comments, photos, etc.
3. Encourage children, youth, and vulnerable adults to follow these same guidelines.

This policy has been reviewed, discussed, and adopted by both the Roseville and Mainesburg Church Councils and is presented here for Parish approval.

Updated: Sept 2013

The Church's Response Plan to Convicted Sex Offenders
And persons charged with or accused of sexually deviant crimes or crimes against
children

The following actions should be taken so that sanctuary, protection, and grace may be offered to all:

1.) When a person within our church congregations becomes a convicted sex offender, has been charged with or accused of sexually deviant crimes, or crimes against children, grace and care must be extended to the convicted individuals as well as any family members associated with the church. Under the Pastor's direction, a covenant group of church members and regular attenders will be formed to support and nurture both the convicted individual and the family. A covenant group coordinator will be named whose responsibilities include, but are not limited to: responsibility for coordinating contact and support of the individual while he/she is incarcerated and on probation, and communication with the Pastor and Safe Sanctuary committee. The covenant group coordinator cannot be related to the offender by blood or marriage. Accompaniment of the individual while at church activities or on church property will be the responsibility of the members of the covenant group. This covenant group will be actively involved in this ministry during incarceration, probation, and while the individual is listed as a convicted sex offender. While family members may be part of this covenant group, they cannot be the only person to accompany the convicted individual during church activities or on church property.

2.) When a convicted sex offender, a person charged with sexually deviant crimes, or crimes against children, not previously connected with the Roseville or Mainesburg United Methodist Churches, wishes to connect with the church, the pastor should make an appointment and visit with the individual with the Safe Sanctuary chair as quickly as possible. This conversation must be welcoming but honest. Included in the conversation should be the need to protect the individual as well as children. Information should be gathered into the nature of the offense and an understanding of the probation restrictions.

3.) In either case, the Pastor and/or Safe Sanctuary chair should be in contact with the probation/ parole officer to verify the parole restrictions, and the township/ borough for any offender restrictions. Information should be sought specifically regarding church attendance and guidance in how to best incorporate the individual into the congregation setting.

4.) In every case, the church and the individual should enter into a written covenant:

The church will covenant to:

- Provide assistance in developing a covenant group, where one or more members will support the individual with attendance when they are on church property, or at church

activities, programs, and ministries. This should be a quiet support, but will include someone being present with him/ her at all times, including when using the restroom.

The individual will covenant to:

- Uphold the mission of the Roseville and Mainesburg United Methodist Churches and their design to provide safe sanctuary for all children by respecting, and abiding by, the Safe Sanctuary Policy.
- Cooperate by giving needed information as requested and accept full benefit of the covenant group as provided.
- Seek volunteer work, only if allowed by parole restrictions, which would be limited to adult activities. Opportunities that provide isolated or one to one contact with children would not qualify.
- Avoid areas where children's programs occur. These areas should not be entered, even with a covenant group member.
- Use only the designated rooms - single stall restroom located on the first floor outside of the Pastor's Office or in the Annex (Roseville) and on the first floor outside of the fellowship hall (Mainesburg).

If this covenant is not kept, the individual will not be permitted in or on the premises located at the Roseville and Mainesburg United Methodist Churches or at any RMUMC activities, programs, or ministries. Spiritual guidance can still be extended to the individual by both the Pastor and the covenant group in another location.

This covenant should only be signed after a detailed conversation occurs with the pastor including the facts of the offense, the sentence, the conditions of the probation, the name of the probation/ parole officer and contact information for the officer. Secondly, the pastor and/ or the Safe Sanctuaries chair is to contact the probation/ parole officer to verify the information received from the individual. Probation restrictions may include presence on church property or attendance at church activities, programs, or ministries, and should be clarified. The probation officer is to be interviewed as a reference as to the qualities of the individual.

Assuming no specific probation restrictions exist, specific conditions mandated by RMUMC must exist in order for participation including:

- Being accompanied by one or more members of the covenant group at all times, even to the restroom (if single stall) or in the restroom (if multiple stall), while on church property and while participating in church activities, programs and ministries.
- No entry into areas designated to be used by children.
- No participation in activities that would provide isolated or one to one contact with children.

Describe your commitment to uphold the mission of RMUMC:

Do you covenant to agree with all conditions as outlined above?

The conditions must be upheld, and if not upheld, attendance at RMUMC activities, programs, and/ or ministries shall be denied, and you shall not be permitted in or on the premises located at the Roseville and Mainesburg United Methodist Churches. Spiritual guidance and support can still be extended by your pastor and covenant group in another location. Your signature below indicates your understanding of this covenant.

Signature: _____

Pastor's Signatures: _____

Covenant group coordinator's signature: _____

Covenant group members:

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____