

Nelson Memorial UMC, Hebron, MD
Safe Sanctuaries Participation Covenant for Those Working with Children and Youth and other Vulnerable People (updated 9/19)

The congregation of Nelson Memorial UMC in Hebron, MD is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by this church. The following 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 adult who has been convicted of child abuse (sexual abuse, physical abuse or emotional abuse) will be permitted to volunteer to work with children or youth in any church sponsored activity.
2. Adult survivors of child abuse need the love and support of our congregation. Any adult survivor who desires to volunteer in some capacity to work with children or youth is encouraged to discuss his/her willingness with one of our pastors before accepting a position.
3. All adult volunteers involved with children or youth of our church must attend regularly for at least six months before beginning a volunteer position.
4. Adult volunteers with children and youth will observe the "Two Adult Rule " preferably two unrelated by blood) at all times so that no one adult is ever alone with a child or youth.
5. No worker under the age of 18 may serve in an adult capacity. Younger youth willing to assist a teacher may serve as an extra set of hands, but may not replace the second adult and they must be at least 5 years older than the children.
6. Volunteers with any ministry involving children and youth shall attend regular training/ education events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies. It is also highly recommended for volunteers of ministries involving vulnerable adults.
7. Adult volunteers shall immediately report any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate to any age group or person to a pastor or lay leader.

Please answer the following questions by putting your initials in the response:

1. As a volunteer, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children and adults? Yes No
2. As a volunteer, do you agree to observe the "Rule of Two Adults" at all times?
 Yes No
3. As a volunteer, do you agree to observe the "no worker under the age of 18" rule and that all youth helpers be at least 5 years older than the children being served?
 Yes No
3. As a volunteer, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior to a pastor or lay leader?
 Yes No
4. As a volunteer, do you agree to inform a pastor of this congregation if you have ever been convicted of child abuse or crime? Yes No
5. Have you ever been convicted of any criminal offense? If yes, please explain on the back of this form.
 Yes No

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

Signature of Volunteer

Date

Printed Name

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Safe Sanctuaries is a movement within the United Methodist Church to ensure that children and youth who participate in activities in the church building are protected from forms of abuse. In 2008, Church Council members voted to implement a Safe Sanctuary Policy and operating procedures at Nelsons Church, and re-adopted that policy in 2019. The policy and procedures follow guidelines found in the resource Safe Sanctuaries for Youth: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries by attorney Joy Thornburg Melton. This resource is used by the United Methodist Church in its Safe Sanctuaries Training.

As of 9/1/19, children and youth workers at Nelson’s Church will:

- Be in attendance and/or church members for at least 6 months prior to working with children and youth
- Complete a written application, including personal references
- Complete a screening process that includes a background check and sex offender registries search (renewed every 4 years).
- Sign a participation covenant annually

As of 9/1/19, the following operating procedures will be in place:

- The Two Adults Rule means that no fewer than two adults (preferably unrelated by blood or marriage) will be present at all times during any church- sponsored program or event.
- All teachers and leaders of children/youth ministries will be over 18 years of age and will have completed the above-referenced screening/hiring procedures.
- Youth willing to assist a teacher may serve as helpers, but not in an adult capacity.
- The Five-Years Older Rule means that youth workers will be at least 5 years older than the oldest youth served in the ministries.
- Rooms where ministries and children and youth take place will include windows in the doors, or doors will be left open while activities are taking place.
- Children/youth will never be left unattended.

A SAFE team is in place to oversee the ongoing implementation of the church’s Safe Sanctuaries policy and procedures. This team will encourage members and those working with the church’s children and youth to attend Safe Sanctuaries training events when they are available. All information received by this person will be treated as confidential and will be kept in a locked file drawer in the church office. This team will also disseminate information to the congregations about steps to be taken if a suspected incident of child or youth abuse should occur. While many of the guidelines are specific to children and youth, the church also has a responsibility to protect all people of all ages who may be put in a vulnerable position. For this reason, any person who feels that they have been put in an unsafe situation at the church should contact the pastor or the SAFE team who will seek to address the situation.

Members of the SAFE team will include but are not limited to:

- The chair or designated representative of the Trustees

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- The chair or designated representative of the Staff Parish Relations Committee
- The chair or designated representative of the Christian Education Team
- Pastor
- Lay Leader