

Safe Sanctuary Policy

Conway First United Methodist Church Conway, Arkansas

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, on April 1, 2000 adopted a resolution aimed at eliminating any potential for sexual abuse in the church.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church—1996, The United Methodist Publishing House, 384-386).

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, The Conway First United Methodist Church (hereafter referred to as Conway FUMC) adopts this policy for the prevention of abuse in our church.

Purpose

Our purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of all the *children, helpers, certified volunteers, clergy* and *staff* at Conway FUMC.

Covenant Statement

The Conway FUMC hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that seek to protect the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our *children* as well as all of our *clergy, staff, certified volunteers and helpers* by creating a safe *sanctuary* during all church sponsored events, on or off the church campus. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting *staff, certified volunteers and helpers*; we will implement appropriate operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our *clergy, staff, certified volunteers and helpers* with *children* on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of *abuse* consistent with Arkansas law.

Scope

Conway FUMC affirms that all *children* have the right to a safe *sanctuary*. Therefore, Conway FUMC is determined to provide an environment in which these persons are safe from neglect or *abuse* while on church premises or participating in the church's sponsored activities. The scope of this policy and its provisions applies to all adults who work with *children* in events sponsored by Conway FUMC. In general, we will 1) require that a minimum number of *clergy, staff and/or certified volunteers* are present when events are taking place; 2) adopt and take all reasonable steps to enforce policies which are designed to protect the safety of *children, staff, clergy, certified volunteers and helpers*; 3) develop and provide a program of training for the certification of volunteers; and 4) encourage all adult *helpers* who volunteer to work with *children* to take the steps to become *certified volunteers*.

I. Definitions

A. Definitions of abuse

1. Arkansas code 9-30-103 states:
 - a. **Child or children** means a person(s) under the age of eighteen (18) years.
 - b. **Child abuse** is any non-accidental physical injury, mental injury, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation inflicted by those legally responsible for the care and maintenance of the child or an injury, which is at variance with the history given. The term encompasses both acts and omissions.
2. General Abuse is categorized in five primary forms:
 - a. **Physical Abuse** is abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child.
 - b. **Emotional Abuse** is abuse in which a person exposes a child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty.
 - c. **Neglect** is abuse in which a person endangers a child's health, safety, or welfare through negligence.
 - d. **Sexual Abuse** is abuse in which sexual contact between a child and an adult (or another older and more powerful child) occurs.
 - e. **Ritual Abuse** is abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child's welfare. The abuser may appeal to some higher authority or power to justify the abuse.

B. Other definitions

1. **Clergy** in The United Methodist Church are individuals who serve either full-time or part-time as commissioned ministers, deacons, elders, and local pastors under appointment of a bishop, who hold membership in an annual conference, and who are commissioned ordained, or licensed.
2. **Staff** includes any employee of Conway FUMC, who is charged with the care or supervision of a *child* at an *event*.
3. **Participants** are *children* who are registered, enrolled, attending or otherwise involved in an *event*.
4. **Certified Volunteers** are those adults charged with the care or supervision of *children* who have completed all requirements for certification.
5. **Helpers** are any volunteers who are charged with the care or supervision of *children* at an *event* who have not completed the requirements for certification.
6. **Events** include all activities which are planned for *children* and intended to involve *children* and which are funded, in whole or in part, by Conway FUMC and which are planned and implemented by persons representing Conway FUMC, whether the activities take place on or off the campus of Conway FUMC.
7. **Sanctuary** is a place of refuge, safety, and rest.

II. Safe Sanctuary Committee

A. Committee Members

The Conway FUMC Safe Sanctuary Committee (hereafter referred to as the Committee) will be comprised of 11 members, 6 of whom are to be elected by the Charge Conference and 5 of whom are to be *staff* members including the following: Director of Children's Ministries, Director of Youth Ministries, a Director of Music Ministries, a Director of Weekday Childcare, and the Business Manager. In addition to these 11 members, a *clergy* member will serve as an ex-officio member.

B. Policy Review

The Committee will be responsible for reviewing and updating the Safe Sanctuary Policy. Any revisions require the approval of the Church Council. The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis or as needed.

C. Application Process and Confidentiality of Records

Program *staff* will be responsible for asking and assisting *helpers* with the application process and the completion of the Certified Volunteer Packet. The Business Manager will be responsible for processing all criminal background checks. After processing, all records will be kept in locked storage under the care of the Business Manager. The Business Manager will be responsible for the confidentiality and safe keeping of all records.

Access to these records will be limited to the members of the Committee to determine the certification of a volunteer after initial processing. Under special circumstances, access to the records can be granted by the Committee to law enforcement officers, mental health professionals, and legal advisors.

All files will be kept indefinitely from the date of their receipt.

III. Approval, Disapproval, and Revocation of Certification

A. Approval of Certification

After submission, review and approval of the Certified Volunteer Packet, the interview with and recommendation of a program staff member, and the completion of training, a volunteer will be classified as a *certified volunteer* to serve in Conway FUMC events.

Certification shall be for a period of three (3) years at which time it may be renewed, based upon the requirements and guidelines established by the Committee.

B. Disapproval of Certification and Appeals

Under no circumstances will an individual who is reported to have a criminal history be approved as a *certified volunteer*. (See page 4 D. 4. c.)

In the event it is determined that an individual may be a registered sex offender under the Sex and Child Offender Registration Act, a pastor shall be immediately notified in order to insure compliance with the Conway FUMC 's Policy and Procedures Regarding Community Notifications Pursuant to the Sex and Child Offender Registration Act.

When a report is received that an individual has a criminal history the following course of action will be taken:

1. The Business Manager will report to a pastor that a criminal background check has reported that the individual has a criminal history.
2. That pastor will notify the program staff member who recommended the applicant.
3. After a discussion between the pastor, the program staff member, and the applicant, the applicant may choose to appeal the disapproval of certification. Following a review of the information provided by the applicant the pastor may decide either to approve or disapprove the appeal or to refer the appeal to the Committee for its review of the information.
4. After careful review of all documents and information, the Committee shall confer and a decision to approve or disapprove the appeal shall be made by a vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the Committee.

5. The pastor and program staff member will notify the applicant of the determination.
6. Written documentation of the appeal process and decision will be added to the applicant's file kept by the Business Manager.

C. Revocation of Certification

If an allegation of *child abuse* is brought against a *certified volunteer*, the following will procedures will take place:

1. The *certified volunteer* will be suspended immediately and removed from service as a *certified volunteer* or *helper* until an investigation is completed.
2. A pastor and program staff member will investigate the complaint or complaints.
3. The pastor and program staff member will review all information and make a determination whether to dismiss the allegation or refer the allegation to the Committee for review.
4. If the allegation is referred to the Committee, one of the following will happen:
 - a. If the Committee, in its discretion, determines that the allegation has sufficient merit, certification will be revoked. Persons who have a "revoked certification" status will not be allowed to assist as a volunteer or *helper* during events at Conway FUMC.
 - b. If the Committee, in its discretion, has determined that the allegation has no merit, the suspension will be revoked and the volunteer will be allowed to continue working with *children* as a *certified volunteer*.

D. Certified Volunteer Requirements

In order to be approved as a *certified volunteer*, an applicant must:

1. Be 18 years of age or older.
2. Interview with the staff person in charge of the event or program. All applicants must be interviewed to determine their suitability for the work they desire to do. The interview will be conducted by the program staff of the department in which the applicant will primarily work or by other persons designated by the program staff. Church policy, guidelines and job descriptions should be discussed during the interview.
3. Receive the recommendation of a *staff* or *clergy* member to serve as a *certified Volunteer* based on the interview.
4. Complete a Certified Volunteer Packet. By completing these forms, the applicant will give Conway FUMC permission to undertake the inquiries necessary to complete the review of the application. The Packet shall consist of the following:
 - a. **Certified Volunteer Application**
Refer to Appendix A
 - b. **Safe Sanctuary Covenant**
Refer to Appendix B
 - c. **Criminal Background Check**
Annual criminal background checks shall be completed for all applicants who are to be considered as *certified volunteers*. The background check shall include any criminal history involving offenses classified as felonies or class A misdemeanors under Arkansas law. If an applicant has already completed a criminal background check for a United Methodist church, district or conference, the Committee may accept that report; however, the Committee reserves the right to request a more recent or comprehensive background check. Refer to Appendix C.

d. Arkansas Department of Human Services Child Maltreatment Registry Check

This check will allow for applicants' names to be checked in the Child Maltreatment Registry. This registry will notify Conway FUMC in writing if there have been any reports of child abuse, neglect or abandonment for the applicant. Refer to Appendix D.

- 5. Complete Certified Volunteer Training.** Conway FUMC will be responsible for providing all training as designated by the Committee. The mandatory training must be completed prior to certification as a *certified volunteer*. Refer to Appendix E for the Safe Sanctuary Training Agenda.

V. Operating Procedures for Events

All events will be governed by the following guidelines:

- A. Two Adult Rule**
At least two unrelated adults who are either *clergy*, *staff* or *certified volunteers*, must be present at any event. When necessary, a *helper* may be used to move in and out of separate rooms in which an event is being held and where only one other *staff*, *clergy* or *certified volunteer* is present.
- B. Four Year Rule**
A *certified volunteer* must be at least four years older than the *participants* with whom they work. (This does not apply to staff or clergy).
- C. Nursery Checkout Procedure**
All parents utilizing the church nursery will observe the check-in/checkout procedure as outlined in the nursery policy.
- D. Open Door Procedure**
The parents of the *children* served, the *clergy*, and *staff* of the church have the right to visit and observe events, classrooms, or church-sponsored programs at any time, unannounced.
- E. Windows in All Classrooms**
It is recommended that all rooms used for *children* have a window in the door or to the side of the door or a dutch door. All windows viewing into rooms used for *children* must remain unobstructed at all times. No room decorations or signs are permitted to cover door windows.
- F. Individual Counseling:**
One-on-one interactions are sometimes necessary and appropriate but care must be taken that they be conducted in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. During counseling of *children*, doors may be closed if there is an unobstructed window viewing into the room. If there is no window, the door must remain open for the entire counseling session.
- G. Classroom Discipline**
All *clergy*, *staff*, *certified volunteers*, and *helpers* will work to protect the dignity of a *child*. If a *child* must be corrected, this will be done privately. If necessary, time outs and other measures can be used at the discretion of the *clergy*, *staff*, *certified volunteer*, or *helper* while being in discussion with the child's parents about the necessary means to discipline. **No physical punishment or verbal abuse is to be used at any time.**
- H. Gifts**
No *certified volunteer* or *helper* should give gifts to individual *children* without the prior knowledge of the parent(s) or responsible *staff*. Because gift giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, gift giving should be done on a group basis, or for special occasions only. Gifts may not be elaborate but should be modest and appropriate to the occasion.
- I. Bathroom Procedures**
Only *certified volunteers* or *staff* members are permitted to diaper and/or assist *children* in the bathroom.
- J. Outings Away From Church Property**
1. All *children* participating in off-campus, out-of-town and over-night outings must have written consent and a medical release form.

2. There must be access to a phone, cell phone, or pager when groups are away from the church property.
3. There must be two (2) *certified volunteers, clergy, or staff* members on any overnight outing away from church property. In no circumstance is one adult to take a *child* or *children* on an overnight outing alone.
4. Female *certified volunteers* will supervise female *children* in their sleeping quarters and male *certified volunteers* will supervise male *children* in their sleeping quarters. Married couples shall not stay together but shall observe the female/female and male/male sleeping arrangements.
5. With the exception of parent/child combination, an adult and *child* are not to occupy the same bed or sleeping bag.

VI. Responses By Clergy, Staff, Certified Volunteers, and Helpers to Allegations of Abuse

Reporting *abuse* is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. If *abuse* occurs, it is our intention to act as an advocate for all affected persons, providing support, information, assistance and intervention. 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 suspected by, observed by or disclosed to a *certified volunteer, helper, clergy or staff* member of the church, that person shall do the following:

- A. Ensure the protection of and tend to the immediate needs of the *child*, as the situation requires.
- B. **IMMEDIATELY** notify the proper authorities (immediate supervisor or the adult in charge of the event.) This person will:
 1. notify the Arkansas Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-482-5964. This is a requirement of the law. (Note: Do not attempt an investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.)
 2. notify a pastor at Conway FUMC. If a pastor or *staff* is the accused party, the chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee should be contacted, who will then notify the District Superintendent.
 3. give written documentation to a pastor and/or Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee.
- C. Have the pastor or chair of SPRC notify parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety of the *child* until the parent(s) arrive. It is important to emphasize that the proper authorities must be notified even if the parent(s) does not wish the incident to be reported. (Note: If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, contact the proper authorities listed above. Follow their advice about notification of the parents.)
- D. After having reported the suspected *abuse* to the proper authorities, the incident is to be reported immediately to the church's insurance company if the incident occurred during a Conway FUMC Event. Then the incident must be reported to the district superintendent. The district superintendent will report the allegation to the bishop's office. Do not try to handle an incident without professional assistance.

Other Important Information Regarding Allegations of Abuse

- A. If the accused is a *clergy* (deacon or elder) member of an annual conference, local pastor, or diaconal minister, provisions of Paragraph 361 and Paragraph 2702 of The 2008 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church must be followed. (See Appendix G)
- B. A list of emergency numbers will be available to the *staff* at all times.
- C. If the accused is working in a volunteer position with children in the church, immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the person, remove the accused from further involvement with children.

D. Any contact with the media will be handled by a pre-determined spokesperson determined by the Committee. Care will be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. The spokesperson should generally convey that the matter is under investigation and any comments made prior to the conclusion of the investigation would be premature.

E. A written report of the basic information will be kept to ensure on-going ministry to, and advocacy for, victims and others involved. A form for this purpose shall be available in the church office. The report will be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It shall be filed in a secure place in order to ensure confidentiality. It will be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed. If the incident involves a *clergy* or *staff* member, the church must also file a copy of the report with the bishop's office of the Arkansas Conference where it shall remain confidential.

VII. Appendixes

Contents:

- A. Certified Volunteer Application
- B. Safe Sanctuary Covenant
- C. Disclosure and Authorization for a Criminal Background Check
- D. Child Maltreatment Registry Check
- E. Safe Sanctuary Training Guidelines
- F. The 2008 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church
- G. Outside Group Waiver

Appendix A

Certified Volunteer Application

Conway First United Methodist Church
1610 Prince Street
Conway, AR 72034

Name: _____ M F Date of Birth: ___/___/___

Address: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip Code: _____ Home Phone: _____ Business Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Cell Phone _____

STATEMENT OF DISCLOSURE

Conway FUMC cares about the *children* and adults participating in our *events*, and desires to ensure their safety while *children* are in our care. Because we care, we ask each person who provides supervision and/or leadership to complete the following background information.

- 1. Have you ever been charged with or convicted of any offense classified as a felony or class A misdemeanor under Arkansas law?..... Yes No
- 2. Have you ever been found by the court in any juvenile court proceeding to have sexually assaulted or exploited any minor or to have abused a minor?..... Yes No
- 3. Have you ever been found by a court in a domestic relations proceeding to have sexually abused or exploited any minor, or to have abused a minor?..... Yes No
- 4. Have you been convicted of the possession, use, or sale of drugs within the last seven years?..... Yes No
- 5. Have you been released from incarceration for a conviction of the possession, use, or sale of drugs with the last seven years?..... Yes No
- 6. Within the past 30 days, have you abused alcohol, legal, or illegal drugs?..... Yes No
- 7. Has your driver's license been suspended or revoked within the last seven years?..... Yes No
- 8. Have you ever been licensed by a board that licenses businesses/professions?..... Yes No
If yes, what board or agency? _____
- 9. Have you ever been found by a board that licenses businesses/professions, or any other disciplinary board, to have sexually or physically abused or exploited any minor?..... Yes No

If the response to any question is "Yes" please explain:

Signature

Date

Complete + return

Appendix B

Safe Sanctuary Covenant

Conway First United Methodist Church
1610 Prince Street
Conway, AR 73034

The congregation at Conway FUMC is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all *children* and adults who participate in *events*. The Safe Sanctuary Policy reflects our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

Policy Statement Verification

I certify that I have received and read the Conway FUMC Safe Sanctuary policy and agree to abide by the policies set forth. I understand that a violation of any of these policies can lead to my immediate suspension or termination as a *certified volunteer*.

Signature

Date

Complete + return

Appendix C

Consent to Perform Background Check Disclosure

Conway First United Methodist Church
1610 Prince Street
Conway, AR 72034

Thank you for volunteering to work with the *children* of Conway FUMC. We are excited to have you as a part of our program and appreciate your willingness to undergo a criminal background check in order to help assure the safety of both our *children* and the volunteers who work with them.

In the event that any negative information is found through the background check, you have the right to review and challenge the information. You also have an opportunity to clear up any false or mistaken information that is reported in the background check within a time frame that will be agreed upon by Conway FUMC and you.

Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, you have the right to request the name, address, and telephone number of the agency used to conduct all background checks. You may also request the nature, substance, and source of all information.

You may be assured that your information is treated as confidential and is kept in a minimally accessed and locked office in order to maintain your privacy and safety.

Please contact the staff person of the department for whom you will volunteer for if you have any questions.

Thank you.

Initial: _____

Date: _____

Complete + return

Church: _____ Camp: _____

**Consent to Perform Criminal History/Background Check
In Compliance with the FCRA (Fair Credit Reporting Act)**

Last Name First Name Middle Name or Initial

Maiden or other name(s) used in any and all other records of birth or records of residence.

*Address Apartment or #

City County State Zip

**Date of Birth Social Security Number **Gender **Race

*AS SHOWN ON THE ORIGINAL APPLICATION

**TO BE USED FOR CRIMINAL HISTORY CHECKS ONLY AND NOT A PART OF THE PERSONNEL FILE.

I, _____, am an applicant for employment / volunteerism with _____
Company and have been advised that as a part of the application process, the company conducts a criminal history background check. I do hereby consent to the company use of any information provided during the application process in performing the criminal history check. The company has informed me that I have the right to review and challenge any negative information that would adversely impact a decision to offer employment / volunteerism. In addition, I have been informed that I will have a reasonable opportunity to clear up any mistaken information reported within a reasonable time frame established within the sole discretion of the company. Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, I have been advised that upon request I will be provided the name, address and telephone number of the reporting agency as well as the nature, substance and source of all information.

The following are my responses to questions about my criminal history (if any).

1. ___Yes___No Have you ever been convicted or plead guilty before a court for any federal, state or municipal criminal offense? (exclude minor traffic misdemeanors).

If yes, please provide details below.

State: _____ County: _____ Date of Offense: ____/____/____

Details of Conviction: _____

2. ___Yes___No Have you ever received deferred adjudication or similar disposition for any federal, state or municipal offense?

If yes, please provide details below.

State: _____ County: _____ Date of Offense: ____/____/____

Details of Offense: _____

Complete + return

3. Yes No Have you ever received probation or community supervision for any federal, state or municipal offense?

If yes, please provide details below.

State: _____ County: _____ Date of Offense: ____ / ____ / ____

Details of Supervision: _____

4. Yes No Have you ever been convicted of any criminal offense in a country outside the jurisdiction of the United States?

If yes, please provide details below.

Country: _____ City: _____ Date of Offense: ____ / ____ / ____

Details of Conviction: _____

5. Yes No As of the date of this consent form, do you have any pending charges against you?

If yes, please provide details below.

State: _____ County: _____ Date of Arrest: ____ / ____ / ____

Details of Pending Charges: _____

THIS SECTION IS TO BE USED TO LIST ALL COUNTIES AND STATES OF RESIDENCE SINCE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION OR AGE 18.

| CITY/TOWN | COUNTY | STATE |
|-----------|--------|-------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | _____ |

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT ALL INFORMATION PROVIDED IN THIS CONSENT FORM IS TRUE, CORRECT, AND COMPLETE. IF ANY INFORMATION PROVES TO BE INCORRECT OR INCOMPLETE I UNDERSTAND THAT GROUNDS FOR CANCELING OF ANY AND ALL OFFERS OF EMPLOYMENT/VOLUNTEERISM WILL EXIST AND MAY BE USED AT THE DISCRETION OF THE COMPANY.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 20____

APPLICANT (PRINT NAME) _____

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE _____

Complete & return

Authorization For Release of Confidential Information

Contained Within the Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry

I hereby request that the Arkansas Child Maltreatment Central Registry, PO Box 1437, Slot S 566, Little Rock, Arkansas 72203, release any information their files may contain indicating the undersigned applicant as an offender of true report of child maltreatment.

Arkansas law now permits Central Registry to charge a fee for child maltreatment background checks, investigative files, photos, audio and video recordings. This fee applies to everyone except potential employees, non-profit organizations and indigent persons. This request will be processed if you return it to us with a check or money order for \$10.00 made payable to the Department of Human Services. We are unable to accept cash. If you feel that you should not have to pay this fee, please provide us with your proof or 501C3. Please allow 7-10 business days for processing. Please make sure all information is legible. All forms that are illegible will be returned.

(PLEASE DO NOT ATTACH ANY STAPLES TO THIS FORM)

This information should be addressed to:

Name of Person Making the Request: Catherine Gatlin

Company Name: Conway First United Methodist Church

Address: 1610 Prince Street, Conway, AR 72034

(Include Post Office Box and Street Address)

Telephone Number: 501-329-3801

I understand that the name of any confidential informants, or other information which does not pertain to the applicant as alleged perpetrator, will not be released.

Applicant's Name (print or type)

Social Security Number

Maiden Name/Aliases

Race

Age

DOB

Child's Full Name, DOB, and Social Security Number

Child's Full Name, DOB, and Social Security Number

Child's Full Name, DOB, and Social Security Number

Child's Full Name, DOB, and Social Security Number

(Please provide the last ten (10) years)

Present Address:

From _____ to _____

From _____ to _____

From _____ to _____

From _____ to _____

Applicant's Signature

County of _____ State of Arkansas Acknowledges before me this _____ day of

_____ 200____. My commission expires: _____

Notary Public

Updated 06/16/2006

Complete Return

Appendix E

Safe Sanctuary Training Guidelines

Conway First United Methodist Church
1610 Prince Street
Conway, AR 72034

Safe Sanctuary training must consist of (but is not limited to) the following:

1. A complete review of the policy and all forms required to be completed to become a *Certified Volunteer*.
2. A specific review of the job description expected to be fulfilled by the prospective *Certified Volunteer*.
3. The answer to any questions the prospective *Certified Volunteer(s)* may have about the Safe Sanctuary policy and/or procedures.
4. Information about the ways to recognize and respond to the physical, emotional or sexual *abuse of children*.

Appendix F

The 2008 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church

Paragraphs 361 and 2702

Taken from the 2008 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church published by The United Methodist Publishing House in Nashville, Tennessee.

Section XV. Complaints

¶ 361. *Complaint Procedures*- 1. Ordination and membership in an annual conference in The United Methodist Church is a sacred trust. The qualifications and duties of local pastors, associate members, probationary members, and full members are set forth in *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*, and we believe they flow from the gospel as taught by Jesus the Christ and proclaimed by his apostles. Whenever a person in any of the above categories, including those on leaves of all types, honorable or administrative location, or retirement, is accused of violating this trust, the membership of his or his ministerial office shall be subject to review.

This review shall have as its primary purpose a just resolution of any violations of this sacred trust, in the hope that God's work of justice, reconciliation and healing may be realized in the body of Christ. A just resolution is one that focuses on repairing any harm to people and communities, achieving real accountability by making things right in so far as possible and bringing healing to all the parties. In appropriate situations, processes seeking a just resolution as defined in ¶ 361.1(b) may be pursued. Special attention should be given to ensuring that cultural, racial, ethnic and gender contexts are valued throughout the process in terms of their understanding of fairness, justice and restoration.

When a complaint is received by the bishop, both the person making the complaint and the person against whom the complaint is made will be informed in writing of the process to be followed at that stage. When and if the stage changes, those persons will continue to be informed in writing of the new process in a timely fashion.

a) *Supervision* – In the course of the ordinary fulfillment of the superintending role, the bishop of district superintendent may receive or initiate complaints about the performance or character of a clergyperson. A complaint is a written and signed statement claiming misconduct or unsatisfactory performance of ministerial duties. The person filing the complaint and the clergyperson shall be informed by the district superintendent or bishop of the process for filing the complaint and its purpose.

b) *Supervisory Response* – The supervisory response is pastoral and administrative and shall be directed toward a just resolution among all parties. It is not part of any judicial process. The complaint shall be treated as an allegation or allegations during the supervisory process. At all supervisory meetings no verbatim record shall be made; no legal counsel shall be present; the person against whom the complaint was made may choose another person to accompany him or her with the right to voice; the person making the complaint shall have the right to choose a person to accompany him or her with the right voice.

The supervisory response shall be carried out by the bishop or the bishop's designee in a timely manner, with attention to communication to all parties regarding the complaint and the process. At the determination of the bishop, persons with qualifications and experience in assessment, intervention, or healing may be selected to assist in the supervisory response. The bishop also may consult with the committee on pastor-parish relations for pastors, the district committee on superintendency for the district superintendents, appropriate personnel committee or other persons who may be helpful.

The supervisory response may include a process that seeks a just resolution in which the parties are assisted by a trained, impartial third party facilitator(s) or mediator(s), in reaching an agreement

satisfactory to all parties. The bishop, the person filing the complaint, the respondent, and other appropriate persons shall enter into a written agreement outlining the process, including any agreements on confidentiality. If resolution is achieved, a written statement of resolution, including any terms and conditions, shall be signed by the parties and the parties shall agree on any matters to be disclosed to third parties.

A process seeking a just resolution may begin at any time in the supervisory or complain process. This is a not an administrative or judicial proceeding.

When the supervisory response is initiated, the bishop may notify the chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry that a complain has been filed, of the clergyperson names, of the general nature of the complaint; and, when concluded, of the disposition of the complaint.

c) *Suspension* – When deemed appropriate, to protect the well-being of the person making the complaint, the congregation, annual conference, other context for ministry, and/or clergy, the bishop, with the recommendation of the executive committee of the Board of Ordained Ministry, may suspend the person from all clergy responsibilities, but not from an appointment, for a period not to exceed ninety days. During the suspension, salary, housing, and benefits provided by a pastoral charge will continue at a level no less than on the date of suspension. The person so suspended shall retain all rights and privileges as stated in ¶334. The cost of supply of a pastor during the suspension will be borne by the annual conference.

d) *Referral of a Complain* – Upon receiving a written and signed complain, the Bishop shall, within 45 days, either dismiss the complaint after consultation with the cabinet, as having no basis in law or fact, or shall initiate the supervisory response process. If within 120 days after the initiation after the initiation of the supervisory response, resolution is not achieved, the bishop shall either:

- (1) Refer the matter to a 3rd party mediator(s) if this has not been attempted; or
- (2) Dismiss the complaint with the consent of the cabinet giving the reasons therefore in writing, a copy of which shall be placed in the pastor's file; or
- (3) Refer the matter as an administrative complaint (¶362.1a) or judicial complaint (¶2704).

All time limitations may be extended for 30 days upon the consent of the complainant and the respondent.

e) *Supervisory Follow-up and Healing* – The bishop and cabinet shall provide a process for healing within the congregation, annual conference, or other context of ministry if there has been significant disruption by the complaint. This process may include sharing of information by the bishop or the bishop's designee about the nature of the complaint without disclosing alleged facts, which may compromise any possible forthcoming administrative or judicial process. When facts are disclosed, due regard should be given to the interests and needs of all concerned, including the respondent and complainant who needs of all concerned, including the respondent and complainant who may be involved in an administrative or judicial process. This may include a process of a just resolution, which addresses unresolved conflicts, support for victims, and reconciliation for parties involved.

CHARGEABLE OFFENSES AND THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS

¶2702. 1. A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference (¶1369), local pastor, clergy on honorable or administrative location, or diaconal minister may be tried when charged (subject to the statute of limitations in ¶ 2702.4) with one or more of the following offenses: (a) immorality including but not limited to, not being celibate in singleness or not faithful in a heterosexual-marriage; (b) practices declared by The United Methodist Church to be incompatible with Christian teachings, including but not limited to: being a self-avowed practicing homosexual; or conducting ceremonies which celebrate homosexual unions; or performing same-sex wedding ceremonies; (c) crime; (d) failure to perform the work of the ministry; (e) disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church; (f) dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church; (g) relationships and/or behavior that undermines the ministry of another pastor; (h) child abuse; (i) sexual abuse; (j) sexual misconduct or (k) harassment, including, but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment; or (l) racial or gender discrimination.

2. A bishop, clergy member of an annual conference, or diaconal minister may be brought to trial when the appropriate body recommends involuntary termination.

3. A professing member of a local church may be charged with the following offenses, and, if so, may choose a trial; (a) immorality; (b) crime; (c) disobedience to the order and discipline of The United Methodist Church; (d) dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of The United Methodist Church; (e) sexual abuse; (f) sexual misconduct; (g) child abuse; (h) harassment, including, but not limited to racial and/or sexual harassment; (i) racial or gender discrimination; or (j) relationships and/or behaviors that undermine the ministry of persons serving within an appointment.

4. *Statute of Limitations* - No judicial complaint or charge shall be considered for any alleged occurrence that shall not have been committed within six years immediately preceding the filing of the original complaint, except in the case of sexual or child abuse and in the case of immorality or crime, when the alleged occurrence(s) include allegations of sexual abuse or child abuse, there shall be no limitation (¶2704.1a).

Time spent on leave of absence shall not be considered as part of the six years.

5. *Time of Offense* – A person shall not be charged with an offense that was not a chargeable offense at the time it is alleged to have been committed. Any charge filed shall be in the language of *The Book of Discipline* in effect at the time of the offense is alleged to have occurrence(s) include allegations of sexual abuse or child abuse. Then it shall be in the language of *The Book of Discipline* in effect at the time the charge was filed. Any charge must relate to an action listed as a chargeable offense in the *Discipline*.

Appendix G

Outside Group Waiver

Conway First United Methodist Church
1610 Prince Street
Conway, AR 72034

The congregation of Conway FUMC is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children and adults who participate in ministries and activities that take place in the church.

As a representative of a group using the facilities of Conway FUMC, I understand that Conway FUMC upholds a Safe Sanctuary policy that states: "to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children as well as all of our workers, paid and volunteer. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement appropriate operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with children on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse consistent with Arkansas state law."

As a representative of a group using the facilities of Conway FUMC, I certify that I have been informed that Conway FUMC has a Safe Sanctuary policy and I have been provided an opportunity to receive the policy.

Signature

Date

Print Name

Group or Organization