

Living Word United Methodist Church

2014

Good Shepherd Policy for Protection of Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults

**Approved by Action of Living Word Leadership Team,
January 27, 2014**

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Introduction

Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these."

Matthew 19:14

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep."

John 10:11

Purpose

The Good Shepherd Program is designed to help churches and other ministries develop programs to reduce the risk of abuse or injury to infants, children, youth, and vulnerable/older adults who participate in their programs. The Good Shepherd Program is about stewardship of one of God's great gifts--children and teens. This program enables churches to develop a prevention program without having to "reinvent the wheel."

Sexual or physical abuse and accidental injury to young people and vulnerable/older adults happens more frequently in churches than we realize. Church insurance companies report that incidents are increasing "at epidemic rates." Abuse or serious accidents are disastrous for children, families, church members, church budgets, and the church's ability to spread the Gospel effectively.

Tragically, in a number of cases, the evidence suggests that incidents and injuries could have been prevented with simple procedures and techniques.

Good Shepherd Program Objectives

The Good Shepherd Program is designed to:

- educate church leaders and ministry workers about prevention of abuse or accidental injury
- enable church leaders and ministry workers to implement practices that reduce these risks
- protect adults from mistaken or groundless allegations
- reduce liability for the church
- build parental confidence in church programs
- prepare church workers to respond should an incident or accident occur

Living Word United Methodist Church strongly believes that we must strive to protect children and vulnerable/older adults from all forms of maltreatment, so this program tries to be as comprehensive as possible. However, child sexual abuse is the most difficult risk for most churches to address. The contents of *The Good Shepherd Policy* focuses upon prevention of child abuse, child sexual abuse, and overall safety of children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

No Prevention Program is Foolproof

The ideas and techniques utilized here are the result of substantial experience and consideration by a large number of people who care for kids. These concepts have been implemented successfully in a wide variety of churches and youth programs. They are widely considered to significantly reduce the risks of accidents and abuse.

Persons who are driven to abuse children are sometimes capable of circumventing even the best screening, training, and supervision programs. The most careful preparation cannot avoid all accidents. However, leaders in the field of youth programs generally agree that steps can be taken that will greatly enhance the safety of young people participating in ministries.

Further, no model prevention program will be suitable for every church or in every situation that involves young people in the care of church volunteers and employees. And today there are no national standards to define what constitutes a safe children's program. As the techniques and policies presented here have been pioneered by a wide variety of churches and youth organizations across the USA, the authors of this program sincerely believe that these recommendations are sound in most situations. Church and ministry leaders need to use their own common sense, plan for "worst-case scenarios," and review their precautions frequently.

Legal and Technical Review Required

The material in this package touches upon technical areas of church management, such as employment law, mandatory child-abuse reporting requirements, and insurance. Laws change and vary by jurisdiction. For these reasons, Living Word United Methodist Church Leadership Team will review these recommended policies and guidelines with qualified advisors and legal counsel who are familiar with the laws that apply in the local community. Such review will be conducted annually, and revisions made as deemed necessary to incorporate legal developments and evolving standards applicable to youth programs as needed.

The Language of Prevention – A Glossary of Terms

This is a glossary of terminology as used in this manual. Technical definitions used for clinical purposes may differ. Legal definitions will vary by jurisdiction.

Abandonment - Leaving a vulnerable adult without the means to obtain food, clothing, shelter, or health care. This form of abuse involves a recognized caregiver who has been giving regular and substantial care to an older person, and willfully discontinues the care without assuring adequate replacement or giving appropriate notice to responsible parties.

Abuse - any act or failure to act performed intentionally or recklessly that causes or is likely to cause harm, including: infliction or physical or mental injury; sexual abuse; unreasonable use of physical or chemical restraints, isolation, medications; threats or menacing conduct; fiduciary abuse or omission or deprivation by a caretaker or another person of goods or services which are necessary to avoid physical or mental harm or illness.

Abused or neglected child – a child whose mental or physical health is endangered or threatened by the actions or failure to act by people responsible for the child's care.

Boundaries – property boundaries are the limits or dividing lines between pieces of real estate. People have boundaries, too, that guide our physical and emotional relations. Personal boundaries are like fences, separating appropriate behavior from improper behavior. The lines change according to the child's age and the relationship between the child and the adult. In a physical sense boundaries govern appropriate behavior. For example, it is fine for a four year old to sit on the lap of her Sunday school teacher, but not for her 14-year-old sister to sit on the lap of her youth group sponsor. Any child with weak boundaries is more vulnerable to sexual molestation. Healthy boundaries enable a child to recognize and reject inappropriate behavior.

In relationships, boundaries govern our behavior and roles. For example, youth ministers should understand the boundaries of their roles and avoid intruding into the responsibilities of a parent.

Child maltreatment – harm to a child by a caretaker or another person who may come into contact with the child. This includes acts of commission (assault) as well as acts of omission (failure to protect). In other words -- physical, emotional, or sexual abuse and neglect.

Child molester – a person who has sexually violated a child.

Child protective services – a generic name for agencies of municipal or state government that investigate child maltreatment and provide services to victims and families. May also be called "social services, human services, child welfare," or similar names. Child protective services work

closely with law enforcement and the courts. Most child protective services staff people have in-depth social work and family counseling training.

Child sexual abuse – includes but is not limited to any contact or interaction between a child and an adult when the child is being used for sexual stimulation of the adult person or of a third person. The behavior may or may not involve touching. Sexual behavior between a child and an adult is always considered forced whether or not consented to by the child. Also referred to as molestation.

Children and/or youth – anyone 18 years of age or younger and still in high school. This category may also include persons 18 years of age through 21 years of age who are not able to fully protect themselves from exploitation or give consent for sexual activity (due to age, intellectual or physical impairments, or other incapacities). An 18 year old still in high school who participates in a high school youth activity is considered a youth in such situations. The definition of a "child" or "minor" may differ according to various state statutes and regulations. The state of Missouri defines children as 17 & under. Living Word's Good Shepherd policy includes 18 year olds who are still in high school. High school graduates may continue to participate in youth activities in the summer following their high school graduation, but when they turn 18 years old, they begin to participate as young adults who are not subject to the supervisory restrictions of the Good Shepherd policy.

Denominational organization – dioceses, synods, conferences, or similar associations of churches that may have policies that interact with an individual church's policies and guidelines.

Emotional abuse may take two forms:

failure to provide love, emotional support, and adult guidance (an act of omission), or, conduct that threatens a child's self-esteem and emotional development, such as humiliating, insulting, or belittling a child (an act of commission).

Exploitation - misappropriation of an adult's property or intentionally taking unfair advantage of an adult's physical or financial resources.

Grooming – a pattern of behavior by a child molester which makes a child more vulnerable to molestation or prevents a child from reporting molestation. Often molestation occurs only after considerable contact with the molester that allows the molester to evaluate and increase the vulnerability of a victim. Example: a child molester involves a teen in viewing pornography and consuming alcohol as an introduction to sexual activity. Later the molester threatens the child by saying "Don't tell anyone or you'll be in more trouble than me for drinking and having those magazines."

Mandatory reporting – Incidents may involve inappropriate behavior by staff/volunteers or other participants toward a participant and call for immediate on-site corrective action. Incidents may involve abuse of participants by staff/volunteers or other participants and mandate reporting through the Missouri Child Abuse Hotline (1-800-392-3738). A call to the Hotline is required to be made by staff/volunteers if there is reasonable cause to suspect that abuse of a participant has occurred. When the necessity of reporting occurs, the protection of children and youth must be paramount. Cooperation with the Department of Family services and law enforcement is required in all such incidences. In case of allegations of abuse, the District Superintendent and/or Bishop shall be notified immediately.

Molestation – see child sexual abuse.

Neglect – the omission or failure to ensure the safety and well being of a child, youth, or vulnerable/older adult. The definition of neglect includes self-neglect, that is, one’s own failure to avoid physical or mental harm and to provide for oneself. Neglect occurs when, a caregiver does not provide enough care and support to meet the person’s individual needs for physical and emotional well-being. –

Older Adult - The federal government uses ages 65 as a marker for full Social Security and Medicare benefits. Researchers identify subgroups of “older adults” as “younger old” (ages 65-75), “older-old” (ages 75-85), and “oldest old” (ages 85+).

Pedophile and hebephile - Pedophile is a clinical diagnosis of a person with a compulsive sexual desire for children who have not yet reached the age of puberty. A hebephile is similar to a pedophile except the desire is focused on adolescent children. The sexual desire must have lasted at least six months and be strong enough to cause significant stress on the individual or cause the individual to act.

Warning: These are clinical terms used by mental health professionals for particular types of child molesters. Not all child molesters are pedophiles or hebephiles. Pedophiles or hebephiles who have not acted upon their fantasies are not child molesters. Since most church workers are not qualified to diagnose these conditions, church workers are best advised to stick to the term child molester for reasons of simplicity and clarity. This is especially important when making reports to child protective workers, law enforcement agencies, or in court testimony. The term child molester stems from outwardly visible behavior that is harmful, regardless of its psychological roots.

Physical abuse – any deliberate act that inflicts bodily harm to a person.

Preferential child molester – molester who actively plans to molest children and works to gain access to them. Preferential molesters will typically abuse children repeatedly and will assail hundreds of children throughout their lifetimes.

Program or ministry leader – persons who direct one component of the church's ministry to children or vulnerable/older adults. This category includes both staff and volunteers in leadership roles.

Red flag – an informal term for any indication that an individual may not be well suited to caretaker roles with children or youth. A red flag raises suspicions and causes program leaders to look more closely at an individual's qualifications or behavior. (Please see Policy #4 of the Good Shepherd Model Policy Manual.)

Risk management – a field of management in which an organization or business evaluates the risks it faces and minimizes or transfers risk in order to protect the effectiveness of the organization. Risk management usually includes the purchase of insurance as a part of the overall process.

Sexual abuse/assault/exploitation – any act of sexual intimacy lacking mutual consent and involving force or threat of force, any sexual contact or sexually explicit language, gestures, or images by a staff person or volunteer with, or directed to, a participant. This includes situations in which the victim is unable to give consent due to age, intellectual or physical impairments, or other incapacities. Note that this definition applies regardless of the ages of the victim and victimizer (i.e., adult-adult, adult-child, or child-child).

Sexual misconduct – *The Good Shepherd Program* defines this term as improper, exploitive sexual behavior between adults. Examples include a counselor who has sex with a person they are counseling or a minister having an extramarital affair with a church member. Note that some individuals and organizations use this term to refer to all inappropriate sexual activities, relationships, and behavior, whether involving children or adults.

Situational child molester – molester who does not actively plan to molest children but is presented with the temptation and acts on impulse. Often the molestation would not occur without exceptional circumstances or unusual stress.

Survivors of abuse – Often youth workers choose to refer to people who have experienced abuse as "survivors" instead of "victims." This term helps the abused individuals see themselves as people who are overcoming a problem rather than as people who are powerless, defined by the abuse they have experienced.

Vulnerable adults – A vulnerable adult is someone who is aged 18 years or over who 'is or may be in need of Pastoral care services by reasons of disability, age or illness'.

Worker or ministry worker – any person who has custody or supervision of children and/or youth (as defined in the glossary of terms) during church activities, whether in a paid or a volunteer role. This includes parents of kids who participate in activities.

Workers by type:

Primary workers – all paid staff and those volunteers in roles with greater responsibility or risk should be classified as primary workers and should meet the primary screening standards (please refer to Policy #3 of the Good Shepherd Model Policy Manual). Primary workers have greater responsibility and more opportunity to harm children, so churches must take extra care in their screening.

Secondary workers – secondary workers are people who occasionally interact with minors and/or do so in less risky circumstances. For example, a volunteer who sees children only in a group setting, on church premises, and with a ministry leader present may be classified as a secondary worker. This category includes parents of participants who supervise activities.

District/Conference Youth Volunteers – adult volunteers who will work during District or Conference youth events must be certified through the Conference Safe Sanctuary Training process and have received a card good for three (3) years showing that all requirements have been met.

Policy #1

Ongoing Supervision of the Child Safety Program

Living Word United Methodist Church Leadership Team will supervise the child safety program. This program shall govern all church activities that involve custody of children and /or youth (as defined in the glossary of terms).

Annual Review of Safety Program

Each ministry leader will review compliance with safety policies and potential risks annually in a brief written report that will be given to the person responsible for the child safety program. The reports should include:

- A listing of any new programs or program changes and the additional risks these changes may incur.
- A brief summary of policy violations and the program leader's response to these violations.

Any patterns of violations that suggest policy changes are needed should be identified. The ministry leader will summarize the reports received from program leaders and submit an overall report annually to Living Word United Methodist Church Leadership Team.

Living Word United Methodist Church Leadership Team will be responsible for all policy revisions and their dissemination following annual review.

Waiver of Policies

Church policies may be waived occasionally for exceptional circumstances. The goal of Living Word United Methodist Church is to promote safety while maintaining practical flexibility in children's and youth ministry. Waiving policies will only be authorized by the Leadership Team.

Modification of Policies

Changes in these policies must be approved by Leadership Team. These policies may be modified or withdrawn by Living Word United Methodist Church at any time. These policies are not intended to create an implied or express contract with any person. They are not intended to create a legally enforceable or binding promise or representation.

Activities Covered by These Policies

All activities of Living Word United Methodist Church that require church workers acting within the scope of their duties to have custody of children, youth, and/or vulnerable/older adults (as defined in the glossary of terms), shall follow these policies.

It is understood that any Living Word United Methodist Church ministry involving any child or youth (as defined in the glossary of terms) must comply with Good Shepherd policies. Examples of these ministries are listed below, but are not meant to be all inclusive:

- Nursery
- Sunday School
- Acolytes
- Vacation Bible School
- All Children's and Youth Choirs
- All Children's and Youth Drama
- All Youth Groups
- Middle School and High School programs
- Confirmation volunteers and leaders
- All Mission activities involving Children and Youth regardless of Ministry area

This policy does not apply to the following programs:

Ministries/events in which District or Conference policies supersede the local church.

Persons Required to Complete Good Shepherd Certification

All persons who, within the scope of their duties as a Living Word UMC volunteer or staff member, have custody of children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults must have current Good Shepherd certification.

By action of Living Word Church Council on December 5, 2011, all church officers, all teachers/facilitators of adult short or long term studies, and all committee chairs are also required to have current Good Shepherd certification. Officers of the church are: Leadership Team Chair, all members of the Staff-Parish Relations, Trustees, Finance, and Nominations Committees, and Lay Delegates to Annual Conference. This requirement acknowledges that for Living Word to be as diligent as possible in the carrying out of our protection policy, *all* those in leadership roles in the church need to have an understanding of, and be compliant with, the Living Word policy. There is an implicit expectation in the minds of parishioners that all those in leadership roles in the church are aware of and compliant with the Good Shepherd policy, and it is our responsibility to ensure this is not a false expectation.

Parent/Guardian Responsibility

Parents and/or legal guardians of children, youth, and vulnerable adults at Living Word maintain responsibility for their care and supervision until their child, youth, or vulnerable adult is transferred into the supervisory care of a Living Word staff member of ministry volunteer. This

parent/guardian responsibility for care and supervision resumes when the child, youth, or vulnerable adult has been transferred out of Living Word supervisory care.

Policy #2

Operating Policies for All Children's, Youth, and Vulnerable/Older Adult Ministries

Statement of Purpose

As a church, we believe that the spiritual, emotional, and physical well-being of children, youth, and vulnerable/older adults is vital. This policy is intended to ensure that church activities involving these persons are consistent with the teachings and example of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the Christian tradition of nurturing vulnerable persons.

The primary purpose of this policy is to promote the safety and well-being of children, youth, and vulnerable/older adults by providing clear instructions about the operation of ministries involving these persons at Living Word United Methodist Church. The leaders of Living Word United Methodist Church sincerely request the cooperation of the adults in our church who must abide by the stringent guidelines of this policy.

Safety Takes Priority

The greatest priority of Living Word United Methodist Church children's, youth, and vulnerable/older adult programs is to help these populations through the Gospel and ministry of Jesus Christ. It is obvious that any sexual exploitation, abuse, or endangerment directly contradicts this priority and the values of Living Word United Methodist Church.

Missouri United Methodists affirm that all children, youth and vulnerable/older adults have the right to safe sanctuary. Therefore, Missouri United Methodists are determined to provide an environment in which these persons are safe from neglect or abuse. The scope of this policy and its provisions shall apply to all staff and volunteers, clergy or lay, who have contact with children, youth, and vulnerable/older adults in the ministries of Living Word United Methodist Church.

Groups from organizations other than Living Word utilizing Living Word's facilities must agree to abide by the requirements of this Good Shepherd policy. It is up to the Living Word ministry leader coordinating such events to provide the outside group with these requirements and to obtain written agreement to abide by them.

Workers and supervisors who oversee children, youth, and vulnerable/older adult workers must keep this priority in mind: adults do not have a right to serve as workers. Adults merely have an **opportunity** to serve when selected by the church. This means that workers should err on the side of caution as they make subjective decisions involving the well-being of children, youth, and vulnerable/older adults.

A Higher Standard

As ambassadors of Jesus Christ, we must strive to be worthy of a very high standard of trust. For this reason, every worker at Living Word United Methodist Church must avoid even the appearance of inappropriate behavior. All workers must diligently avoid any conduct that appears wrong to a reasonable observer, even if no actual misconduct takes place.

Policy Standards and General Christian Moral Standards

Workers in children's, youth, and vulnerable/older adult ministry are expected to observe these policies and guidelines as well as the other Christian standards of moral behavior. Our behavior should reflect the love, mercy, integrity, compassion and wisdom of Jesus Christ and should be grounded in Godly principles revealed through the Bible so we can live in covenant with God and others.

Supervision of Ministry Workers with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable/Older Adults Adequate Supervision of Youth Workers

Church staff and volunteers, including volunteers who supervise youth workers, are charged with the diligent enforcement of these policies. Violations of these policies are grounds for immediate dismissal, disciplinary action, or re-assignment for both volunteers and staff, at the discretion of the church. Supervisors and volunteers who suspect any unhealthy or abusive activities must discuss their suspicions promptly with a Staff Ministry Director or one of the church Pastors.

Worker to Child Ratios

Living Word United Methodist Church has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry workers to children whenever feasible. These ratios are goals. The church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible, such as an unexpected number of children showing up for an event.

Worker to Child Ratios *2 Worker Minimum Rule: *there should always be 2 workers even if fewer children than in ratio to maintain a two-deep policy.*

PROGRAM	WORKERS	CHILDREN
Nursery		
Infant	2	6
Toddler	2	8
2's – PreK	2	10
Sunday School	2	20
Youth Programs (6 th -12 th)	2	20
Midweek Small Groups (K-5 th)	2	20
Midweek Small Groups (6 th -12)	2	20
Vacation Bible School	2	20

Mission Trips

Middle School (2 adult min.)	2	8
High School (2 adult min.)	2	10

Touching Policy

We live in an age where abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable/older adults is a reality in our society. The church should deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect those in our care. Living Word United Methodist Church has implemented a touching policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be carefully followed by anyone working with children, youth, and vulnerable/older adults.

1. Non-sexual hugging, holding hands, pat on the back/shoulder and other forms of appropriate physical affection between workers and those in their care are important for care and development, and are generally suitable in our church setting. Vulnerable adults, in particular usually lack the physical touch that was once so vital to their beings. As we age, people feel uncomfortable touching older and vulnerable adults and we tend to not touch at all. Holding a hand, resting a hand lightly on the back or shoulder would be appropriate for these adults.
2. Physical affection should be appropriate to the age of the child or youth. (For example, it is generally appropriate for a four-year-old to sit in a nursery worker's lap and give a kiss on the cheek, but it is not appropriate for a teenager and youth leader to behave this way.)
3. Touching should be initiated by the child or youth. It should be a response to the child's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need.
4. Touching and affection should only be given when in the presence of other children's ministry or youth workers. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adult workers are present and the touching is open to observation. This rule is especially important when diapering a baby or helping a young child change clothes or use the restroom.
5. Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As ministry workers our behavior must foster trust at all times; it should be above reproach.
6. Any person's preference not to be touched should be respected. Do not force affection upon a reluctant person.
7. Church workers are responsible to protect children, youth, and vulnerable/older adults

under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others.

8. Church workers must promptly discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with their ministry leader or a pastor. Please contact the Director of Children's Ministries for birth through 5th grade incidents, the Director of Youth Ministries for 6th through 12th grade incidents, or the Director of Pastoral Care or Director of Adult Ministries for vulnerable/older adult incidents. As a volunteer in the state of Missouri, it is mandatory that any suspicion of abuse be reported to your immediate authorities (refer to mandatory reporting in the glossary of terms) with what you have seen and what you suspect so it would be important to document the incident.

Policies Concerning Children of Parents Attending Adult Events

1. Childcare may be scheduled for use by children of Living Word members and non-members during meetings, Bible studies, and other church events. Parents should be onsite at the church facility and use a pager so that childcare staff can reach them quickly.
2. There are no set hours for childcare outside of Sunday morning and Wednesday evening Connection. Childcare is only scheduled when requested by a ministry leader.
3. Services are designed for infants through elementary school children. Childcare facilities are not designed for middle school youth, and other arrangements should be made for their care.
4. Elementary and middle school children may stay with their parents unless confidentiality requires otherwise. Elementary-aged children are not permitted to remain unsupervised in any area of the building. Middle and high school youth may wait for parents in either the lobby or library. Parents of children who become disruptive may be called out of their meeting or event by any Living Word staff member on duty.
5. Childcare will remain open until 15 minutes after the scheduled end of the adult activity. Parents are encouraged to pick up their children within 5 minutes of the scheduled end of their meeting.
6. In the event that childcare is scheduled but no children arrive, staff will stay 45 minutes past the starting time of the event to accommodate late arrivers, then will leave.
7. Guidelines for scheduled childcare providers are those provided in Form #6, "Guidelines for Nursery Workers".

Policy #3

Worker Selection and Supervision

The following guidelines will be used as LIVING WORD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH reviews applicants for positions in children's youth, and vulnerable/older adult ministry:

Minimum Age

All workers must have completed 5th grade. An adult worker is age 18 or older and no longer in high school. All 6th graders must be paired with an adult, and depending on the situation, 7th grade through high school seniors should be paired with an adult rather than having two teenagers working together. (Exceptions might include having two qualified youth volunteers leading a VBS group where they will be traveling to activity centers where adults are present). Youth who have completed 5th grade and have gone through the application process and Good Shepherd training may count as a 2nd worker when with an approved adult worker, including within the paid childcare system.

Age Separation Rule

There must be a four-year separation between those who supervise children or youth, unless the supervisor has reached the age of 21. For example, workers with 14-year-old middle school youth must be at least 18 years old, and workers with 10-year-old grade school children must be at least 14 years old. Persons who have reached the age of 21, however, may supervise any age level, including high school youth who have reached the age of 18. Children and youth leaders are expected to conservatively estimate the oldest age of a child or youth expected to attend any event, and only recruit workers who either meet the four-year separation rule or are 21 years of age or older.

Confidential Interviews

All applicants for primary workers must be interviewed for suitability for the work they desire to do. Interviews will be conducted by the leader of the program in which the applicant will work or by other persons designated by the program leader. A team of interviewers may be used. Church policy and guidelines should be discussed during the interview. Secondary workers may be interviewed in person or by phone following receipt of application and reference check.

Six-Month Rule

Applicants must have been a member of Living Word United Methodist Church or a regular attendee (at least 50% attendance in 6 month period) of the church for at least six months. This time of interaction between ministry leaders and the applicant allows leaders to better evaluate the suitability of an applicant for volunteer work. In some situations this rule is not feasible and may be waived if all other background checks/references are acceptable by hiring staff person

such as church employees or interns who are not church members. If the six-month rule is waived, program leaders should take additional steps to screen the applicant at their own discretion.

Application Forms

Applicants must complete and sign the Good Shepherd application (Form #2) and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information (Form #3).

Survivors of Child Abuse

Any applicant who is a survivor of childhood sexual or physical abuse needs the love and acceptance of the Living Word United Methodist Church family. A person's experience with abuse and their recovery process may be pertinent to their suitability as ministry workers. Applicants who are survivors of abuse should discuss this in confidence with the person who conducts the confidential interview. If an applicant is uncomfortable doing so, they may have the interview conducted by a pastor.

When evaluating candidates, the following factors will be considered if an applicant is a survivor of child abuse:

- whether the applicant has previously committed an act of child abuse or molestation (anyone who has maltreated children may not serve in children's or youth ministry)
- the extent of professional counseling the applicant has received
- the opinion of references, especially professional counselors who have served the applicant
- the opinion of leaders in other churches or youth organizations in which the applicant has been involved
- how closely the church is able to supervise and monitor the position for which the applicant is applying

Criminal Background Check

Required for primary worker positions. **Optional** for secondary worker applicants at the option of the leader of the program in which they will work.

References

Three personal references must be submitted by each worker. The "children's, youth, and vulnerable/older adult reference" (Form #4) forms are to be mailed directly to the Living Word Office Coordinator at the church address, by the person completing the reference. The three references should include: one person who has known the applicant well for an extended period

of time, and, whenever possible, a pastor/church staff person. For applicants for compensated positions, additional former supervisors may be checked.

Auto Safety

It is the goal of all church activities to use the church bus in transporting members to offsite locations. When use of the church bus is not feasible, then persons who will drive vehicles for conducting church business or transporting children must complete an "Auto Safety" form (Form #5). This form is not necessary for people who will not transport children or youth.

First Aid Training

Church employees who supervise young people must maintain current certification in basic first aid and basic CPR (or their equivalent if other is offered in the church's locality). Costs for this training will be paid by the church. The church has purchased an automatic defibrillator for restarting hearts and it has instructions on it. Employees will be paid for attending training. New employees must get this certification within 90 days of the start of their employment. Nursery workers and others serving young children may also want training in infant and toddler CPR. Other workers are encouraged, but not required, to get training if they frequently accompany kids on adventure activities: water sports, camping, home-building mission trips, etc.

Signatures on Guidelines

All applicants must agree by signature that they understand the guidelines pertaining to their positions and that they agree to abide by them. This requirement will be met by having applicants sign the printed "Guidelines" forms that are appropriate to their position. (Forms #6, 7 & 8) Staff members or volunteers who work with several ministry areas should sign the appropriate form for each ministry area.

Confidentiality of Information

The church will keep confidential all information received in the applicant selection process. Selection information will be marked as such and stored with limited access afforded only to church staff and others with a need to know.

Delays in Receiving Information

While the church is waiting for background information and references, applicants may begin working in contact with children, youth, and/or vulnerable/older adults. During this time only closely supervised work should be done by the applicant. Failure to receive satisfactory responses in a timely manner may result in dismissal or withdrawal of the offer to work with the children, youth, or vulnerable/older adult ministry program.

Classification of Workers According to Their Duties

In order to screen workers appropriately to their responsibilities, Living Word United Methodist

Church will categorize workers into three categories: primary, secondary and District/Conference Youth worker. Please note that the terms primary and secondary do not refer to the ages of children served, but rather to relative levels of responsibility and risk.

Primary workers -- all paid staff and those volunteers in roles with greater responsibility or risk should be classified as primary workers and should meet the primary screening standards. Primary workers have greater interaction with and access to children, and more opportunity to harm children, so churches must take extra care in their screening.

Secondary workers -- Secondary workers are people who occasionally interact with minors and/or do so in less risky circumstances. For example, a volunteer who sees children only in a group setting, on church premises, and with a ministry leader present may be classified as a secondary worker. This category may include parents of participants who supervise activities.

District/Conference Youth worker – an adult volunteer serving at a District or Conference function must have completed the Conference Safe Sanctuary Training and have a valid approval card which must be re-certified every three (3) years.

Recertification -- Volunteers must be re-certified by January 1 of the year following the three-year anniversary of initial certification, and every three years thereafter. Volunteers who are re-certifying do not need to resubmit the application (Form #2) or references (Form #4), but all other paperwork must be resubmitted to ensure awareness of policy revisions since prior certification. Background and auto safety checks will be repeated as part of the recertification process.

Recommended Screening Requirements for Primary and Secondary Workers

	Primary	Secondary
Six-Month Rule (may be waived for employees and interns)	Yes	Yes
Application Form and Covenant	Yes	Yes
Records Request Authorization	Yes	Optional
References	3 or more	2 or more
Confidential Interview	In-depth	Brief (by phone is fine)
Criminal/Court Records Background Check	Yes	Optional
Child Abuse Registry	Yes	Yes
Auto Safety Form	Yes*	Yes*
Guidelines (signed) and Job Description	Yes	Yes

** If operating a vehicle for church business.*

Form #1

Personnel File Checklist

Name _____

Has applicant been a church member or regular attendee for at least six months?

Yes _____ No _____

R=Received, W=Waived*,

Items contained in this file:

Signed Application Form (form 2)	__ R	
Signed Release and Authorization Form (form 3)	__ R	__ W
Criminal/Court Records Background Check	__ R	__ W
Reference 1 (form 4)	__ R	
Reference 2	__ R	
Reference 3	__ R	
Signed Auto Safety Form (if driving, form 5)	__ R	__ W
Copy of Driver's License and Proof of Insurance (if driving)	__ R	__ W
Signed Copy of Applicable Guidelines for Workers (form 6, 7, 8, or 9)	__ R	
Quiz	__ R	

Certification Complete DATE _____

Name Badge updated Date _____

CD contains:

1. Power Point Presentation explaining application process
2. Good Shepherd Policy Book (complete with all forms)
3. Rapid Response Book
4. GS Quiz

Form #2

Children's, Youth, and Vulnerable/Older Adult Ministries Application

Date: _____ / _____ / _____

Note: This form is to be completed by all applicants (volunteer and employee) for any position involving supervision or custody of minors and /or care of vulnerable/older adults. This application is used by Living Word United Methodist Church to help promote a safe environment for the children, youth, and vulnerable/older adults who participate in our programs or use our facilities.

Any applicant who has ever been convicted of child sexual abuse, physical abuse, or domestic violence should not volunteer service in any church sponsored activity or program for children, youth, or vulnerable/older adults. Applicants with criminal records of other types will be evaluated at the discretion of church leaders.

Any applicant who is a survivor of childhood sexual or physical abuse needs the love and acceptance of the Living Word United Methodist Church family. Applicants who have such a history should discuss their desire to work with youth with one of the Age-Level Ministries Directors or one of the Pastors prior to any participation as a youth worker.

All applicants must study and agree to obey the guidelines that are provided for their program and position within the church's children's, youth, and vulnerable/older adult ministry.

Please answer each question.

Consistent with relevant law, the information on this application will not be disclosed to unauthorized persons. Circle **Y** for yes or **N** for no. You may use the back of the paper for explanations or you may attach extra pages.

Name _____ Email _____
Last First Middle

Y N Have you used any other names? If yes, please list complete name and dates of use on the reverse side of this application.

Present Address _____
Street City State Zip

Home Phone (____) _____ Work Phone (____) _____

Social Security # _____ Driver's License # _____

Which group do you prefer to work with: Preschool, Elementary, Middle School, High School, Vulnerable/Older Adults (circle/list all that apply) _____

On what date would you be available? _____

Disciplinary and Legal Background

Y N As a church worker with children, youth, and/or vulnerable/older adults, do you agree to observe all guidelines and policies regarding this ministry?

Y N Have you ever been convicted of a criminal offense (felony or misdemeanor, except for minor traffic violations)? You will need to answer "yes" if you have entered into a plea agreement, including a deferred sentence or deferred judgment arrangement, in connection with a criminal charge. If you have been convicted of such an offense, please attach a statement of explanation, including nature of offense, date, court where conviction was entered, and any other relevant information.

Y N Have you ever been charged with a sexual offense, offense relating to children, youth, or vulnerable/older adults or crime of violence? If you have been charged with such an offense, please attach a statement of explanation, including nature of offense charged, date, law enforcement agency making the charge, and any other relevant information.

Y N Have you ever been reported to a social services agency, law enforcement authority, child abuse registry, or similar organization regarding abuse or misconduct involving children, youth, or vulnerable/older adults? If so, provide a description of the circumstances and name and address of the entity receiving the report.

Y N Have you ever been subjected to expulsion, reprimand, or other discipline by a church, denomination, or other organization? If so please describe the circumstances and provide the name and address of the church, denomination or religious organization involved.

Y N Have you ever been disciplined or dismissed from employment or a volunteer position by any employer or any organization in which you volunteered, including charitable and religious organizations, following an allegation of sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, or other immoral or inappropriate behavior or conduct? If so please describe the circumstances and the name and address of the employer.

Y N Have you ever been the subject of a civil lawsuit involving sexual misconduct, sexual harassment, or other immoral behavior or conduct, involving adults or children? If so please describe the circumstances and provide the name and address of the employer, educational institutions, church, or other organization where the lawsuit, investigation, or allegation arose or occurred.

Y N Have you ever been the subject of a complaint or disciplinary proceeding against a professional

license or other license held by you, including but not limited to a license to provide child care or similar services?

- Y N** Have you ever been the subject of any disciplinary action, transfer, or dismissal, or been named as a defendant in a civil or criminal lawsuit, as a result of an accident or mishap involving children, youth, or vulnerable/older adults? If so please describe the circumstances and provide the name and address of the employer, church, or organization with which you and/or the children, youth, or vulnerable/older adults were associated at the time of the incident.
- Y N** Do you have any investigation, review, or disciplinary action pending by an employer, organization in which you volunteered, licensing authority, or professional association for sexual misconduct, violence, or misconduct involving children, youth, or vulnerable/older adult?
- Y N** Were you abused as a child? *You may refuse to answer this question, or you may discuss your answer in confidence with a pastor or church leader rather than answering on this form. A "yes" does not disqualify you from working with children or youth.*
- Y N** If you are volunteering to work with vulnerable/older adults, have you ever received treatment for any emotional or psychiatric problems? (Note: A great many caregivers have been made stronger in their caregiving ministry through the care they themselves received, including care from mental health professionals. We affirm the work of mental health professionals, who have helped many individuals to experience growth and healing. The Director of Pastoral Care and the Pastors request this information because they want to be as fully informed as possible about their Vulnerable Adult Caregivers).

Church Activity

List other churches you have attended over the past five years.

<i>Church Name</i>	<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Contact</i>	<i>Years Attended</i>

Name of church of which you are currently member: _____

If a regular visitor or member of this church, how long have you been attending Living Word United Methodist Church? _____

List previous work (*church and non-church*) involving children or youth.
Use a separate sheet of paper if needed.

<i>Church Name</i>	<i>Telephone</i>	<i>Contact</i>	<i>Type of Work</i>

List gifts, callings, training, education, or other factors that may have prepared you for work with children and youth. Use a separate sheet of paper if needed.

Employment History

Identify all employers for the last 10 years. Include part-time and temporary employers. Start with your most recent employer. Attach an additional sheet if necessary.

<i>Employer Name</i>	<i>Area Code & Phone Number</i>	<i>Title</i>	<i>Dates Employed</i>	<i>Reason for Leaving</i>

Please describe your activities during any gaps in employment in excess of three months. Do not include leave or time off due to illness or medical treatment.

References

<i>Name</i>	<i>Address & Telephone</i>	<i>Years Known/Relationship</i>
		(pastor/ministry staff)
		(friend/business)
		(friend/business)

Applicant's Statement

I hereby authorize all employers, organizations, churches, and other entities and persons identified in this form to release any information contained in their files or records concerning me.

In consideration of the receipt and evaluation of this application by LIVING WORD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, I hereby release LIVING WORD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH and any individual, church, youth organization, charity, employer, reference, or any other person or organization, including record custodians, both collectively and individually, from any and all liability for damages of whatever kind or nature which may at any time result to me, my heirs, or family, on account of compliance or any attempts to comply, with this authorization. I waive any right that I may have to inspect any information provided about me by any person or organization identified by me in this application. I HAVE CAREFULLY READ THE FOREGOING RELEASE AND KNOW THE CONTENTS THEREOF, AND I SIGN THIS RELEASE AS MY OWN FREE ACT.

I understand and agree that it is critical to the mission and ministry of LIVING WORD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH that all employees and volunteers conform to the highest standards of safety, interpersonal conduct, and sexual morality. I affirm that I will strictly comply with LIVING WORD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH children, youth, and vulnerable/older adult ministry policies and procedures, including those concerning safety and protection, sexual abuse and misconduct, and interpersonal relationships. I understand and agree that failure by me to abide by such policies and procedures may result in my immediate dismissal, or disciplinary action, all in the discretion of the church.

My responses above are truthful and accurate. I understand and agree that if they are not truthful and accurate, LIVING WORD UNITED METHODIST CHURCH may determine that I am no longer qualified to be associated with its programs as a church worker, employee, or volunteer in any capacity.

Applicant's Signature _____ Date _____

Print Name _____

Witness _____ Date _____

Form #3

Children, Youth, and Vulnerable/Older Adult Worker Authorization for Criminal/Court Records Check

Release Authorization

In connection with my application for placement, I understand that an investigative report will be requested that will include information as to my character, work habits, performance, and experience, along with reasons for disciplinary action or termination of past employment. I understand that as directed by policy and consistent with the job described, you may be requesting information from public and private sources about my: criminal record, driving record, education, and previous employment.

The fact that applicants have a criminal record will not be an automatic bar to employment or work as a volunteer. Factors such as age at the time of the criminal offense, seriousness and nature of the violation, time elapsed, and subsequent rehabilitation will be taken into account.

I acknowledge that a telephonic facsimile (fax) or photographic copy shall be as valid as the original. This release is valid for most federal, state, and county agencies, including the Missouri Department of Labor.

I hereby authorize, without reservation, any law enforcement agency, court, institution, information service bureau, school, employer, or other organization or person contacted by the employer or its agent to furnish the information described above.

Signature

Print your full name

Today's Date

The following information is required by law enforcement agencies and other entities for positive identification purposes when checking records. It is confidential and will not be used for any other purpose.

Print other last names you have used

Home Address

City

State

Zip

Social Security Number

Date of Birth

Driver's License Number

Name as it appears on license

State Issuing License

Form #4
Children's, Youth and Vulnerable/Older Adults Worker
Reference Form

***Applicant:** Please complete the top two lines, and give this form to three persons. One may be a family member. If possible, one reference should be a pastor or church staff ministry leader.*

***Reference:** The person named below has applied for a position volunteering with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults at Living Word United Methodist Church, and has listed you as a reference. Please answer the following questions as honestly as possible. All information will be held in confidence and will not be released to unauthorized persons. Please return this form directly to:*

Living Word UMC
Attn: Cindy Brown
17315 Manchester Road
Wildwood, MO 63038

Applicant Name _____

Reference Name _____

Reference Questions

How do you know the applicant? For how long have you known him or her?

Would you recommend this applicant for a position of trust supervising children, youth, and /or vulnerable/older adults? Why or why not?

What specific strengths or weaknesses are you aware of relating to this person's desire to work with children, youth, and/or vulnerable/older adults? What else should we know before putting this person in a position of trust with children, youth, or vulnerable/older adults?

Form #5

Auto Safety Certification

Circle either **Y** for Yes or **N** for No. The information on this application will not be disclosed to unauthorized persons.

Y N Are you now a licensed driver? Please present your license to staff so they may copy it for the records.

Y N Do you currently have personal auto insurance? Please present your proof of insurance card to staff so they may copy it for the records.

Y N Have you been ticketed for driving violations (parking tickets not included) within the past 2 years? (If yes, please explain the nature of the tickets on the back of this paper.)

Agreement to Notify of Driving Events

I agree to immediately inform my ministry leader or senior pastor if my driver's license is suspended or revoked, if I am ticketed for a driving offense, or if I have DUI or DWI charges pending. I must also notify my ministry leader or the senior pastor if my personal auto insurance is canceled or not renewed. These notifications are required even if the offenses are not related to church work. The church will not release this information to unauthorized persons.

Seat Belt Usage

I agree to transport persons only in passenger seats equipped with appropriate seat belts and child safety seats. I agree to require seat belt usage and child safety seat usage at all times. In buses that are not outfitted with seat belts, this rule does not apply.

Safe Vehicles

I agree to transport persons only in vehicles that are in safe operating condition.

I have truthfully and accurately responded to the questions above. I agree to notify the church if any of the driving events listed above occurs.

Signature _____ Date _____

Please print name _____

***Note to church staff:** This form, together with a copy of the applicant's driver's license and insurance card, should be filed with the applicant's application.*

Form #6

Guidelines for Nursery Workers

Note: We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. The church must deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the children in our care. Living Word United Methodist Church has implemented a policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be strictly followed by anyone who has custody or supervision of nursery age children. We pray for God's blessing for our children, workers, and church.

Before You Begin

Six-Month Rule -- All workers must be members or regular attendees of Living Word United Methodist Church for at least six months before working in the nursery. This guideline may be waived for employees.

Completion of Application -- All nursery workers must complete and sign an application form.

Release Authorization Form -- All nursery workers must complete and sign a Release Authorization form.

References -- Applicants will be asked to provide three references not in the applicant's immediate family. The church may also contact employers, former ministers, and persons who have supervised applicants in church work previously.

Interview -- All nursery workers must be interviewed by a nursery coordinator or church leader to determine their suitability for nursery work. Information from this interview will not be released to unauthorized persons.

Background Check and Social Services Registry -- After gaining the applicant's permission, church leaders will conduct a criminal background check and a Missouri family registry check for applicants: this is mandatory for primary positions and optional for secondary positions.

Auto Safety Form -- All nursery workers who will be driving children or youth conducting other church business must complete and sign an Auto Safety form.

Signed Agreement to Follow Guidelines -- All nursery workers must sign the agreement at the end of these guidelines to show their commitment to observe these guidelines.

Guidelines

Two-Person Rule -- Two workers must be present in each nursery room at all times. This rule accomplishes two important objectives. First, it reduces the risk of child abuse. Secondly, it reduces the risk of unfounded claims of abuse. Teams of workers cannot be of the same family unless a third un-related person is a visible and unpredictable presence such as hallway helpers who continually stop in to various rooms.

Only assigned workers may be in the nursery. There are two exceptions to this rule: nursing mothers and parents called to the nursery to calm an upset child.

Only parents can receive their child from the nursery. Nursery workers should release children only to their parents (not to older siblings).

Corporal Punishment (hitting or spanking) and other forms of punishment involving physical pain are never appropriate in Living Word United Methodist Church activities. This rule holds true even if parents have suggested, or given permission for, corporal punishment. In addition, yelling at a child or intentionally belittling the child are inappropriate responses by our workers. Nursery workers must consult a nursery leader or other church leader if they need help with discipline techniques.

Workers must report suspected or observed child abuse to the nursery leader or a pastor immediately. Violations of these guidelines or suspect behavior by other workers must be reported in the same manner.

Workers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct. This is needed in order to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.

Workers who disobey these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved from nursery duty at the sole discretion of the Childcare Coordinator, Director of Children's Ministries, or a Pastor.

I have read the guidelines above. I agree to observe them faithfully:

Signature _____ Date _____

Form #7

Guidelines for Children's Ministry Volunteers

Note: We live in an age where sexual misconduct and child abuse is a reality in our society. The church must deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the children in our care. Living Word United Methodist Church has implemented policies to help safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be strictly followed by anyone working in any ministry with children, including the Sunday School. We pray for God's blessing for our children, workers, and church.

Before You Begin

Six-Month Rule -- All workers must be members or regular attendees of Living Word United Methodist Church for at least six months before volunteering with children.

Completion of Application -- All children's program volunteers must complete and sign an application form.

Release Authorization Form -- All children's program volunteers must complete and sign a Release Authorization form.

References -- Applicants will be asked to provide three references not in the applicant's immediate family. The church may also contact employers, former ministers, and persons who have supervised applicants in church work previously.

Interview -- All children's program volunteers must be interviewed by a church leader to determine their suitability for teaching. Information from this interview will not be released to unauthorized persons. Interviews may be over the phone or in person.

Background Check and Social Services Registry -- After gaining the applicant's permission, church leaders will conduct a criminal background check and a Missouri family registry check for applicants: this is mandatory for primary positions and optional for secondary positions.

Auto Safety Form -- All children's program volunteers who will be driving children or conducting other church business must complete and sign an Auto Safety form.

Signed Agreement to Follow Guidelines -- All children's program volunteers must sign the agreement at the end of these guidelines to show their commitment to observe these guidelines.

Guidelines

Two-Person Rule -- Two workers must be present with children at all times. This rule accomplishes two important objectives. First, it reduces the risk of child abuse. Secondly, it reduces the risk of unfounded claims of abuse. Teams of workers cannot be of the same family unless a third un-related person is a visible and unpredictable presence such as hallway helpers who continually stop in to various rooms.

Corporal punishment (hitting or spanking) and other forms of punishment involving physical pain are never appropriate in Living Word United Methodist Church activities. This rule holds true even if parents have suggested, or given permission for, corporal punishment. Teachers must consult their supervisors or a pastor if they need help with misbehaving youth or discipline techniques.

Volunteers must report suspected or observed child abuse to the Childcare Coordinator, Director of Children’s Ministries or any Pastor immediately. Violations of these guidelines or suspect behavior by other workers must be reported in the same manner.

Workers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct. This is needed in order to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.

Workers who disobey these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved from duty at the discretion of the Director of Children’s Ministries or a Pastor.

I have read the guidelines above. I agree to observe them faithfully:

Signature_____ Date_____

Form #8

Guidelines for Youth Group Leaders, Interns, Youth Choir Leaders, Small Group Leaders, Confirmation Class volunteers, Bible Class Teachers, and Youth Chaperones for all Living Word United Methodist Church Youth trips

Note: We live in an age where child abuse is a reality in our society. The church must deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the children in our care. Living Word United Methodist Church has implemented a policy that will safeguard our children while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be strictly followed by anyone working with youth in Living Word United Methodist Church. We pray for God's blessing for our children, youth, workers, and church.

Before You Begin

Six-Month Rule -- All workers must be members or regular attendees of Living Word United Methodist Church for at least six months before becoming youth workers (except compensated employees and interns who meet "frequent contact" screening standards). Exceptions may apply in the area of secondary Youth workers under supervision of staff or primary workers following successful screening as outlined in this policy.

Completion of Application -- All youth workers must complete and sign an application form.

Release Authorization Form -- All youth workers must complete and sign a Release Authorization form.

References -- Applicants will be asked to provide three references not in the applicant's immediate family. The church may also contact employers, former ministers, and persons who have supervised applicants in church work previously.

Interview -- youth workers must be interviewed by a church representative to determine their suitability for youth group work. Information from this interview will not be released to unauthorized persons.

Background Check and Social Services Registry -- After gaining the applicant's permission, church leaders will conduct a criminal background check and a registry check for applicants: this is mandatory for primary positions and optional for secondary positions.

Auto Safety Form -- All youth workers who will be driving children or conducting other church business must complete and sign an Auto Safety form.

Signed Agreement to Follow Guidelines -- All youth workers must sign the agreement at the end of these guidelines to show their commitment to observe these guidelines.

Guidelines

Team Leadership -- Whenever feasible a youth will not be in the primary care of only one adult. Teams of adults (preferably male and female) will supervise activities. This policy has three purposes: it provides for more than one adult to help ensure appropriate levels of supervision, it protects adults from unfounded allegations, and it lessens the possibility of an adult becoming a "guru" who thrives on the dependency of youth as well as an adult having undue influence over an individual youth.

Overnight Activities -- At least two adults will supervise overnight activities per guidelines established. If the participants are male and female, then male and female chaperons must be present. If these conditions cannot be met, then the event should be postponed. It is never appropriate for an adult chaperon who is not a family member to share a bed with a youth. Males and females attending events must not share the same room for sleeping and should have separate access to bathroom facilities. This rule applies regardless of the size of the room. Experienced adult workers should be included with adults who are newcomers to youth ministry.

Lodging Considerations - - If overnight stays occur in individual homes which are outside of Living Word United Methodist Church membership, then a minimum of 2 adults must be present with the Living Word United Methodist Church Youth and must be able to observe them at all times. If overnight stays occur in hotels or motels, then Youth of the same sex may stay in rooms alone while Living Word United Methodist Church adult volunteers monitor the halls at all times. The specifics of hall monitoring will be determined by the Ministry leaders present based upon the physical layout of the lodging. However, the requirement is that all halls where Youth rooms are located be monitored at all times. If this requirement cannot be met, then the event should be postponed. No youth are to be permitted in the sleeping quarters of the opposite sex at any time.

Individual Counseling -- Team counseling is preferable whenever possible. When team counseling sessions are not feasible, notify another adult of the location and with whom you are meeting. Counseling should be done in a public place where private conversations are possible but occur in full view of others. Guard carefully to avoid seclusion. If possible, have female adults counsel female youths and males counsel males. A male/female team is generally appropriate for counseling either gender.

Long-Term Counseling -- Youth workers should not meet with youth more than three times to discuss the same issue. Youth workers are not prepared or supported for long-term counseling or formal therapy. Adult leaders are encouraged to refer youth who they suspect have a serious need for counseling to professionals in the community. Questions about referral must be discussed promptly with the Director of Youth Ministries or a Pastor.

Informal Contact (Independent of Church Activities) -- Informal contact refers to phone calls, letters, or face-to-face contact between an adult worker and a youth that is not connected to official church activities. The church recognizes that informal contact

between worker and youth frequently occurs. For example, workers may hire teens as baby sitters for their own children, or workers may see kids during social events with the child's family. This interaction is usually legitimate and beneficial. However, workers should seek permission of parents before having informal contact with their child. The worker should clearly let the parent know the nature of the contact and that it is not part of church activity. Parents are responsible for monitoring this informal contact.

Transportation To and From Meetings -- Transportation to and from meetings is not part of church or youth group activities. Parents are responsible for providing or arranging for this transportation. Parents are discouraged from asking leaders to transport children. However, if a leader does transport a child at the parent's request, this should be recognized as informal contact (not a part of church activities), and the guidelines for informal contact should be followed (see paragraph above).

Transportation as a Part of Church Programs -- The church may from time to time provide transportation as an official part of church activities. For example, the church may provide transportation to out-of-town events or field trips. When children or youth are transported as a part of church activities, all guidelines will apply. Having all drivers complete an auto safety certification form is especially important. The following guidelines also apply:

- A. Meet for departure at a designated area.
- B. Prearrange a schedule for periodic checkpoint stops as a group.
- C. Plan a daily destination point.
- D. A common departure site and a daily destination point are a must. If you cannot provide two adults for each vehicle, the minimum required is one adult and two or more youth – *never one on one*.

Confidentiality -- **Youth workers must report to a clergy person if a minor discusses harming himself or others, committing a crime, or being abused.** There are limits to confidentiality when working with youth. Questions about such cases or other issues of confidentiality must be discussed promptly with the Director of Youth Ministries or a Pastor. Any serious issues discussed in confidence should be reviewed with one of the ministers, who will also protect the confidential nature of the discussion. Conferring with a minister on sensitive issues is not considered breaking a confidence.

Youth Supervising Youth -- Minors may help adults lead youth activities only under the direct leadership of adults. A minor may not be used to meet the team leadership or team counseling guidelines discussed above.

Gifts -- Youth workers are generally discouraged from giving personal gifts or money to youth. When the giving of personal gifts is desired, the youth worker must first notify parents and the youth minister. Gifts can be easily misinterpreted. Gifts given to groups of young people are appropriate, such as graduation presents or awards for participation.

Corporal Punishment -- Corporal punishment (hitting or spanking) and other forms of punishment involving physical pain are not appropriate in Living Word United Methodist

Church activities. This rule holds true even if parents have suggested, or given permission for, corporal punishment. Youth workers must consult their supervisors or a minister if they need help with misbehaving youth or discipline techniques.

High Adventure Activities -- Special precautions must be taken on high adventure activities, such as rock climbing, hiking, overnight camps, raft trips, or the like. Both physical safety and safety from abuse are at risk in high adventure situations. A high ratio of adults to youth is recommended. Guides for high adventure activities should be licensed by the sports governing body or government authorities to guide groups whenever possible.

High adventure camping often raises unique circumstances involving individual privacy, sleeping arrangements, bathroom facilities, and so on. Adult leaders must be vigilant to avoid suspicious or misinterpreted behavior in these circumstances.

Open Door Policy -- All youth events should be open door. This means that workers, parents, and church members have a right to observe any youth activity.

Dating or Sexual Involvement -- No adult youth worker is to date a youth or be romantically or sexually involved with a youth. Any adult with prior incidents of sexual misconduct may not be a youth worker or serve in any capacity of youth ministry at Living Word United Methodist Church . There are no exceptions to this guideline.

Workers must report suspected or observed misconduct by other workers to the Director of Youth Ministries or a Pastor immediately.

Supervision and Communication -- Youth workers must meet on a regular basis with the Director of Youth Ministries, and the Director of Youth Ministries must meet with a Pastor periodically to discuss any issues regarding these guidelines. Appropriate topics that must be discussed include problems, accountability, policy clarification, personal feelings, or other issues that may interfere with youth ministry efforts

Workers must avoid even the appearance of misconduct. This is necessary in order to maintain parental confidence and avoid mistaken allegations.

Workers who disobey these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved from youth program duty at the discretion of the Director of Youth Ministries or a Pastor.

I have read the guidelines above. I agree to observe them faithfully:

Signature _____ Date _____

Form #9

Guidelines for Volunteers with Older and Vulnerable Adults (Pastoral Care Ministries)

Note: We live in an age where sexual misconduct, and elder abuse is a reality in our society. The church must deal with this issue as a “good shepherd” by taking steps to protect the older and vulnerable adults in our care. Living Word United Methodist Church has implemented policies to help safeguard our older and vulnerable adults while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them. The guidelines below are to be strictly followed by anyone working in the Pastoral Care ministries. We pray for God’s blessing for our older and vulnerable adults, workers and the church.

Before You Begin

Six-Month Rule – All volunteers must be members or regular attendees of Living Word United Methodist Church for at least six months before volunteering for a caring ministry.

Completion of Application – All volunteers in Pastoral Care ministries must complete and sign an application form.

Release Authorization Form – All volunteers in Pastoral Care ministries must sign a Release Authorization Form.

References – Three personal references must be submitted by each worker. The “children’s, youth, and vulnerable/older adult reference” (Form #4) forms are to be mailed directly to the Living Word Office Coordinator by the person completing the reference.

The three references should include: one person who has known the applicant well for an extended period of time, and whenever possible, a pastor/church staff person. For applicants for compensated positions, additional former supervisors may be checked.

Interview – All volunteers in Pastoral Care ministries must be interviewed by a church leader to determine their suitability for participating in the caring ministries. Information from this interview will not be released to unauthorized persons. Interviews will be done in person.

Background Check and Social Services Registry – After gaining the applicant’s permission, church leaders will conduct a criminal background check and a Missouri family registry check for applicants. This is mandatory.

Auto Safety Form – All volunteers in Pastoral Care ministries who will be driving older or

vulnerable adults or conducting other church business must complete and sign an Auto Safety Form.

Signed Agreement to Follow Guidelines – All volunteers in Pastoral Care ministries must sign the agreement at the end of these guidelines to show their commitment to observe these guidelines.

Guidelines

Two-Person Rule/Same Gender Rule – Caregivers in Pastoral Care ministries will always be assigned care receivers who are of the same gender. Volunteers who bring communion to shut-in's, those hospitalized, those in retirement and assisted living communities will always go in pairs.

Volunteers in Pastoral Care ministries must report Abuse, Neglect, Abandonment, and Exploitation

Abuse and neglect of older persons includes several categories of acts and/or omissions generally referred to as abuse, neglect, exploitation and abandonment. Signs of potential abuse or neglect include:

1. An elderly person with bruises, welts or burns or evidence of physical restraints.
2. An elderly person who appears over or under-medicated.
3. An elderly person with inadequate food or water, or with unclean clothes or bedding.
4. An elderly person whose caregiver abuses alcohol or is emotionally unstable.
5. An elderly person who previously has had excellent credit or resources but now seems unable to meet expenses.
6. An elderly person whose caregiver is under severe stress such as illness, unemployment or family problems.
7. An elderly person living in a family with history of violence such as child or spouse abuse.
8. An elderly person who is not permitted visitors or direct, private communications with others.

Volunteers in Pastoral Care ministries who disobey these guidelines may be reassigned or relieved from their caring ministry duty at the discretion of the Director of Pastoral Care or a Pastor.

I have read the guidelines above. I agree to observe them faithfully.

Signature _____ Date _____

Policy #4

Guidelines for Interviewing Applicants

Red Flags

Red flags alone do not mean that an individual is a potential danger to children, youth, and/or vulnerable/older adults. But they are possible indicators that an individual may participate in unhealthy relationships or even be a molester. Red flags are signals for program leaders to consider the applicant more carefully, to look a bit deeper into his or her background, and to be especially careful in making decisions to approve or disapprove the applicant.

A specific interest in a certain age group or gender. Child molesters sometimes fixate on children of the same age they were when first molested.

Over-involvement with children and youth. Excessive activity with youth may indicate a person is fixated on youth, lacks adult outlets for recreation, or is seeking access to youth in a variety of programs.

Lack of adult relationships. Healthy workers have adult relationships for friendships and, when appropriate, for romantic reasons. They do not need to turn to youth to meet their basic need for relationships.

Lack of adult interests. Interest in adult hobbies and in adult groups shows that youth workers have balanced lives that are not overly concentrated on children.

Instability in work and life. Look out for people who move or change jobs frequently and do not have a plausible explanation for it. Child molesters often move from place to place as people become suspicious or to seek out new opportunities to molest children. Instability in work may mean that an applicant has a drug or an alcohol problem.

Gaps in a person's life history. An unexplained gap in a resume or history may mean that the applicant served a prison term or is covering up a difficult time in his or her life.

A history of abuse or family instability. A person who experienced abuse or family problems while growing up may have unresolved emotional issues. These issues can interfere in their ability to work with children. Also, child abuse often occurs in unstable families facing problems with alcohol/drugs, mental illness, extreme poverty, etc.

Stressful events in the applicant's recent past. Events such as the death of a close family member, divorce, marital problems, unemployment, etc., often cause stress. This stress can lead applicants to react in unhealthy ways.

Evasive or misleading answers. Dishonesty is an indicator that a person is not trustworthy enough for working with kids and may be hiding vital information.

Rigidity in belief or doctrines. Applicants may have strong beliefs, but they should demonstrate flexibility in dealing with different points of view and accepting people as they are. A larger-than-expected proportion of child abusers come from rigid, orthodox backgrounds that encourage a one-dimensional perspective on important issues. Be cautious with applicants who have an overly-strong, personal agenda for youth. Look out for statements such as "I want to train children to believe in God just like I do" or "Children today are spoiled, so I want to teach them the strong discipline I grew up with."

What to Look For

Applicants with a clear explanation of why they want to work with youth.

Applicants with well-balanced lifestyles involving work, family, friends, recreation, and spiritual growth.

Applicants who have demonstrated maturity and people skills over the long term in their life experiences.

Applicants who are open to differences in people, flexible in dealing with people, and have a sense of humor.

Applicants who demonstrate appropriate reactions to stress.

Applicants who understand the need for screening and supervision and who react to it positively rather than defensively.

Interview Questions

Start the interview with a reminder that "information will not be disclosed to unauthorized people." Begin with light questions and ask the more personal ones as the applicant relaxes.

1. Tell me about your family when you were growing up.
2. What were your family's religious beliefs when you were a child?
3. Tell me about your hobbies and interests outside of church.
4. What is the biggest problem in children's lives right now? (Look for a coherent, well-reasoned answer that demonstrates the applicant has thought about kids' problems.)
5. Give me a brief rundown of your life. (Follow up with questions to address where they grew up, their childhood, education, work experience, churches they have been a member of, job and residence changes, etc.)

6. Tell me about other work with children, youth, or vulnerable/older adults you have done.
7. Is there anything else I should know about you that might affect how you work with children at Living Word United Methodist Church?

Policy #5

Training Strategies for Prevention of Abuse

Outcry Training for Children and Parents

Living Word United Methodist Church will institute outcry training for kindergarten-age children and above and their parents. The objectives of outcry training are to enable kids or parents to:

- recognize abuse,
- resist abuse,
- report abuse or attempted abuse, and
- reduce the shame, stigma, and confusion with open discussion, clear information, and unconditional support for children.

Training for Children and Youth Ministries Workers

Living Word United Methodist Church will train workers to keep young people safe. This training is mandatory for children and youth ministries workers and other church workers who may work with children and youth ministries.

The training will be offered to incoming workers. Refresher training will also be offered to veteran workers. The training will include the following information:

1. the nature of the problem, especially child sexual abuse
2. recognition of child abuse indicators in children and in adults who may be abusers
3. explanation of policies and rules that apply to each category of worker
4. discussion of expectations
 - avoiding the appearance of misconduct
 - monitoring coworkers' behavior
 - accountability for violation of rules
5. recognizing inappropriate behavior and situations open to problems or misunderstandings
6. reporting requirements (*You must explain this responsibility clearly to workers, especially if church employees are mandatory reporters under your state law.*)
7. how to respond to an incident or an emergency: This should include topics such as:
 - what to do when you believe a child is the victim of inappropriate conduct by a church worker
 - what to do when you believe a child in your program is a victim of abuse by family members or others
 - what to do when you believe that two children in your program are involved in inappropriate sexual activities

- what to do when two adult church workers are engaged in an inappropriate sexual relationship
8. your church's touching policy
 9. appropriate discipline techniques
 10. who to turn to for advice or help

Policy #6

Response Procedures for Serious Incidents, Abuse or Accidents

General Principles

When responding to allegations of abuse, the church and its representatives will keep several key principles in mind:

1. Reports should be taken seriously.
2. Allegations should be handled with sensitivity for people's privacy and confidentiality.
3. The church should cooperate with law enforcement and social services.
4. The victim should not be blamed.
5. The church should seek to provide support as appropriate for alleged victims, alleged offenders, and their families during this period of great stress.
6. The insurance carrier should be contacted as soon as possible.

Reports of questionable behavior must be taken seriously.

They should not be ignored or allowed to circulate without concern for the integrity and reputation of the accuser, the accused, and the church.

Allegations may occur in a variety of ways.

Since the church cannot control how a report will surface, it is important that officers, employees, and volunteers follow the steps described below. These steps will ensure that the allegation is channeled to the appropriate person and that the problem is not compounded by an improper response.

Non-church related allegations must be taken seriously.

Young people frequently choose to confide in church youth workers about abuse happening outside of the church. It is important that reports of this type are also handled sensitively and appropriately. The church's policies also apply to reported allegations not related to church activities or workers. These policies are appropriate for allegations involving church activities **and** non-church related reports of abuse.

When a Victim Reports Abuse

The person hearing the initial report should follow these steps:

Listen supportively.

Hear the victim out -- do not minimize or discount the allegation.

Do not judge the allegation negatively or positively.

Ask basic questions to clarify facts if needed, but do not try to investigate or verify the allegations of the report.

Note the pertinent details in writing as soon as possible after hearing the report, but don't take notes when the victim is speaking. Give him or her your full attention.

Contact a Staff Ministry Director or a Pastor immediately. The Director or Pastor will help decide on the next step, consult with legal counsel, and make the report to law enforcement if necessary.

If an appointed Pastor is being accused, the person receiving the initial report should contact the chair of the staff parish relations committee or a denomination representative if applicable. **Do not discuss the allegation** with anyone except those who have a need to know and are helping to respond.

If the safety of the child, youth, or vulnerable/older adult is at issue, the worker must use his or her own judgment to decide the best way to proceed. Workers may contact law enforcement directly if timing is critical and church leaders are unavailable for consultation. Phone numbers for law enforcement and child protection hotlines are.

St. Louis County Police - Wildwood Precinct 636-458-9194

Child Abuse Hotline 1-800-392-3738

Church Workers Who Observe Questionable Activities or Suspicious Behavior

Any person who observes violations of church guidelines or has reasonable suspicions of inappropriate activity is required to report these concerns to an appropriate leader.

Write brief notes to document specifically what you have observed. (Form #16)

Contact a staff Director or a Pastor as soon as possible. In a private conversation, the Director or Pastor can help evaluate any suspicions.

The Director or Pastor is responsible for any further response to the situation. He or she must document the report in the confidential files. Possible responses can range from reminding the worker about following guidelines to reporting the incident to law enforcement.

Church Workers Responding to Serious Accidents

Render appropriate first aid and call for appropriate emergency help.

Provide emotional support to the victim(s) and other persons who may be upset by the accident. (Prayer is usually appropriate!)

Contact a staff Director or a Pastor as soon as possible after ensuring the safety of victims.

One of these leaders should then take charge of responding to the accident using the procedures listed below in this policy

Write brief notes about what happened while the event is still fresh in your memory.
Be cautious about making statements that imply responsibility or provide information against the interests of the church and its workers.

Church Leaders Responding to Abuse

In cases of **serious** incidents, the leadership of Living Word United Methodist Church will form a small team consisting of appropriate church leaders and any legal counsel they may retain. The team should respond quickly to an accident or report of abuse using the following guidelines:

The team should **evaluate the report** with the person(s) who heard the initial report.

The team should **decide** if a report to authorities is warranted. Guidance of the church's attorney is often necessary because reporting statutes and relevant criminal statutes may be complicated. This is a decision based on the information at hand and applicable laws.

The team should **not attempt to verify the allegations**.

The team should **contact law enforcement or social services**. Phone numbers are:

St. Louis County Police - Wildwood Precinct 636-458-9194

Child abuse hotline 1-800-392-3738

The team should **cooperate with law enforcement** under the guidance of the church's attorney. With the consent of law enforcement, the team should **inform** the victim's parents, the accused worker, and the alleged victim that the victim and worker are not to have further contact (including verbal contact). Also, the worker is to refrain from any volunteer work until the issue is resolved.

The team should **inform the church's insurance carrier**. The team should **inform the Missouri Conference of the United Methodist Church**.

The team should designate one of its members as a **spokesperson**. All contact with the news media should be handled by the spokesperson. The team should inform all necessary persons not to respond to media inquiries except to refer questions to the spokesperson.
Note: the news media will learn of the incident quickly through access to law enforcement records.

The team should consider hiring a **public relations firm** or representative to help manage the publicity of a serious incident.

The team should **document** its activities in writing. Briefly log what is learned and what and when actions are taken. Logs should be dated and initialed or signed each time an entry is made.

Tips for Dealing with the News Media

Your church may be in the media spotlight if you have a serious accident or case of abuse. In general the media (and the public) want to know about institutions like churches that appear to misuse their authority or contradict their own principles. The fact that we do not expect persons to get hurt by church workers makes the story newsworthy.

News of serious incidents usually reaches the media--when a law enforcement agency responds it usually goes on the public record. Since you can't prevent adverse publicity, prepare for it, minimize the damage, and manage it as best you can.

How to Deal with the Media after a Serious Event

Appoint a spokesperson and refer all inquiries to him or her. Ask everyone to refer media inquiries to the spokesperson. You may have someone in your church who is qualified for this or you may ask your attorney to serve this function.

Don't lie! Don't cover up! The truth usually comes out anyway. However, this does not mean you have to answer or provide negative information.

Take your time in responding. You may delay answering inquiries until you are prepared to do so or until you get advice from the response team. Don't let the pressure of the moment force you to say things that are inaccurate or poorly thought out.

Use "no comment" when necessary. You should not lie, but you do not have to answer media questions. The spokesperson may want to explain why the church is not commenting, so the public doesn't view "no comment" as a way of avoiding difficult questions. Possible explanations:

"We have no comment out of respect for the privacy of the victims and accused."

"We will not comment until we have a better understanding of what has occurred."

Present positive information even if you are saying "no comment" to some questions. Examples:
After a serious allegation of abuse:

"The church is committed to the safety of our young people. We have policies in place focused on child safety and we have a very good record to date. Over 200 kids take part in our church activities every year without any problems. Our prayers and sympathy are with everyone affected by this event. We are doing our best to cooperate with the authorities as they conduct their investigation."

After a serious accident:

"The church deeply regrets that this terrible accident has happened. We take the safety of our youth very seriously. We have policies in place focused on preventing injuries. Over 200 kids take part in our church activities every year and this is the first time an accident like this has happened. We are doing all we can to help the victim and his family and friends in this difficult time. They have our sympathy and our prayers."

Do not judge the guilt or innocence of anyone accused of wrongdoing. Do not judge whether or not allegations are warranted or true. As the church representative you should express

- regret that someone may have been harmed, hope for justice, and offer verbal support for people struggling with the effects of the incident.
- Limit your comments to objective facts. Avoid conjecture or broad conclusions.
- Avoid statements that cast blame or doubt on one of the people or families involved in the situation, even if such information may serve to protect the interests of the church. If people feel the church is attacking them, they are more likely to sue or provide biased information to investigators.
- Avoid giving names of sexual abuse victims. This might be seen as an invasion of privacy. Also, most media outlets will not use them but do not take this for granted.
- Avoid naming accused wrongdoers. The media may do this based on public records, but the church should avoid discussing individuals accused of wrongdoing. This might result in a defamation lawsuit brought by the wrongdoer. Consult with the church's attorney before discussing persons accused of wrongdoing with anyone other than church leaders with a need to know.
- Don't say or show anything to reporters that you don't want to be publicized. Going "off the record" is a very murky subject that causes a lot of grief.
- Do not give information and ask to remain anonymous. This is unprofessional and suggests you have something to hide. You may be embarrassed later if your anonymity is not protected.

Form #10

Confirmation Letter for Your Church's Insurance Carrier

Dear _____:

I am writing today in regard to the liability insurance policy for Living Word United Methodist Church, policy # _____. I would like to confirm the terms and conditions of this policy as part of my church's overall plan of child safety and risk management.

Please answer the following questions about our policy as specifically as possible:

1. Does this policy cover child, youth, and vulnerable/older adult abuse, neglect, and sexual molestation by church employees and volunteers?
2. Does this policy cover sexual misconduct by church employees and volunteers?
3. Does this policy cover church volunteers as well as church employees?
4. Will this policy pay for legal fees if the church, its employees, or volunteers are sued?
5. Will this policy pay for damages resulting from emotional distress and physical injuries? If so, in what circumstances?
6. Are lawsuits related to employment practices covered by this policy?
7. Will this policy pay for libel, slander, and defamation claims?
8. Does this policy cover personal vehicles used by employees and volunteers in the course of church activity?
9. Does this policy cover church activities that occur away from church property? in other states? in foreign countries?
10. Does this policy cover errors and omissions by church employees?
11. Please provide us with a list of specific coverages and activities included in this policy.
12. Please provide us with a list of specific coverages and activities excluded by this policy.
13. Based upon your experience insuring other churches, can you give us a list of specific coverages that we lack and should add to our insurance coverage?
14. Please explain the specific actions our church must take if we need to report a claim.

Thank you in advance for your assistance.

Sincerely,

Form #11

Letter or Announcement to Congregation Announcing Child Safety Policies

Note: This letter should be customized as needed to fit your situation.

Dear _____,

We live in an age where sexual misconduct, abuse, and accidental injury are a reality in our society. The church must deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the persons in our care. The leadership of Living Word United Methodist Church has implemented new policies to help safeguard our children, youth, and vulnerable/older adults while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them.

Soon, our church will increase our efforts to screen and supervise staff and employees. We are revising operating policies for children's, youth, and vulnerable adult programs. All church workers, volunteers, and employees will be subject to these new guidelines.

I want to assure you that these changes are not a reaction to a problem or "scandal" that has occurred. Instead they represent our best efforts to *prevent* problems in the future.

These changes will mean additional effort for staff, volunteers, and parents. I, and the leaders of our church, believe the children are well worth the effort. We thank you in advance for your cooperation and your patience with this process.

If you have questions about these new policies, please contact _____ **<INSERT APPROPRIATE NAMES AND PHONE NUMBERS HERE>**.

Safe and secure kids are a witness to God's love, expressed through careful staff and volunteers. We pray for God's blessing for our children, workers, and church.

Sincerely,

Form #12

Dear Living Word United Methodist Church family,

We live in an age where sexual misconduct, abuse, and accidental injury are a reality in our society. The church must deal with this issue as a "good shepherd" by taking steps to protect the persons in our care. The leadership of Living Word United Methodist Church will begin implementing new policies to help safeguard our children, youth, and vulnerable/older adults while promoting a positive, nurturing environment for ministry to them.

Our church is increasing efforts to screen and supervise staff and employees. We are revising operating policies for children's, youth, and vulnerable/older adult programs. All church workers, volunteers, and employees will be subject to these new guidelines.

I want to assure you that these changes are not a reaction to a problem or "scandal" that has occurred. Instead they represent our best efforts to prevent problems in the future.

In an effort to keep you informed, we will be sending you printed information about what we are doing to reduce the risks of harm to your child, and what you can do to help. Also, we will invite you to training that will help you and your child recognize abusive or dangerous situations, and instruct you in how to seek help.

These changes will mean additional effort for staff, volunteers, and for you as a parent. I, and the leaders of our church, believe the children are well worth the effort. We thank you in advance for your cooperation and your patience with this process.

If you have questions about these new policies, please contact a Pastor or staff Director at 636-821-2800.

Safe and secure kids are a witness to God's love, expressed through careful staff and volunteers. We pray for God's blessing for our children, workers, and church.

Sincerely,

Living Word United Methodist Leadership Team
Living Word United Methodist Church Ministry Staff

