

A Resolution for the Safety of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults* in the Local Churches of the Oklahoma Conference of the United Methodist Church

Presented May 2003

WHEREAS, in 1995 the Oklahoma Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church approved and adopted *Leader Guidelines and Safety Standards for Children and Youth Events* applicable at the Conference and district levels; and

WHEREAS, local churches have been encouraged since 1995 by the Oklahoma Annual Conference to be proactive in the prevention of abuse or harm by developing, adopting, and implementing similar safety policies; and

WHEREAS, the 1996 General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of abuse against children, youth, and vulnerable adults; and

WHEREAS, it is the responsibility of every local church to protect the well-being of children, youth, and vulnerable adults and personnel who work with them in the ministries of the church; and

WHEREAS, the failure to adopt and implement such policies continues to put at risk children, youth, vulnerable adults, local churches, members of local churches and the Annual Conference; and

WHEREAS, a church with policies and procedures related to safety of children, youth, and vulnerable adults is less liable in case of alleged abuse than one without such policies and procedures;

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Oklahoma Conference of the United Methodist Church mandates that each local church of the Annual Conference shall:

1) By Charge Conference 2003, ratify "*A Covenant for the Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults in Local Churches of the Oklahoma Annual Conference.*"

2) By Charge Conference 2004, develop, adopt, and implement a policy and its procedures related to safety issues for the protection of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

3) At a minimum, incorporate into this policy and its procedures components that:

- Apply to all paid and volunteer staff who work with children, youth, and vulnerable adults;
- Require a screening process for workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults;
- Include aspects of training, supervision, and support of workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults;
- Provide information and/or training on safety issues for the entire congregation;
- Specify procedures for reporting and responding to incidents of abuse or injury;
- Include a comprehensive assessment of safety in the ministry of the local church.

4) Annually conduct a "*Local Church Safety Audit*" provided by the Annual Conference and due at the time of Charge Conference to the Conference Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Safety Task Force with a copy to the District Superintendent.

Respectfully submitted by the Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adult Safety Task Force of the Oklahoma Conference Discipleship Ministry Team (Rev. Mary Gaudreau and Diane Doughty, co-chairs, Janet Boone, Sondra Shepherd, Revs. Jennifer Scott, Chuck Nordean, Liz Tate, Craig Stinson, and Mary Lue Eastmond)

** Vulnerable Adult: A person 18 years of age or older who has a physical or mental condition which substantially impairs the person from adequately providing for his or her own care or protection.*