

**Good Shepherd Program**  
*Child Protection Policy*  
**Church Hill United Methodist Church**  
**Youngstown, Ohio 44505**

**People were bringing little children to Him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me, do not stop them; for It is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it" And He took them up In His arms, laid His hands on them and blessed them.**

This incident from the ministry of Jesus speaks of the value our Lord placed on children and the example of faith that they provide for the rest of us. As followers, we understand that children are valuable members of Christ's community.

Jesus highlighted not only the faith and openness of children, but also their vulnerability. This puts children at risk, but it also places them closer to God. Their dependence on God may be what Jesus was trying to get His disciples to see as a model for their own faith. The dependence and vulnerability makes the protection and support of the community of faith even more important. Jesus was teaching that there must be protection for each of us in our dependence on God and on each other. As followers of Christ, we resolve to protect children in their vulnerability and also to learn from them as we grow in the faith.

The purpose of The Good Shepherd program at Church Hill United Methodist Church is to provide procedures specifically designed to protect children and youth associated with the activities of the church and to establish a means of dealing with alleged, reported or suspected incidences of abuse. We are also attempting to discourage behavior that is unsafe and could lead to injury, such as children wandering the halls without adult supervision.

**We hereby resolve to:**

- Safeguard the children and youth of our church from abuse and neglect
- Protect church staff and volunteer workers from potential allegations of abuse
- Limit the extent of our church's legal risk and liability due to abuse
- Enforce rules and standards to be followed by all children and youth, supported by their parents and members of the congregation, to discourage unsafe behavior or actions and prevent Injury to oneself or others.
- Strengthen our Christian Education/ youth ministries

**Guidelines for the supervision of children or youth**

**Adequate Supervision**

A concerted effort will be made to provide at least two **unrelated** adults or one adult and one teen helper at least age 14. When two adults are not available, a designated person will periodically check the rooms and be aware of the children's whereabouts if they leave the classroom or event area. While recognizing the importance of the role of youth volunteers in children's ministries, in an effort to assure a safe environment, all activities will be supervised by at least one adult aged eighteen or older, and at least four years older than those they are supervising. At least two adults will be present for all non-classroom activities involving children and youth. Teacher/student ratio for infants and toddlers will be one adult teacher and helper for every three children under two years of age. The ratio for ages 3-5 will increase to one adult teacher and helper for every five children.

**Children without supervision**

All children ages 11 and under shall be in the company of their parents or an adult teacher throughout the Sunday school and worship service times. This is to discourage unsafe behavior and prevent injuries that may occur if the children are unsupervised. This includes running, sliding down the stair railings, playing or climbing on equipment in rooms when an adult is not present, activity by windows, or presence in the education wing without adult supervision.

### **Dismissal from Sunday School or group events**

All children in grades 4 and under must have a parent pick them up from their Sunday school class to escort them to worship or to little followers, as desired. In other activities such as King's Kids Club, parents must pick up their children in the fellowship hall. No child will be dismissed from any activity without the parent's or guardian's presence in the building.

In group events, it may be inevitable that one child/youth's transportation from the event arrives after all the others have departed. In those circumstances, they may be left alone with an adult. The adult is responsible to exercise their best judgment for that child/youth's well-being.

### **Trip and Retreat Supervision**

There shall be at least two adults present for all trips, retreats and other times that children/youth gather away from the church building. At least two adults from each gender shall be present at all overnight functions. No adult shall stay alone in a room with the children/youth.

Permission slips, including permission for medical care, shall be carried by the person in charge of the trip.

### **Rules for providing transportation**

- Driver must be at least 21 years old
- Driver must have a valid state driver's license for the vehicle being operated
- Driver must have proof of insurance
- Driver must be accompanied by at least two children or youth
- Driver must have read and signed an acknowledgment form indicating that the Good Shepherd program policy has been read and will be followed.
- If the driver is under 21 years of age, written permission must be given by the parent for his/her child to ride in the car.

### **Open Door Policy**

Parents, volunteers or staff may visit and observe the. Program at any time

### **Sign in-sign out procedure**

Refer to New Beginnings Nursery Program Guidelines

### **Screening of volunteer**

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within our church, each volunteer 18 years of age or older who works with the children/youth on or beyond church grounds, will be screened and will be trained on child protection issues and the Good Shepherd program.

Leaders of all community groups who use the church facilities will read the policy and sign that the policy has been read and will be followed.

The Staff Parish committee may set additional screening and performance standards for paid staff.

A person who works with children and youth must be a member of the church at least six months or active in the church for at least six months prior to volunteering.

Each person shall fill out an application form.

After reviewing the written application, the Pastor, staff parish committee or Director of Children's Ministries may choose to interview the volunteer in the event that the person:

- Is a newcomer to Church Hill United Methodist Church
- Wants to work with only one age group
- Does not want/like close supervision
- Has been charged or convicted of a crime
- Has had driving privileges suspended

**Before beginning work with children or youth, each volunteer will read, understand, agree, abide by and sign the Good Shepherd program**

**All teachers and volunteers will attend one church-offered child protection training session every year.**

### **Response by church workers to allegations of abuse**

As caring Christians, we are committed to protect and advocate for children and youth participating in the life of the church. The church is entrusted to provide an emotionally safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, youth and adults in which they are protected from abuse. It is our policy to report abuse whenever it comes to our attention regardless of where that abuse takes place. We shall report it to stop further abuse. Reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. We seek to provide a supportive atmosphere, offering both objectivity and empathy as we seek to create a climate in which healing can take place.

If abuse is observed by or disclosed to a volunteer or staff member, that person shall report the incident to the pastor. Together they shall determine the appropriate response, which may include one or all of the following:

- The suspected abuse shall be reported immediately to Children's Services. This is a requirement of the law.
- If the alleged abuser is a volunteer or paid staff of the church, once the safety of the victim is assured and confidentiality is protected, the alleged abuser shall be confronted and, at the very least, removed from the setting in which the abuse has occurred
- The pastor shall consult with the District Superintendent. A written report shall be kept as a record of the event.

### **Continuing Education**

Each year, regularly scheduled training focused on issues of abuse will be provided for child workers and volunteers. Attendance at this training shall be required of all persons who will have direct contact with children or youth in the church's ministry.

#### **The training will include the:**

- church's policy on screening
- church's policy on reporting abuse
- church's policy on age of adults in supervision
- church's policy on the ratio of adults to children
- meaning of confidentiality
- report forms
- appropriate ways to discipline

The education commission shall develop ways to educate the congregation on abuse, safety, and the Good Shepherd Program.

Proposed February 17, 2000

Approved

Implemented

Reviewed and Revised - 09/2010, 9/2011