



### **Preamble**

God has called us to make our ministries safe, protecting our children, youth and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation. God has also called us to create communities of faith where children, youth and vulnerable adults can be safe and grow strong.

Jesus taught that *“Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me,”* (Mark 9:37 NRSV) and *“If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea.”* (Matthew 18:6 NRSV).

The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state that *“...children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse.”*

At each child’s baptism, we affirm our responsibility to their safety by our congregational response, pledging:

*“With God’s help, we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.”* (From *The Book of Worship*, Baptismal Covenant, Congregational Pledge II)

Building on these foundations, we recognize that our faith calls us to offer hospitality and protection to all children, youth and vulnerable adults, as well as those who are committed to ministering to them as volunteers and employees. Every 15 seconds, a child is abused or neglected. Often, abuse occurs in places where children and youth feel safe—homes, schools, camps, and even churches. In over three quarters of reported cases, the victim was related to or acquainted with the abuser. In light of this, **Cornerstone Ministries, The United Methodist Church (Boothsville United Methodist Church, Eldora United Methodist Church, and Janes Memorial United Methodist Church)** has adopted these policies and procedures that can 1) prevent or reduce such abuse from happening in our church; 2) allow **Cornerstone Ministries** to be a place where children can feel safe in disclosing abuse; 3) protect the loyal volunteers and employees that minister to our children, youth and vulnerable adults and 4) allow those known sexual offenders who choose to worship at **Cornerstone Ministries** and its churches to do so in a manner that protects our children, youth and vulnerable adults while at the same time protects and safely integrates those known sexual offenders into our congregation to receive spiritual care.

This policy sets forth the requirements in the areas of: 1) Screening, 2) Supervision, 3) Reporting, 4) Response Plan, 5) Discipline Procedures, and 6) Protection and Integration of Known Sexual Offenders.



## **WV Annual Conference, The United Methodist Church Guidelines for Local Churches**

By action of the WV Annual Conference (2019) the following guidelines and directives were issued to local United Methodist Churches:

Local churches should:

- develop a Safe Sanctuaries Policy for their church;
- be familiar with Annual Conference and other church policies regarding clergy and lay leader sexual misconduct; and
- designate a Safe Sanctuaries coordinator and/or team within the local church to ensure policies and procedures are followed.
- adopt screening procedures (use of application forms, interviews, reference checks, background clearances, and so forth) for staff, volunteers, employees, and helpers (paid and unpaid) directly or indirectly involved in the care of children, youth, and vulnerable adults;
- develop and implement procedures for church activities
- become informed as to who are mandatory reporters
- carry liability insurance that includes sexual abuse coverage;
- develop and implement an ongoing education plan for the congregation and its leaders on the reality of child abuse, risk factors leading to child abuse, and strategies for prevention;

The West Virginia Conference Safe Sanctuaries Policy, with its minimum standards and recommended procedures, seeks to assist local churches and conference ministries in their covenant commitments to reduce the risk of abuse in ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

### **Cyber Space and Cyber Safety**

While ministries and activities take place in a variety of venues, new forms of communication via the Internet, cell phones and other hand-held devices constitute a new space for ministry and activities for children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Cyber Space includes: communications via email, instant messaging, and cell phone (speaking and texting), and other devices; communicating on social networking sites such as Facebook; web-surfing and downloading of materials from the Internet; and gaming. Cyber Space is a fluid space which changes more and more as communications become more portable and websites change with increasing frequency. The dangers of direct access to age-inappropriate content, risky social contacts, intimidation, threats, bullying, remade and/or inappropriate photos, information that could increase risks for abuse, and more in Cyber Space make Cyber Safety an important part of Safe Sanctuaries.



**Child and Youth Protection Policy**  
of  
**Cornerstone Ministries, The United Methodist Church (Boothsville United Methodist Church, Eldora United Methodist Church, and Janes Memorial United Methodist Church)**

**Introduction**

A central tenet of the Christian faith is the inherent value and worth of all children, youth, and adults. Children and youth are least able to protect themselves in our society and are particularly vulnerable to abuse and neglect. **Cornerstone Ministries, The United Methodist Church** desires to do everything it can to protect the youth and children who participate in the life of its congregations.

We believe implementing a policy and adopting procedures to protect our children recognizes that:

*“Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the Children. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church states that ‘... children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse.’”*

*“Tragically, Churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, and exploitation... occur in Churches, both, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines.... God calls us to make our Churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from abuse.”*

*“Child abuse prevention and Ministry Protection policies and procedures are essential for congregations, not only for the protection and safety of our children and youth, but also for our volunteers and staff working with youth.”*

*“The Gospel calls us to be engaged in ministry with children and youth. We should not allow the risks to undermine or stop our ministry. Rather, we must:*

- Acknowledge the risks and develop a practical plan to address these issues:*
- Take steps to prevent harm to our children; and*
- Continue to answer the Gospel’s imperative to be in ministry with children, thus making a difference in their lives.”*

*From Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth.*



I. Definitions

A. **“Child” and “Youth” and “Adult”**

Following the public school system, a “child” is anyone age of 11 or under. A “youth” is anyone not a “child” and under the age of 18. An adult is anyone 18 years of age or older and has finished high school.

B. **“Paid Staff Person,” “Adult Volunteer,” and “Screened Adult”**

A Paid Staff Person is someone paid by the church, overseen by Staff Parish and screened. An Adult Volunteer is someone who has not been screened. They can work in a room with a Screened Adult or paid staff person. A Screened Adult is a volunteer who has gone through the screening process. These persons may or may not be members, but they must be regular attendees and active in church activities for at least six months.

C. **Youth Helpers** -Youth below the age of 18 years assisting with child or youth activities. They can assist with activities but should not be considered an adult volunteer and should be supervised themselves.

D. **“Child/Youth Abuse”**

For purposes of this Policy, child/youth abuse includes any of the following:

1. **Physical Abuse:** Violent non-accidental contact which results in injury. This includes, but is not limited to, striking, biting, or shaking. Injuries include bruises, fractures, cuts, and burns.
2. **Sexual Abuse:** Any form of sexual activity with a child/youth, whether at the Church, at home, or any other setting. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another minor.
3. **Emotional Abuse:** A pattern of intentional conduct which crushes a child’s/youth’s spirit attacks his/her self-worth through rejection, threats, terrorizing, isolating, or belittling.
4. **Neglect** – depriving a child of his or her essential needs, such as adequate food, water, shelter, and medical care.

II. **Screening and Selection of Church Staff and Adult Volunteers**

The Pastor and the Staff Parish Relations Committee are charged with the responsibility of developing, implementing and evaluating the process for recruiting,



screening, selecting, training and supervising of non-appointive church staff and adult volunteers.

- A. Adult volunteers who regularly work with the Church's children and youth and each church paid staff person will be screened. Those who work regularly with children/youth will be trained on child protection issues prior to beginning their regular involvement with children and youth. The procedures for screening are as follows: Each person being considered to work regularly with children and/or youth, whether as a volunteer or paid staff person, shall fill out an application form. This screening is good for 5 years after which time a re-screening will be necessary.
- B. Before placing the applicant in a position of responsibility with children or youth, a designated paid staff member or other person charged with specific responsibility will interview the applicant reviewing with them the written application.
- C. The person conducting this interview will contact the references provided on the application form and any additional persons as the circumstances dictate. A written record of such contacts will be retained with the application form.
- D. Each person applying to work with children and/or youth shall "authorize" the church to conduct a criminal background check. At a minimum, the background check will include the one offered by *Protect My Ministry* and as part of the application process, the applicant shall agree to and authorize **Cornerstone Ministries, The United Methodist Church** to run a background screening (licensed and active/non-retired Public School teachers/administrators and licensed Social Workers with a current state license shall be exempt due to ongoing rigorous background checks as part of their licensure). Also, 4-H workers may provide proof of recent background checks to satisfy this requirement.
- E. Before beginning work with either children or youth, each paid staff member and volunteer will sign a statement that they have read, understood, and agree to abide by this Child and Youth Protection Policy.
- F. After the interview and background check have been accomplished, the decision will be made to accept or reject the applicant as a paid staff member or adult volunteer who will work with youth and/or children.
- G. Where it has been determined that an applicant should not work with children or youth, those persons involved with the decision should handle it in a sensitive



manner. The appointed clergy her/his designee should inform the applicant in person. The specific reasons for the decision should be given, whenever possible.

- H. It is important that all records be kept in a locked cabinet in the appointed clergy's office. There should be a system in place that gives those who need these records easy access and a safe place to be stored when they are not needed.
- I. Although not required to personally accomplish the above tasks, the appointed clergy shall be responsible for ensuring compliance with sub-paragraphs (A) through (H) above.

### **III. Ongoing-Education of Persons Who Work with Children and Youth**

The Pastor and Staff Parish Relations Committee shall ensure that regularly scheduled (i.e., at least once every five years, as well as new volunteer orientations as needed) training focused on current issues of child protection is available to and received by those working with children and youth. Attendance at this training shall be required of all paid staff members, screened, and non-screened adult volunteers who work consistently with children and/or youth. The training should include:

- A. The definition and recognition of child abuse.
- B. The Church's policy and procedures on child abuse and the reasons for having them.
- C. The need to maintain a positive classroom environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics.
- D. The appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders of child/youth events.
- E. Abuse reporting responsibilities and procedures.
- F. Definition of appropriate interpersonal boundaries.

### **IV. Supervision of Children and Youth**

#### **A. General Rules**

1. All activities involving children and youth will be supervised by at least one screened adult. This screened adult, as a general rule, should be five years older than the minors they are supervising.
2. When reasonably feasible, each room set aside for children/youth should have a door with a window. (Windows in doors tend to remove the opportunities for secrecy and isolation, conditions every child abuser seeks). Half doors should be



considered for Toddler to Second Grade children to keep them from wandering outside the classroom.

3. The “Two Person Rule”, the expected norm for children and youth activities is defined as having at least two people (not in the same immediate household) in any classroom or setting, one of which must be a screened adult volunteer or staff person. A roving screened adult in open areas may also constitute compliance to the “Two Person Rule”

#### B. Supervision of Classroom Activities

##### 1. Crib/Toddler to Second Grade

At least one screened adult will be present for all classroom activities involving infants, toddlers, and children in grades K-2. When feasible, there should be two screened adults present, and where the two adults are family members, it is preferable that a third adult be present. In addition, a designated person should periodically check each classroom. Two persons in the classroom is the expectation, at least one of them must be a screened adult.

##### 2. Grades 3-5

At least one screened adult will be present for all classroom activities. Two screened adults are preferred. In addition, a designated person should periodically check each classroom. Children should be escorted to and from bathroom facilities or when otherwise leaving the room by either one of the supervising adults or by a designated floating person who checks on all classrooms. Where two adults are not available to supervise, the classroom doors are to remain open.

##### 3. Grades 6-12

At least one screened adult will be present for all classroom activities. A designated person should periodically check all classrooms.

#### C. Open Door Policy

Parents, volunteers or staff of the church will be permitted, as reasonableness dictates, to visit and observe all programs and classrooms at any time.

#### D. Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure

Adults responsible for children who are infant through toddler should sign-in their child and indicate the names of the authorized person(s) to whom the child may be signed-out. Adults responsible for children age 2 through second grade should sign their child in and out of Sunday School and other children’s activities. Picking-up children by non-authorized adults is forbidden.



E. Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities

At least two screened adults will be present for all non-classroom activities involving children and/or youth. Any meetings held in an individual's home will be supervised by at least two adults who are not members of the same family. Meetings held in an individual's home must be pre-approved by the child's/youth's parent or guardian.

F. Counseling of Youth and Children

In instances of informal youth or child counseling where circumstances dictate that counseling would be most effective on a one-on-one basis, a referral should be made to **Cornerstone Pastoral Counseling and Wellness Center**, where those policies and procedures will apply in accordance with ethical standards and licensure.

G. Time Following Group Events

Following child/youth group events, it is inevitable that occasionally a child's/youth's transportation arrive after all other participants have departed. In those circumstances, a child/youth may unavoidably be supervised by one screened adult. Under these circumstances, the general rule requiring the presence of two screened adults is suspended and the screened adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the participant's well-being.

H. Toilet Needs Policy

Children and youth are to use restroom facilities separately. Small children (pre-school and kindergarten) should be accompanied by an adult who must stand outside the restroom. Children in diapers who need assistance must be accompanied by a parent, guardian, or relative as staff nor volunteers shall be responsible for these toileting needs. Care should be taken by staff and volunteers to insure that no one is in the restroom facilities prior to the child's entrance. For the protection of all, workers should *never* be alone with a child in a bathroom with the door closed.

V. Transportation

A. General Rules

Transporting children and youth is an important concern. Their safety can be at risk in a variety of ways. Therefore, certain discretion must be used depending upon the event attended, the locale of the event, and the age group participating. This Policy includes both Requirements and Guidelines. When feasible, there should be adherence to the recommendations in the Guidelines. It is expected that the Requirements will always be followed.



**B. Requirements**

1. Drivers must be known to the designated adult leader of the event.
2. When a child/youth is transported in any vehicle, the driver must be either the child's/youth's parent/guardian, or a screened adult or a paid staff person who is at least 18 years old.
3. When a child/youth is transported in a church-owned vehicle, the driver must be at least 21 years of age; provided, however, exception is made when the driver is a paid staff member who is at least 18 years of age and for whom a motor vehicle record search has been made and the record has been found by the Appointed clergy and supply pastors or his/her designee to be satisfactory.
4. Drivers must have a valid driver's license for the vehicle being operated. For example, if driving a church bus, a commercial license is required. A copy of the driver's license should be on file at the church.
5. Drivers must require that seat belts be used at all times and the number of passengers must not exceed the number of seat belts.
6. Drivers should be advised of a designated route and should not deviate from it except in cases of emergency or road detours.
7. Drivers should not use cell phones unless required for communication with other drivers and should not text message while driving, or those behaviors required by current State law.
8. When there is reason to believe it would not be safe for a youth to ride in a vehicle driven by another youth, the adults responsible should intervene and take reasonable steps to make alternative arrangements for all concerned.
9. Parental trip consent forms must be secured before a minor can be transported for an official church function/trip.

**C. Guidelines**

1. Drivers should be accompanied by at least one other adult when possible, but should be screened when not possible.
2. Youth who drive their own vehicles should be reminded regularly of the importance of vehicle safety.

**VI. Trip and Retreat Supervision**

Trip and Retreat settings can call for different child/youth protection requirements depending on the circumstances. What follows are Requirements and Guidelines of this Policy. The Requirements should always be implemented. Depending on the circumstances of the setting, who is in attendance, etc., some or all of the Guidelines should be implemented. Those in charge of the trip or retreat should be mindful of



both Requirements and Guidelines, in addition to applying their own wisdom to the needs of a given occasion.

A. Requirements

1. There will be at least two screened adults present for all trips, retreats and other events where the children and/or youth gather overnight at, or away from, the church campus.
2. There will be at least one screened adult for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least one of the two screened adults present shall be of the same gender as the child/youth.
3. The person in charge of youth/children for each overnight trip and/or retreat shall carry parental permission slips including permission for emergency medical care.

B. Guidelines

In a hotel type setting, rooms should be assigned as follows:

1. Separate rooms for adults and child/youth should be assigned with at least two children youth per room.
2. Assignments should be made so that an adult room is between two children/youth rooms.
3. Adults should make random monitoring hall trips and room checks at night by two adults of the same gender as those being checked.
4. A hotel should be selected where the rooms open to the interior of the building (i.e., do not open to the outside).

VII. Online Safety

It is acknowledged that the use of electronics or media communications may be useful tools in supporting child and youth ministries. However, it should also be recognized that these forms of communication also potentially pose a unique risk. Church computers that are set up for guests or program participants to access the internet should be in high-traffic places and randomly monitored by staff. Controls should be in place to prevent access to inappropriate content.

VIII. Photography and Posting Pictures Online

Before minor pictures can be taken or posted online, parental permission must be secured, either verbally or in writing.



IX. Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse

WV State Code Regarding Mandated Reporting

**§49-2-803. Persons mandated to report suspected abuse and neglect; requirements.**

(a) Any medical, dental, or mental health professional, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer, school teacher or other school personnel, social service worker, child care or foster care worker, emergency medical services personnel, peace officer or law-enforcement official, humane officer, member of the clergy, circuit court judge, family court judge, employee of the Division of Juvenile Services, magistrate, youth camp administrator or counselor, employee, coach or volunteer of an entity that provides organized activities for children, or commercial film or photographic print processor who has reasonable cause to suspect that a child is neglected or abused, including sexual abuse or sexual assault, or observes the child being subjected to conditions that are likely to result in abuse or neglect shall immediately, and not more than 24 hours after suspecting this abuse or neglect, report the circumstances to the Department of Health and Human Resources. In any case where the reporter believes that the child suffered serious physical abuse or sexual abuse or sexual assault, the reporter shall also immediately report to the State Police and any law-enforcement agency having jurisdiction to investigate the complaint. Any person required to report under this article who is a member of the staff or volunteer of a public or private institution, school, entity that provides organized activities for children, facility, or agency shall also immediately notify the person in charge of the institution, school, entity that provides organized activities for children, facility, or agency, or a designated agent thereof, who may supplement the report or cause an additional report to be made: Provided, That notifying a person in charge, supervisor, or superior does not exempt a person from his or her mandate to report suspected abuse or neglect.

(b) County boards of education and private school administrators shall provide all employees with a written statement setting forth the requirements contained in this section and shall obtain and preserve a signed acknowledgment from school employees that they have received and understand the reporting requirement.

(c) Nothing in this article is intended to prevent individuals from reporting suspected abuse or neglect on their own behalf. In addition to those persons and officials specifically required to report situations involving suspected abuse or neglect of children, any other person may make a report if that person has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been abused or neglected in a home or institution or observes the child being subjected to conditions or circumstances that would reasonably result in abuse or neglect.

(d) The provisions of this section are not applicable to persons under the age of 18.

**WV Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline (24 hours a day, 7 days a week)**

**1-800-352-6513**

In case of serious injury, call 911.

A. Immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the accused, remove the accused from further involvement with children and/or youth. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child or youth is



secured, the appointed clergy or other designated persons should inform the accused that abuse has been reported.

B. If abuse is observed by, disclosed to, or suspected by a volunteer and/or paid staff member of the church, the observer shall report the incident immediately to the appointed clergy. If the appointed clergy are not available, the matter should be reported to the District Superintendent. If the accused is the appointed clergy or a member of her/his family, the allegations shall be immediately reported to the District Superintendent and immediately reported to the proper authorities as required by state or local law. The District Superintendent will take responsibility and act according to established rules of *The Book of Discipline* with respect to claims against a pastor. If the District Superintendent is not available, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office in Charleston, WV.

C. Notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety and wellbeing of the child or youth until the parent(s) arrive. NOTE: If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, follow the advice of the authorities concerning notification of others.

D. Take all allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Show care and support to help prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority. Respond in a positive and supportive manner to the victim and the victim's family.

E. The church should provide a supportive atmosphere to all those who are affected, offering both objectivity and empathy as it seeks to create a climate in which healing can take place.

F. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the appointed clergy is to report the incident immediately to the District Superintendent. If the District Superintendent is unavailable, the incident should be reported to the Bishop's office.

G. Keep a written report of the steps taken by the Church in response to the reported abuse. The report should be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It should be kept in a secure place. It should be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed.



H. Any contact with the media should be handled by a pre-determined spokesperson selected by the appointed clergy. NOTE: The Conference Communications Department is a good source of help when media questions arise. The church spokesperson should generally convey a spirit of concern for the spiritual, physical, and emotional wellbeing of all who are affected, and that the matter is being diligently and appropriately handled.

X. Implementation

Unless otherwise specifically stated, it shall be the responsibility of the Staff Parish Relations Committee to implement this Policy, to design and conduct future training, and to ensure the ongoing effectiveness of this Policy.

XI. Application

All of those who participate in the life of this congregation and use its facilities – individuals, organizations, and groups within and outside this congregation --are expected to respect, implement, and adhere to these provisions as a minimum.



## **Student Discipline Procedures**

The churches of Cornerstone Ministries, The United Methodist Church take a positive approach to discipline based on the Christian principle, *“So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.”* (Matthew 7:12) Classroom teachers/leaders can facilitate the development of responsibility, self-regulation, and self-control in children by:

- setting clear, consistent and fair limits for classroom behavior,
- encouraging appropriate behavior, patiently reminding children of rules and their rationale as needed,
- using children’s mistakes as learning opportunities,
- anticipating and eliminating potential problems,
- redirecting children to a more acceptable behavior or activity,
- deflecting problems before they become conflicts,
- modeling appropriate and acceptable behavior, and
- listening and acknowledging the feelings and frustrations of children with respect.

Under no circumstances shall a staff member or volunteer use corporal or physical punishment (beyond benign restraint for safety) or emotional abuse, such as belittling, routinely singling out a student, etc., designed to humiliate or frighten any child. Time-outs are discouraged because children need to learn to work out their problems, not be isolated from them. This is not to say a staff person or volunteer cannot take the child off to the side and attempt to relate to them or ascertain what might be at issue. Food or beverage is never withheld as a discipline device at church functions or activities. When or if a student’s behavior becomes unmanageable, the following protocol is to be employed:

1. Secure adequate supervision for students under care.
2. Call parent, guardian, or designated pick-up person to come and remove the child from the setting and/or schedule a conference with them.
3. File a brief written encounter report and submit to the Director of Christian Education, person-in-charge of event, or the Pastor.

## **Sick Child Policy**

It is our desire to provide a healthy and safe environment for all of the children. Parents are encouraged to be considerate of other children when deciding whether to place a child under our care. In general, children with the following symptoms should NOT be dropped off:

- Fever, diarrhea, or vomiting within the last 48 hours;



- Green or yellow runny nose;
- Eye or skin infections; and/or
- Other symptoms of communicable or infectious disease.

Children who are observed by our workers to be ill will be separated from other children and the parent or guardian will be contacted to request that the child be picked up.

### **Medications Policy**

It is the policy of **Cornerstone Ministries, The United Methodist Church** or its churches not to administer either prescription or non-prescription medications to the children under our care. Medications should be administered by a parent at home. Exceptions to the medications policy may be granted to parents of children with potentially life-threatening conditions (such as asthma or severe allergic reactions). Parents of such children should address their situation with in advance of any church activity to develop a plan of action.

### **Accidental Injuries to Children**

In the event that a child or youth is injured while under our care, the following steps should be followed:

1. For minor injuries, scrapes, and bruises, workers will provide First Aid (Band-Aids, etc.) as appropriate and will notify the child's parent or guardian of the injury at the time the child is picked up from our care.
2. For injuries requiring medical treatment beyond simple First Aid, the parent and/or guardian will immediately be summoned in addition to the worker's supervisor. If warranted by circumstances, an ambulance will be called.
3. Once the child has received appropriate medical attention, an incident report will be completed in the case of injuries requiring treatment by a medical professional.

### **Church Participation by a Registered Child Sex Offender**

The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church declare: "We recognize that family violence and abuse in all its forms-verbal, psychological, physical, sexual-is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the Church to provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the victim. While we deplore the actions of the abuser, we affirm that person to be in need of God's redeeming love."

Increasingly, churches are faced with a dilemma in their attempt to be faithful to both of the last two sentences above. Assuring the safety of children in our care, our facilities and our programs is a sacred duty. We must weigh that duty in the balance with what often seems the conflicting value of participation in the life of the church by a convicted child abuser. Being part



of a worshipping community is not the only way for a person to experience God's redeeming love, but it is an important one.

Recent studies suggest a low likelihood that pedophiles can or will change. Without extensive professional treatment, virtually all child sexual offenders will re-offend. Repentance, prayer, and pastoral support, always in combination with lifelong professional treatment, can be crucial in helping to change behavior but, in themselves, offer slim hope of changing the behavior of perpetrators. Welcoming a child sex offender into a congregation must be accompanied by thorough knowledge, careful planning, and long-term monitoring.

A convicted and/or registered sex offender who wishes to be part of a church community should expect to have conditions placed on his or her participation. Indeed, offenders who have been in treatment and are truly committed to living a life free of further abuse will be the first to declare that, in order to accomplish that, they must structure a life that includes on-going treatment, accountability mechanisms, and lack of access to children.

The following steps should be taken in order to be faithful to the Social Principles' commitment both to safety from abuse and to ministry with abusers:

- hold discussions in the church council and in adult education settings about the possibility of facing the situation of a convicted sex offender returning to or joining the church. These discussions should be held and general agreements reached about actions to be taken should the church find itself in this circumstance;
- develop a carefully constructed and openly negotiated covenant between the offender and the church community. The covenant should include agreements in the following areas: participation in a professional counseling program; adult "covenant partners" to accompany the offender while on church property or attending church activities; areas of church facilities that are "off limits;" restrictions on leadership in or on behalf of church; no role in church that includes contact with children or youth; any additional conditions for presence or participation; and
- assure that the covenant is maintained by having it written and signed by the offender, the pastor(s), and the chairperson of the church council. While confidentiality of victims should be respected, the covenant should not be secret. Monitoring of the covenant should be taken seriously as a permanent responsibility.



**Adoption**

This Child and Youth Protection Policy is adopted by action of the Administrative Councils of the Boothsville United Methodist Church, the Eldora United Methodist Church, and the Janes Memorial United Methodist Church on this day

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Chair, Boothsville United Methodist Church Council

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Chair, Eldora United Methodist Church Council

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Chair, Janes Memorial United Methodist Church Council

This Child and Youth Protective Policy is also endorsed by the Pastor/Staff-Parish Relationship Committee of Cornerstone Ministries, The United Methodist Church and the Leadership Council of Cornerstone Ministries, The United Methodist Church on this day

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Chair, Cornerstone Ministries Leadership Council

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Chair, Cornerstone Ministries Pastor/Staff-Parish Relationship Committee

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Child Protective Coordinator, Cornerstone Ministries, The United Methodist Church

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Pastor, Cornerstone Ministries, The United Methodist Church