



**EPWORTH
UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

Safe Sanctuary Policy

249 East Center Street

Marion, Ohio 43302

740-387-8344

www.epworthumc.org

Epworth United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Mission

Epworth United Methodist Church is a spiritual community, which takes seriously its responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children and youth who participate in our ministries. All staff and ministry volunteers who are in leadership roles in these ministries are living out the vows we take in baptism to nurture our children and youth in the Christian faith. Church workers, whether paid or volunteer, play a key role in fostering the spiritual development of individuals and families in our church community.

In the spirit of care for all people and especially those most vulnerable, we, the church, are committed to a **Safe Sanctuary** and have developed policies and procedures that will provide a common understanding for parents and those who work with children and youth about how to maintain a safe and healthy church community in which to grow together in Christ.

Safe Sanctuary Statement of Purpose

Members of Epworth United Methodist Church recognize the need to have formal, written policies with procedures to help (i) prevent the opportunity for the occurrence of abuse of children and youth; (ii) protect employees and volunteers from undue accusation and suspicion; and (iii) bring parents and those who work with children and youth together as a team that follows common guidelines about how we should ensure the wellbeing of children and youth in our ministries. The following policy, with its implementation procedures, is designed to promote mutual accountability for being a safe and nurturing community among those who provide programs and supervision, parents, and the church as a whole. All adults are asked to cooperate in implementing these policies and procedures.

Safe Sanctuary Task Force Participants

Each position listed below will be a standing appointment on the Safe Sanctuary Task Force

- Pastor
- Director of Ministries with Children & Families
- Chair of Administrative Council
- Trustee Designee
- Designee from Staff Parish Relations Committee
- Youth Coordinator
- Chair of Children's Council
- Chair of Youth Council
- Parent Representatives (nursery, children, youth)
- Two Professional Volunteers (lawyer, social worker, counselor, law enforcement professional or other member in relevant vocation) - appointed by Chr. of Administrative Council

The Safe Sanctuary Task Force reports to the Trustees and serves to develop, revise, monitor, and implement the Safe Sanctuary Policy of Epworth UMC. The Safe Sanctuary Task Force will meet annually to update members on policy or program changes and to verify that the Task Force is fulfilling its obligations to the congregation. The Safe Sanctuary Task Force may be assembled for emergency purposes at any time, but as soon as possible, following any reportable incident and as often as necessary to revise procedures, provide instruction and assistance to clergy, staff or volunteers, and to keep members of the congregation informed of EUMC Safe Sanctuary Program and its ongoing implementation. The Safe Sanctuary Task Force, with the guidance of the Director of Ministries with Children & Families, will also be responsible for coordinating the training for all staff and volunteer workers in these policies and procedures in either verbal or written form.

Safe Sanctuary Policy

1. Hiring and training of compensated church workers

- 1.1 The applicant will provide references to be contacted by a member of SPRC.
- 1.2 A confidential Criminal Background Check will be completed.
- 1.3 A check of the applicant's driving record will be made for any position that might involve transporting children and youth.
- 1.4 No applicant who is found to have been involved in any activity in which the applicant abused, exploited, or neglected children or youth will be hired. The SPRC reserves the right to also disqualify an applicant who has been convicted of other violent offenses or behaviors, which indicate that the applicant is ill-suited to work with children or youth.
- 1.5 All compensated church workers must complete Safe Sanctuary Training.

2. Recruiting, screening, and training volunteers

- 2.1 We value our volunteers and ask that each person interested in volunteering with children or youth complete a volunteer application form and provide references.
- 2.2 All prospective volunteers agree to authorize the church to do a *confidential* Criminal Background Check prior to commencing ministry with children and/or youth.
- 2.3 Training in Safe Sanctuary Procedures will be part of each volunteer's orientation.
- 2.4 An individual who has expressed interest in volunteering with children and youth, but who has not yet completed the application process and/or Safe Sanctuary training, may provide *occasional* assistance with a ministry staff member who agrees to uphold the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures. This volunteer may not chaperone an overnight event.
- 2.5 In order to become a volunteer with children and youth, an individual must be well associated with the Epworth United Methodist Church for at least six months.

3. Ministering to children and youth

- 3.1 Two Adult Rule – Epworth strives to always have two adults, preferably unrelated, present at all times during any church-sponsored event involving children and/or youth.
- 3.2 Visible Presence - When two adults cannot be present, a designated “Roamer” will have the responsibility to monitor multiple classrooms or events that are occurring simultaneously. The Roamer must be able to physically observe all one-worker rooms on a sporadic and constant basis during the duration of the ministry event.
- 3.3 Open Door Policy – All children's and youth classrooms/meeting areas will have a viewing window that will remain free of covering at all times.

3.4 Corporal punishment, including hitting someone, a threat of force, and/or intimidation of any kind, is never appropriate or permitted.

3.5 All overnight and off-site activities require the prior permission of the Pastor.

3.6 Epworth will strive to have at least one person who is First Aid/CPR trained present at every church-sponsored event involving children/youth. At least one person trained in First Aid/CPR will be in the Nursery whenever children are present.

3.7 Smoking is not permitted on any property of the church, including vehicles owned or rented, as well as the church parking lot. Smoking or vaping is not permitted at any church-sponsored event or activity.

3.8 Alcohol or drug use or abuse is not permitted on any property of the church, including vehicles owned or rented, as well as the church parking lot. Alcohol or drug use is not permitted at any church-sponsored event or activity.

3.9 Epworth United Methodist Church property is considered to be a gun-free and a weapon-free zone.

4. Transportation of children and youth

4.1 These requirements pertain to vehicles rented by Epworth UMC, those provided by parents/guardians of participating unrelated children and youth, those provided by ministry workers, and any external commercial vehicles provided for transportation of children and youth.

4.2 All vehicles should be in good running condition, have a current license plate and passenger restraints. Passenger restraints, including seatbelts, car seats, and booster seats required by law, must be used while transporting children/youth.

4.3 All vehicles shall have insurance coverage as required by Ohio law.

4.4 No vehicle will be allowed to carry more than the passenger capacity as specified by the manufacturer.

4.5 All drivers will have a current valid driver's license for the classification of the vehicle being driven and be at least 25 years old and less than 70 years of age.

4.6 All drivers will obey all traffic laws.

4.7 No driver may transport any child/youth alone, without written or verbal permission from the parent. If possible, there will always be more than one youth in the vehicle. In the event there is only one child or youth in the vehicle, the minor must be seated in the rear seat of the vehicle.

5. Virtual Safe Sanctuary

5.1 Staff and ministry volunteers shall not initiate nor accept any private social media communication (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snap Chat, etc.) with any child or youth that is under our care in ministry.

5.2 Interactions with children and youth in the virtual world must be transparent or "open door" communications; therefore, all virtual meeting space, emails, text messages, and contact through any

social network involving children and youth who are under our care in ministry shall be in public view and/or open copied to the child's or youth's parent and/or a paid Epworth staff member.

5.3 Photos/videos of any minor/youth with a photo release on file at Epworth UMC may be posted on Epworth UMC websites or Epworth UMC social media groups, however, "tagging" or naming of minors is prohibited. We encourage those taking pictures to turn off "location services" (GPS) on cell phones and cameras.

5.4 Virtual meeting space that is used for church-related activities including, but not limited to, Sunday school, Bible study, group activities, family events, and small group discussions shall be guided by the online procedures found in the appendix section of the Safe Sanctuary procedure document.

5.5 Cyberbullying or harassment will not be tolerated on church social media sites or condoned in any forum. If you find any instances of this behavior, you must report it as an incident and follow the reporting steps found under 'incident reporting' of the Safe Sanctuary procedures document.

6. Reporting suspected abuse

6.1 Any allegations of abuse will be taken seriously by all children's and youth staff and ministry volunteers.

6.2 Volunteers will report suspected abuse directly to their staff contact, the Director of Ministries with Children & Families, or the Pastor. The Pastor and Director shall determine if legal authorities and the District Superintendent will be notified.

6.3 An allegation of abuse involving an employee, other than the Pastor, shall be made to the Pastor and the Chairperson of SPRC. The Pastor and the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee will determine if legal authorities and the District Superintendent will be notified.

6.4 An allegation of abuse involving a Pastor shall be made to all of the following: the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, the Chairperson of the Administrative Council, and the District Superintendent.

7. Emergency Policies

7.1 All areas in the church will be clearly marked for the safest route out of the building in the case of fire or other dangerous circumstances.

7.2 All areas in the church will be clearly marked for the safest location to seek shelter during a tornado or other storm warning/watch.

7.3 Emergency phone numbers will be posted in all meeting spaces.

7.4 A first aid kit will be available during any church-related activity or event held both within the church grounds and off-site.



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In the spirit of care for all people and especially those most vulnerable, we, the church, are committed to being a **Safe Sanctuary** and have developed policies and procedures that will provide a common understanding for parents and those who work with children and youth about how to maintain a safe and healthy church community in which to grow together in Christ.

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Safe Sanctuary Committee Participants

Each position listed below will be a standing appointment on the Safe Sanctuary Committee:

- Pastor
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- Youth Coordinator
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- Chair of Youth Council
- Parent Representatives (nursery, children, youth)
- Two Professional Volunteers (lawyer, social worker, counselor, law enforcement professional or other member in relevant vocation) - appointed by Chr. of Administrative Council

The Safe Sanctuary Committee serves to develop, revise, monitor, and implement the Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures of Epworth United Methodist Church. The committee will meet annually to update members on policy or program changes and to verify that the committee is fulfilling its obligations to the Trustees and the congregation. The committee may be assembled for emergency purposes at any time but as soon as possible following any reportable incident and as often as necessary to revise procedures, provide instruction/assistance to clergy, staff, or volunteers, and to keep members of the congregation informed of Epworth United Methodist Church's Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures and its ongoing implementation. The Safe Sanctuary committee will also be responsible for coordinating the training for all staff and volunteer workers in these policies and procedures in either verbal or written form.

Epworth United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary

For Epworth's Safe Sanctuary Procedures, the following definitions will apply:

Abuse - Harm or threatened harm to the health and welfare of an adult with special needs, a child, or youth by any person responsible for the health and welfare of an adult with special needs, a child or youth that occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury: sexual abuse; sexual exploitation or mistreatment; sexual harassment; sexual contact; sexual molestation; disseminating exhibiting, or displaying sexually explicit material.

Alcohol – defined in the broadest sense, including, but not limited to, beer, wine, and liquor.

Child or Children or Youth – Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday

Church Property – defined in the broadest sense, including all land, property, buildings, structures, vehicles, and all other property owned or leased by Epworth UMC or otherwise being used for church business purposes. This also includes vehicles and parking lots.

Corporal Punishment – is punishment that involves hitting someone or the threat of force, including intimidation.

Illegal drug – is defined as any substance which is not dispensed by a licensed physician's prescription specifically for the individual's use or any substance which is made illegal by state or federal law.

Leader - Anyone directly responsible for supervising and overseeing the specific church-related function, event, or activity. A person in a "position of trust" with protected persons, such as any clergy, staff, Sunday school leader or teacher, employee, program director, youth counselor, and any other person in a leadership position, who is at least 18 years old and involved in a ministry. No person under the age of 18 shall be placed in a position of supervision over protected persons. Younger persons (less than 18) may be utilized as leader helpers but shall always be under leader supervision.

Outside groups - All organizations that utilize, on a recurring basis, the church building or other properties owned by the church but are otherwise organized and supervised outside the structure of Epworth United Methodist Church.

Parent or Guardian - Any parent, step-parent, foster parent, grandparent, or appointed guardian with the general responsibility for the health, education, or welfare of a protected person.

Personnel - All volunteers and paid staff who are working with children (from birth through 17 years of age) as deemed by the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) will fill out the appropriate application and give written permission for a background check prior to that person assuming the position.

Protected Persons - Refers to a child and/or youth under 18 years of age or a vulnerable adult defined as an adult from 18 through 20 years of age with mental or physical handicaps.

Roamer – An identified adult who has the responsibility to monitor multiple classrooms or events that are occurring simultaneously. When a worker is acting in this capacity, the two-adult-in-each-room rule will be met. The roamer must physically observe all one-worker rooms on a sporadic and constant basis throughout the duration of the ministry period.

Two Adult Rule - Two adults, preferably not related to each other, will supervise protected persons at all times. Each adult must be at least five years older than the oldest child/youth in the group.

Volunteer - An unpaid individual involved in a ministry, activity, or service at Epworth United Methodist Church or on the church's behalf.

Worker(s) - Person (paid or volunteer) "in a position of trust" such as any clergy, staff, Sunday School leaders, teachers, youth counselors with protected persons.

Hiring, Placement, and Training of Compensated Workers & Volunteers

The following will be part of the application process for employment at Epworth United Methodist Church:

1. Prior employment history
2. References and screening
3. Background Check for Criminal Record and Driving Record
4. Record Confidentiality

No applicant who is found to have been involved in any activity in which the applicant abused, exploited, or neglected children or youth will be approved. Any conviction of a crime against children or youth shall generally disqualify any applicant. The SPRC reserves the right to also disqualify applicants who have been convicted of other violent offenses or have been convicted of behaviors indicating that the applicant is ill-suited to work with children or youth.

Being and Becoming a Volunteer for Epworth Ministries with Children and Youth *Thank you for valuing service with children and youth — Here's how you can get involved!*

1. Individuals who have been associated with Epworth for preferably at least six months, and who would like to become a volunteer in Epworth's ministries with children and youth, are invited to talk with either the Director of Ministries with Children & Families or the Youth Ministry Coordinator. They will give you a Volunteer Application, so the church will have written information about your background and interests. The church staff will let you know about upcoming Safe Sanctuary training opportunities.
2. Participate in training on how to follow Safe Sanctuary practices. Indicate that you have completed the training and agree to follow the policy by signing the Epworth United Methodist Church Employee/Volunteer Safe Sanctuary Covenant. Additional training may be necessary for a particular ministry. (Example: CPR for nursery workers, First Aid for retreat leaders.)
3. *All* staff and volunteers agree to authorize the church to do a *confidential* Criminal Background Check* prior to commencing ministry with Protected Persons
4. When Safe Sanctuary training and a criminal background check** have been completed, volunteers can jump in and serve!

*It is a feature of our times that institutions, including churches, have become aware of the woeful

Adopted by Administrative Council 4.9.12. Revised & adopted by Administrative Council 4.15.21

reality that actual cases of child/youth abuse do happen even in institutions full of good responsible people. We recognize that this requirement may feel strange for people who have been long-standing volunteers and for all of us who, as Christians, mutually place great trust in one another and our community of faith. It is simply a reality of our world today that institutions need to keep earning trust. We will implement this policy with everyone, because we believe in the best of everyone and hope never to be disappointed. Of course, we will never know if, seeing that our children and youth all have safe and positive experiences in the congregation, we will have implemented this policy unnecessarily, but we will also never know if we have perhaps prevented an incident of abuse from damaging the sense of safety and healthy love that should be the church's gift to every person, especially children, and youth.

****What is the Criminal Background Check screening for?** Primarily to identify previous incidences of child abuse (whether physical, emotional, sexual, or neglectful) or violent offenses or other serious offenses that preclude any volunteer involvement in ministries with children and youth. A person who has received a DUI or DWI conviction within the eight years immediately prior to application will not be permitted to act as a driver in ministries with protected persons.

Nursery Ministry Procedures

The following procedures cover the activities in the Nursery Ministry of Epworth United Methodist Church. The Nursery ministry age is from birth up to 3 years of age.

1. Nursery personnel

- 1.1 Nursery staffing will include one worker for every five children, with at least two adults in the room being most desirable. When there are less than five children, one worker in the room and one designated roamer will meet the two-adult rule.
- 1.2 Nursery employees will have current Infant child CPR training, child abuse identification, and First Aid certifications. Nursery employees may be assisted by Safe Sanctuary trained volunteers.
- 1.3 Only trained, assigned workers/volunteers will be permitted in the nursery areas. No other individuals will be allowed in these areas without an identified need and the approval of the nursery personnel.
- 1.4 No worker/volunteer may take an infant or child to an unsupervised area without the parent's/guardian's permission.

2. Drop-off and Pick-up of children

- 2.1 All parents or guardians leaving children in the nursery ministry shall follow these procedures to assure proper claiming of children.
- 2.2 All parents and/or guardians will complete a Children's Ministry Registration Card that shall be kept on file with the Director of Ministries with Children & Families. The form will include the child's name, parent or guardian name, contact information, and photo permission, as well as allergies and medical and current medical conditions.

- 2.3 It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to indicate to the nursery attendants and Director of Ministries with Children & Families if there is a custody concern regarding the release of the child. If that is the case, the parent will provide a copy of the custody order.
- 2.4 The parent/guardian shall fill out the daily roster with his/her full name, the child's full name, and parent signature. The pager number will be listed on the daily roster.
- 2.5 The only person permitted to pick up a child will be the parent/guardian who dropped the child off unless other arrangements were made when the child was dropped off. In this situation, if the person picking up the child is unknown to the nursery ministry personnel, he/she will need to show picture identification.

3. Nursery General Procedures

- 3.1 Nursery care is provided during worship services, Sunday school, and selected church activities. Parents are expected to remain within the church while their child is in the nursery. In the unusual case that a parent leaves the building, he/she must leave a cell number with the nursery staff and inform them of the parent's location. Example: Adult Sunday school class goes out for breakfast.
- 3.2 Pagers are available for parents while they are within the church. In lieu of using the provided pagers, parents may leave their cell phone number with nursery staff.
- 3.3 All diaper bags and bottles should be labeled with the child's name.
- 3.4 It is the responsibility of the parents to inform nursery staff if they would like to be notified when their child has a soiled diaper. Parents may temporarily sign their child out to change the diaper and then return their child to the nursery.

Children's Ministry Procedures

These procedures cover the activities in the Children's Ministry of Epworth United Methodist Church. The children's ministry age includes all children three years of age through 5th grade.

1. Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures

- 1.1 All parents and/or guardians leaving children in children's ministry programming shall follow these procedures to assure proper claiming of children.
- 1.2 All parents or guardians will complete a Children's Ministry/VBS Registration Card for their children to be kept on file with the Director of Ministries with Children & Families. The form includes the child's name, parent or guardian name, contact information, and medical information, which should also document allergies, medical conditions, photo permissions, any child custody information, and who is authorized to pick up from church activities.
- 1.3 It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to indicate to the child's teachers and the Director of Ministries with Children & Families if there are any custody concerns regarding the release of the child. If that is the case, the parent will provide a copy of the custody order.

- 1.4 Every registered child will sign in to a daily activities roster while participating in any on-site activity in which parents do not remain within the church. Parents will also be asked to sign their child out during pick up.
- 1.5 The only person permitted to pick up a child will be the parent/guardian who dropped off the child unless other arrangements were made when the child was dropped off. In this situation, if the person picking up the child is unknown to the children's ministry leaders, he/she will need to show picture identification to the ministry workers.
- 1.6 A signed permission form will be required for each child participating in any off-site activities when a parent is not present. The permission form will be taken by the leader to the off-site activity, and given to the Director of Ministries with Children & Families after the event.
- 1.7 While adults are required to supervise children at all times, adults are not permitted to use the same restroom facilities when children are using the same restroom facilities.

Youth Ministry Procedures

These procedures cover the activities of the Youth Ministry at Epworth UMC. Youth Ministry includes students in 6th grade through the summer after 12th grade.

1. Supervision of Youth

- 1.1 For safety purposes with high school and middle school students there will be a 2:14 ratio; however, the two-adult rule applies at all times. Two adults will be present when less than seven youth are participating. At least one adult must be 23 years or older. A minimum of two adults shall supervise all off-site youth events and for transporting youth – two adults age 25 or older.
- 1.2 Youth ministry assumes responsibility for supervision of youth from 15 minutes before a scheduled event until 15 minutes after a scheduled event.
- 1.3 Youth ministry is not responsible for youth at times when no youth ministry offerings are scheduled and also not responsible for youth when youth are choosing not to participate in the scheduled youth ministry offerings. Parents will be contacted to pick up their child if he or she chooses not to participate with the group.

2. Guidelines for Youth Conversations in Informal and/or Individual Settings

- 2.1 In a situation where the two-adult rule is not feasible, a youth worker is expected to move him/herself and the youth he/she is in conversation with towards the rest of the group, in the hope of finding a second adult.
- 2.2 Youth ministry has an interest in helping youth and youth ministry workers maintain appropriate boundaries. Youth workers need to communicate the message that "I am your friend, but I am not your peer" clearly at all times, not only in the midst of crises but also before any crises emerge.
- 2.3 The above rules are not meant to eliminate adult and youth meetings in public settings, for example, taking a youth to lunch in a restaurant with his or her parent's permission. Such

ministry worker and youth volunteer meetings shall be conducted only with the approval of the Pastor.

3. Guidelines for Youth Conversations in Formal and/or Group Settings

- 3.1 In Sunday school or a small group setting, the goal is to have two preferably unrelated adults in every room; if not, the open-door policy will be in effect. During Youth Fellowship, the goal is to have one adult for every seven youth in attendance. When dividing into small groups meeting in separate rooms, it is advisable to have two adults per group.
- 3.2 Tutoring and conversations with individual youth must occur during regular church business hours, with the knowledge of the receptionist or night host in the building at the time, and with the door open.

4. Procedures for Overnight Activities (Children and Youth)

These procedures cover youth activities that require an overnight stay and are sponsored and/or supervised by Epworth United Methodist Church and affiliates. This includes, but is not limited to, mission trips, retreats, camping, lock-ins, hotels/motels, and overnight stays in a personal dwelling.

- 4.1 A signed permission form and a medical card including emergency contact information as well as any current medication information will be required of each child/youth prior to the activity. Copies will travel with the staff or chaperone leaders, and originals will be filed in the Church Office. These will be collected and approved by the group leader prior to the activity. Following the activity, the forms will be provided to the Director of Ministries with Children & Families. If the group of protected persons includes both males and females, there shall be at least one female adult and one male adult on the trip.
- 4.2 All overnight and/or off-church property activities require the prior permission of the Pastor, the group leader, and the parent's signed permission.

5. Rules of Conduct for Overnight Activities (Children and Youth)

- 5.1 All persons are to abide by the Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures, including the team approach for supervision.
- 5.2 None of the children/youth will be allowed away from the designated overnight area without prior permission of the Pastor, the group leader, and the parent's signed permission.
- 5.3 No members of the opposite sex will be allowed to sleep in the same room.
- 5.4 A Child or Youth Covenant must be signed by the participating child/youth and his/her parent before being allowed to participate in overnight activities.
- 5.5 Adults will not be allowed to sleep in the same bed with a child/youth.
- 5.6 Adults will create a schedule for showering that does not occur during youth showering times.
- 5.7 When possible, adults will also not utilize bathroom facilities while youth are present in those same facilities.

Transportation Procedures for Children/Youth Activities

The following procedures are for providing transportation for children and youth to and from activities sponsored and/or supervised by Epworth United Methodist Church and affiliates. These procedures relate to transportation provided by the church, parents of children and youth, and youth workers to and from activities off the church property.

1. Vehicle Requirements

- 1.1 These vehicle requirements pertain to vehicles owned by Epworth United Methodist Church, those provided by parents of participating children/youth, those provided by youth workers, and any commercial vehicles provided for transportation of children and youth.
- 1.2 All vehicles shall be in good working condition, have a current valid license plate, and passenger restraints. Passenger restraints, including seat belts, car seats, and booster seats, must be used as required by law while transporting children/youth.
- 1.3 All vehicles shall have insurance coverage as required by Ohio law.
- 1.4 No vehicle shall carry more than the passenger capacity as specified by the vehicle manufacturer.

2. Qualification of Drivers:

- 2.1 All drivers will be workers (as qualified by the Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures), parents of participating youth, or licensed commercial drivers. The appropriate director/coordinator will pre-approve all drivers.
- 2.2 All drivers will have a current valid driver's license with the classification for the vehicle being driven and be at least 25 years of age and less than 70 years of age.
- 2.3 All drivers who are employees of Epworth UMC will be subject to periodic checks of their motor vehicle record.

3. General Rules for Transportation:

- 3.1 Unless otherwise approved by the Trustees' designee and the parents/custodians, all transportation subject to these procedures will begin and terminate at the church property.
- 3.2 All drivers will obey all traffic laws. Failure to do so may disqualify them from driving for church-related activities.
- 3.3 For overnight church functions, signed parent permission forms will be obtained from each child/youth. If the youth does not have a completed permission form, he/she will not be permitted to participate in the transportation arranged by the church.
- 3.4 No driver may transport any child/youth alone, without written or verbal permission from the youth's parents. If possible, there will always be more than one youth in the vehicle. In the event there is only one child or youth in the vehicle, the minor must be seated in the rear seat of the vehicle. The two-adult rule does not apply in the parent-child relationship.

Virtual Safe Sanctuary Procedures

As more and more people use digital communications, it is important that all staff and ministry volunteers, as well as families, understand the parameters of Epworth's "Virtual Safe Sanctuary" policy. In order to create a safe environment for children and youth under our care in ministry, all interactions in the virtual world, including, but not limited to virtual meeting spaces, emails, text messages, and all social networking sites with children and youth, are in no way to be considered confidential and/or private. With this in mind, all staff and ministry volunteers are required to adhere to the Epworth Safe Sanctuary Policy and the following "Virtual Safe Sanctuary" procedures:

1. Staff and ministry volunteers shall not initiate nor accept a private social media relationship with a child or youth that is under our care in ministry.
2. It is possible that staff and ministry volunteers have accepted private social media relationships with a child or youth that is under our care in ministry prior to the establishment of this policy, or prior to becoming a staff or ministry volunteer. These private forms of communication **must be terminated** in order to create a safe environment for children and youth.
3. Interactions with children and youth in the virtual world must be transparent or open door communications; therefore, virtual meeting spaces, all emails, text messages, and contact through social networking, involving children and youth who are under our care in ministry, shall be in public/open view and/or copied to the child's or youth's parent and/or a staff member.
4. Photos or videos of children and youth may be posted on the Epworth website, Epworth Facebook page, Epworth Facebook groups, or print media if the parent has given media permission on the Children's Ministry Registration Card or Youth Ministry Registration Card. However, the naming or tagging of a child or youth is **strictly prohibited**. If the child or youth is named in the comments, the page or group administrator will remove the comment and/or photo/video. Epworth currently has the following official internet presence:

Web site - www.epworthumc.org

Facebook page – Epworth United Methodist Church, Marion, Ohio

Facebook group – Marion Epworth United Methodist Church and Epworth UMC Children, Youth, and Families

No additional pages or groups shall be initiated on behalf of the church, or groups within the church, without the approval of the pastor and/or Administrative Council.

5. Email and text messages can be an appropriate and effective means of communicating basic, factual information such as the date or time of an event, or a meeting agenda. Email is not an appropriate form of communication for pastoral or legally sensitive information, emotionally charged information, or matters that require extensive conversation.

Parent Covenant – Infancy to Grade 5

This is to confirm that I have received and read a summary of the Safe Sanctuary Policies of Epworth United Methodist Church of Epworth, Ohio.

I understand that as a parent, my role for abiding by the policy includes:

- Following the Safe Sanctuary Policy as written
- Taking responsibility for my children when inside the church and not participating in a Children or Youth Activity
- Making sure that my child/children are not anywhere in the church building at any time without a designated adult. If my child needs to leave the sanctuary during worship, an adult from our family will go with them.
- Following the procedures for check-in and check-out at all ministry activities
- Actively upholding the church to the policy
- Reporting any misconduct or failure to uphold the policy to the Director of Ministries with Children & Families

Parent Name: (please print) _____

Parent Signature: _____

Name (s) and ages of child(ren) _____

Date: _____

Note: A copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy is available upon request.

Epworth United Methodist Youth Behavior Covenant

A spirit of cooperation, teamwork, and respect for the rules makes every group setting more enjoyable, and youth events are no different. The behaviors listed below are those we believe most important to follow for a safe and positive environment. If you wish to participate in youth events, please agree to live up to these expectations and sign below. Serious violations of this covenant could result in a trip home as well as not being allowed to participate in future events. All consequences as a result of violating this covenant will be at the discretion of the Epworth United Methodist Church Youth Ministry Coordinator.

- I will encourage my peers and chaperones by lifting them up in public and private; I will not take part in criticizing them, making fun of them, or tearing them down in any way, including in any social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat, etc.).
- I will be respectful to people, buildings, equipment, and the environment and be a good steward of my possessions, as well as the possessions of the church and others.
- If I am assigned a job for any activity, I will do it willingly and to the best of my ability.
- I will use all cell phones, iPods, and other electronic devices sparingly, since the purpose of youth activities is to experience God and fellowship with others.
- I will not have any drugs, firearms, alcohol, or tobacco products, and I will notify an Epworth United Methodist Church adult if I observe any youth who do.

I understand that the main purpose of all church-related activities is to glorify God and to strengthen my relationship with God, and I will keep that in mind while participating. By signing this covenant, I understand that I am promising to try to live the life I am being called to live by Jesus Christ and that all my actions should reflect this calling.

Youth Signature

Date

Parent Signature

Date

Photo Release

In order to share the news of ministry activities, photos are often taken. It is recommended that the location services device on the cellphone or camera be turned to the off position when photographing children or youth. Epworth United Methodist Church often includes photography of ministry events on its Facebook pages, the church website, and the church directory. When children and youth appear in a photo that is shared electronically or in print media, parent permission is required. Children and youth will not be identified by name in such media. A photo release, requiring parent signature, is part of the Epworth Children's Ministry Registration Card/Epworth Youth Ministry Registration Card and is kept on file by the Director of Ministries with Children & Families. Please inform the church office or the Director of Ministries with Children and Families of any changes throughout the year.

EPWORTH UMC CHILDREN'S MINISTRY REGISTRATION CARD

Date _____

Please complete a separate card for each child

Child's Name _____

Birth Date _____ Grade Currently Starting _____ School _____

Parent/Guardian Name _____

Address _____

Phone Numbers: Home _____ Cell _____

E-mail Address/es _____

Allergies/Medical Information/Other _____

Name(s) of person(s) who may pick up this child from Children's Sunday School/ Epworth ministry events:

In the midst of our ministry activities, we often photograph kids to share the moment. These photos may appear on bulletin boards, the Epworth website, the Epworth Facebook page/group, and future church directories, as well as brochures describing our ministries. In order to protect children and youth, it is our Safe Sanctuary Policy not to identify minors by name when we use a photo. Please initial one of the following: _____ YES, we may use photos in which your child/youth appears.
 _____ NO, we may not use photos in which your child/youth appears.

Parent Signature _____

Incident Reporting

1. Incidence or Suspicion of Incidence Report

1.1 Do not ignore any reported incident of abuse. Any suspicious activity, observed abuse, or victim allegations that are brought to the attention of a church worker or volunteer must be reported immediately to the persons identified below.

1.2 Allegations against volunteers

- The accused adult should never be confronted before the safety of the child or youth is secured.
- The volunteer will be relieved of duties by the appropriate program director until accusations are determined.
- The report shall be made to the Director of Ministries with Children & Families and/or Pastor.
- The Pastor and Director shall determine if legal authorities and the District Superintendent will be notified.

1.3 Allegations against Employees

- For any employee, other than the Pastor, the report shall be made to the Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the Pastor.
- The Pastor and the Chairperson of the SPRC shall determine if legal authorities and the District Superintendent will be notified.

1.4 Allegations against any Pastor - The report shall be made to all of the following:

- The Chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee
- The Administration Council Chair
- The District Superintendent

2. Post Reporting Procedures

2.1 Epworth United Methodist Church acknowledges that there are many victims who may be affected by an incident or of suspicion of child abuse or neglect. We are mindful that the following persons will require the proper response, care, counseling, and support following any such event:

- Family members of the harmed child, youth, or vulnerable adult
- Peers of the child, youth, or vulnerable adult
- Peers of the child's or youth's or vulnerable adult's parents
- Remaining workers of children, youth, or vulnerable adult programs
- Congregation as a community of faith
- Family of the accused abuser

We believe that failure to address the issues of suffering, anger, fear, and grief that occur within the church after abuse can have extended and unnecessary consequences for everyone. We will not hide or shrink away from our responsibility to promptly and appropriately address any incident of abuse, and that as a congregation, we are committed to the prevention of and termination of behaviors which to contribute to the cycle of abuse.

3. Responding to Allegations of Abuse:

3.1 If it is determined that the allegation has a factual basis, then the following steps shall be taken:

- A response team shall be formed and will be assigned to take any further actions that are required. The Response Team shall follow the advice of legal counsel and the District Superintendent (or the Superintendent's representative).
- The Response Team shall be made up of the Pastor, the Director of Ministries with Children & Families, The Staff Parish Relations Committee Chairperson, the Administrative Council Chairperson, and a mental health professional.
- The Response Team shall appoint one sole media spokesperson. The Response Team shall determine the appropriate means of communicating with the congregation.

3.2 The Response Team will:

- Inform the employee or volunteer of the accusation and discuss the accusations.
- Suspend with pay (for paid employees) the alleged offender while the confidential investigation is being conducted.
- Consult with church attorney for advice regarding compliance with reporting laws - then file the necessary report with the appropriate agency within the time frame required by the State of Ohio.
- Together with the agency official, meet with the child's parents and in their presence and with their permission with the child. The purpose for the meeting is to learn more fully the nature of the allegations, including when and where the alleged offense took place. It is important to reassure the child that he or she has done nothing wrong and that it was right to report the incident. Allow the child to speak freely. Do not coach responses from them and do not become defensive to any statements. Seek the truth, and protect the child's welfare. If the nature of the alleged abuse is such that any physical injury may have occurred, ask the parents to have the child examined immediately by a qualified physician.
- Notify the liability insurance company. Do not wait for the investigation to be concluded unless your attorney advises you to do so. Do not wait until criminal charges are filed or until you are faced with a civil suit. Involving the insurance company is not an admission of negligence. It is a wise protective measure and may be the means by which legal counsel may be retained to provide a defense for the church and, possibly for the accused. Besides making a coverage determination, the insurance company can also offer advice and assistance in addressing the incident.
- Cooperate in the investigation conducted by the insurance company and Child Protective Services.
- Provide ongoing spiritual and counseling support for the victim and his/her family.
- Consider the spiritual needs of the accused and seek assistance from the District Superintendent and Conference personnel in providing the proper counseling and response for the accused and the accused's family.

Notification Contacts:

Rev. Jennifer Bass	740-387-8344	614-580-6834
Rev. Kristen Lawson	740.387.8344	626-200-8868
Marion County Children Services	740-389-2317	weekdays 8:30-4:30pm
Marion County Sheriff	740-382-8244	when Children Services is not available or 740-387-2525
If true emergency, Marion City Police	911	
Pam Combs, Chair, Staff Parish Relations Committee	740-740.361.6099	(cell)
Dave Claborn, Chair, Board of Trustees	740-396.9136	(home)
Lynn Garvin, Administrative Council Chair	740-382-4242	740-360-5152 (cell)
Rev. Dr. Tim Bias, District Superintendent	309-453-1472	

Insurance:

Church Mutual Insurance Company 800-554-2642

Law Enforcement: in accordance with local law as instructed by Marion County Children Services and legal counsel.

Legal Representative

- 1) As provided by the insurance company and/or
- 2) Legal representative for church (if not same as 1 above)

Accident/Incident Report

Epworth United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy & Procedures

This form is to be completed after accident or injury, or by the person(s) witnessing an incident in which questionable behavior involves a worker with a protected person.

Date of Incident: _____ Time of Incident: _____

Name of child/youth involved: _____

Address of child/youth: _____

Location of incident: _____

Parent or guardian: _____

Name of persons witnessing the incident:

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Describe the incident: _____

Print name of person filing report: _____

Signature

Date

APPENDIX A: VIRTUAL MEETING SPACE GUIDELINES

In light of concerns regarding the safety of children, youth, families, and staff alike at a time when video-streaming platforms are used to connect, the following Guidelines are recommended:

1. **Church ZOOM account.** All official Epworth virtual activities, classes, and meetings should be held via Epworth's Zoom account. Rev. Hoffman, Rev. Bass, or Alycia Orcena are available to set up virtual spaces.
2. **Hosts/Co-Hosts.** Once a meeting has begun, Rev. Hoffman or Alycia can give another volunteer the host controls and will be used at their discretion. During all child or youth-related virtual space activities, 0 church staff (i.e., pastor, children, and youth directors, will serve in the role of the virtual host.)
3. **Waiting rooms.** When virtual spaces are scheduled, the host can enable the waiting room feature. The waiting room feature allows the host to see who has logged into the meeting and then admit them into the meeting.
4. **Limit screen sharing.** The host can disable any screen sharing of participants allowing the host to control who can share a screen and when with the entire group.
5. **Disabling chat feature.** The host can choose to disable the chat feature preventing private messaging. This is left to the discretion of the staff member during each meeting. Private messaging allows participants to message one another without the host's knowledge. The host may not use the chat feature to private message children or youth.
6. **Two-factor authentication.** Hosts can generate a random meeting ID when scheduling the event and require a password to join.
7. **Disabling microphones and video.** The host can turn off a participant's video or microphone if necessary due to inappropriate comments, gestures, or other distracting activities.
8. **Muting participants upon entry.** All participants may be muted upon entry into the meeting space, but able to turn their microphone on once connected.
9. **Turn off file transfer.** The host can disable the file transfer feature, which would allow participants to share files within the chat.