

**A Covenant for the Protection of the Entire Congregation, which includes
Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults
in Local Churches of the Oklahoma Annual Conference, The United Methodist Church**
May 2003/ Updated 2010

Introduction

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 in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes [a] child... welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5.) Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from abuse, including sexual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (From *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church* – 1996, Readopted 2004 and 2008)

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From 1995 forward the Oklahoma Annual Conference has encouraged local churches to adopt or adapt *Leader Guidelines and Safety Standards for Children and Youth Events* or develop their own safety policy and procedures.

Scope

This policy and its provisions shall apply to all paid and unpaid staff, whether lay or clergy, ages 14 and older, who have contact with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults who participate in any event sponsored by the _____ United Methodist Church in the Oklahoma Annual Conference.

Statement of Covenant

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation in the Oklahoma Conference, we commit ourselves to the safety and protection of children, youth, vulnerable adults, and those who work with them in any ministry of our local church. The policy we adopt will include but not be limited to the following:

- we will follow reasonable safety measures, including background checks, in the selection and recruitment of workers;
- we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events to reduce risks of harm, injury or abuse;
- we will provide supervision and support for workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults;
- we will educate all of our workers with children, youth, and vulnerable adults regarding the use of all appropriate policies, procedures.

* *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.*



- we will conform our facilities to meet reasonable safety standards to reduce the risk of harm or injury;
- we will educate our congregation, including children, youth and vulnerable adults, regarding our adopted policy and procedures;
- we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law;
- we will have in place procedures to respond to threats or actual instances of natural or human-made disasters that impact the church;
- we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if any such incident occurs;
- we will provide a ministry of supportive care to all involved in any such incidents; and
- we will annually conduct a "Local Church Safety Audit" as provided by the Annual Conference.

Conclusion

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the safety of all of our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations in the Oklahoma Conference, we commit to the development and adoption of an appropriate safety policy for children, youth, and vulnerable adults in accordance with the action of the 2003 Oklahoma Annual Conference.

Ratified by the _____ United Methodist Church of
(Name of local church)

_____, Oklahoma, on _____
(Town/City) (Date)

Signed:

Chair, Administrative Council/Board