

CHILD ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL
CHRIST UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
508 FRANKLIN ROAD
FRANKLIN, TENNESSEE 37069

INTRODUCTION

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child . . . welcomes me."
Matthew 8:5, NRSV). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones . . . it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea."
(Matthew 18:6, NRSV). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church states that ". . . children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse."

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse can occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional and monetary consequences of litigation, following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

This policy was adapted from Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church, by Joy Thornburg Melton. Used with permission.

PURPOSE

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

STATEMENT OF COVENANT

Therefore, as a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the Gospel in ways that seek the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth as well as all the paid and volunteer workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers, and we will implement prudent operational procedures in our programs and events, as we deem appropriate to promote the safety and welfare of our children and youth. We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse as we seek to conform to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to properly respond or limit responses to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

CONCLUSION

In all our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be “surrounded by steadfast loved, established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (Baptismal covenant, United Methodist Hymnal, page 44)

<p>ORIGINAL POLICY COMMITTEE MEMBERS:</p> <p>Mary Anne Beshears, Children’s Ministry Team</p> <p>Harry Boyko, Trustees Committee</p> <p>Sue Carter, Staff-Parish Relations Committee</p> <p>Scott Ewing, Boy Scout Assistant Troop Scoutmaster</p> <p>Julia Farrow, Chair, Children’s Ministry Team</p> <p>Rev. Rita Hays, Associate Pastor for Children and Families</p> <p>David Jackson, Finance Committee</p> <p>Tammy Lovell, Giving Committee</p> <p>Ingrid McIntyre, Youth Director</p> <p>Lesa Skoney, Sunday School Teacher</p> <p>Rachel Waterhouse, Sunday School Teacher</p>	<p>2021 REVIEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS:</p> <p>Emily Ayers – Youth Volunteer; Educational Representative</p> <p>Elecia Beard – Trustee Representative</p> <p>Caroline Byrd – Youth Representative</p> <p>Jen Fuqua – Former Youth Volunteer, Marketing Professional</p> <p>Jackson Oliphant – Youth Representative</p> <p>Al Partee – Church Member & Attorney</p> <p>Sterling Thomas – Youth Parent & SPRC Member</p> <p>Rev. Paul Bonner, Youth Minister</p>
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CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT DEFINITIONS

CHILD or YOUTH as used in this policy refers to any person who has not reached his or her eighteenth birthday.

ABUSE is the willful infliction of injury, unreasonable confinement, intimidation, or punishment with resulting physical harm, pain, or mental anguish. Child abuse and neglect occur when the child is mistreated, resulting in injury or risk of injury. Abuse can be physical, verbal, emotional or sexual.

NEGLECT is the failure to provide goods and services necessary to avoid physical harm, mental anguish or mental illness.

1. **Physical Abuse** is defined as non-accidental trauma or injury inflicted by a parent or caretaker on a child. It also includes a parent's or a caretaker's failure to protect a child from another person who perpetrated physical abuse on a child. In its most severe form, physical abuse is likely to cause great bodily harm or death.
2. **Physical Neglect** is defined as the failure to provide for a child's physical survival needs to the extent that there is harm or risk of harm to the child's health or safety. This may include but not be limited to abandonment, lack of supervision, life endangering physical hygiene, lack of nutrition that places the child below the normal growth curve, lack of shelter, lack of medical or dental care that results in health threatening conditions, and the inability to meet basic clothing needs of a child. In its most severe form, physical neglect may result in great bodily harm or death.
3. **Sexual Abuse** includes penetration or external touching of a child's intimate parts, oral sex, indecent exposure or any other sexual act performed in a child's presence for sexual gratification, sexual use of child for prostitution, and the manufacturing of child pornography or inappropriate exposing of children to pornographic materials. Child sexual abuse is also the willful failure of the parent or the child's caretakers to make a reasonable effort to stop child sexual abuse by another person.
4. **Emotional Abuse** includes verbal assaults, ignoring and indifference, and degradation.

CHILD ABUSE exists when a person under the age of eighteen is suffering from, or has sustained a wound, injury, disability or physical or mental condition caused by brutality, neglect or other actions or inactions of a parent, relative, guardian or caretaker.

AN ABUSER is any person who:

- (a) Inflicts or allows to be inflicted upon the child or youth physical or emotional injury by other than accidental means;
- (b) Creates or allows to be created a risk of physical or emotional injury to the child or youth by other than accidental means;
- (c) Engages in a pattern of conduct that renders the parent incapable of caring for the immediate and ongoing needs of the child or youth including, but not limited to, parental incapacity due to alcohol or other drug abuse;
- (d) Continuously or repeatedly fails or refuses to provide essential parental care and protection for the child or youth, considering the age of the child or youth;
- (e) Commits or allows to be committed an act of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation.
- (f) Creates or allows to be created a risk that an act of sexual abuse or sexual exploitation will be committed upon the child or youth;

- (g) Abandons or exploits the child or youth;
- (h) Does not provide the child or youth with adequate care, supervision, food, clothing, shelter, and education or medical care necessary for the child's or youth's well-being.

SEVERE CHILD ABUSE means:

- (a) The knowing exposure of a child to or the knowing failure to protect a child from abuse or neglect that is likely to cause great bodily harm or death and the knowing use of force on a child that is likely to cause great bodily harm or death;
- (b) Specific brutality, abuse or neglect towards a child which in the opinion of qualified experts has caused or will reasonably be expected to produce severe psychosis, severe neurotic disorder, severe depression, severe developmental delay or retardation, or severe impairment of the child's ability to function adequately in the child's environment, and the knowing failure to protect a child from such conduct.

Definitions in this report are taken from Tennessee State Law regarding child abuse and the Tennessee Department of Children's Services website.

OPERATION AND PROGRAM PROCEDURES

A. Screening of Staff and Volunteers

Our church shall take reasonable steps to insure that we do not employ or use as a volunteer a person in a position which involves supervisory or disciplinary power over a child or youth who is a violent offender or has been convicted of any sex crime under state or federal law. All job applicants shall be required to complete job application forms which require truthful disclosure of information of relevant criminal history as a condition of employment and an appropriate release in order for the church to conduct all criminal background checks as may be required by law.

***For church volunteers we generally require a six-month period of regular attendance and involvement before volunteering begins. Exceptions will only be made if a pastor/staff member has had a long term working relationship with the potential volunteer or the pastor/staff member has a recommendation from a trusted connection at a previous congregation. A written and signed form shall be submitted by the staff member documenting the recommendation or testimony to prior relationship.**

***All church employees and volunteers shall undergo a criminal background check prior to working with the children or youth. The business office administrator, in conjunction with the children and/or youth department will oversee this process.**

B. Training

Persons who work with children (paid and volunteer) shall be trained in the procedures contained in this policy. Persons shall receive a copy of our Child Abuse Prevention Policy and

Procedures Manual and shall sign a form acknowledging that he/she have read and will adhere to the policy. This form is included in the “Background Check Disclosure Form” located on page 12.

Training concerning this policy will be provided by the Children and/or Youth Ministry Department. Training is valid for a three-year period and will be offered annually for new employees and volunteers.

***Parents will be notified about training and included if a family so desires. This policy will be made available for any parent or guardian who would like to read and understand Christ UMC’s guiding principles.**

C. Supervision of Children

1). **No Child Unattended**

Staff and volunteers will not knowingly allow children (infant through fourth grade) to be anywhere in our church building without adult supervision. Children in 5th and 6th grades shall be allowed to move through the church in groups of three or more (i.e. to retrieve items from kitchen, resource room, etc), but not for the purpose of simply wandering. Students, 7th-12th grades are not required to move through the building in groups, however in situations where an adult is not present, 7th – 12th graders must be in a room with an open door.

2). **Two-Adult Rule for Group Activities**

Two or more adult volunteers (age 18 and up) are to be present at all times during any group church sponsored program, event, or ministry. It is recommended that a five year age differential exist between children/youth and their leaders. (For instance, 18 year olds may help with youth and children ages 13 and under.) If one-on-one interactions between adults and children/youth are unavoidable, the interaction should occur in an area where there are open doors or windows and with the knowledge of another adult. For church sponsored activities where children are alone with an adult, the adult must attain verbal parental approval.

Additionally, the church recommends that the two adults present in a supervisory role should not be from the same family. When this is unavoidable, the trained volunteer or children/youth representative should be aware and able to float around to classes, checking in as a third adult.

3). Adult to Child Ratio

We recommend the following ratio of children to adult volunteers for all church sponsored events:

2 years - 4 years	2:15
Kindergarten - 2nd	2:20
3rd - 6th grades	2:20
7th - 12th grades	2:20

When children and youth are involved in overnight events sponsored by the church and there are both male and female children/youth present, we will select both male and female adults to accompany the children/youth. When only male children/youth are present, we will make sure there are male adults present; when only female children/youth are present, we will make sure there are female adults present.

D. Restroom Procedure

When nursery children are assisted in the restroom by an adult, the door is to be left partly open and another adult worker/volunteer (who must be 18 or older) is to be in view. If a preschool child is able to go to the restroom unassisted, he/she is to use the bathroom in the nursery room with the door unlocked, and an adult volunteer/worker shall be in view and earshot. For children Kindergarten – 5th grade, an adult needs to oversee the travel to and from the restroom. At no time are teenagers, who are 17 and under and would not be safe sanctuary trained, allowed to assist children in the restroom. Children in Kindergarten – 5th grade should be in full view by the teacher when they are walking to the restroom. We will respect the privacy of all children.

E. Searches

Christ United Methodist staff/volunteers will be instructed not to search child/youth unless the staff/volunteers determine that without the search there is a potential risk to self or others. If a search is warranted, it will be conducted in the presence of another Christ United Methodist staff/volunteer and will be conducted by a person of the same sex. The parents/guardians of the child/youth will be contacted prior to the search.

F. Discipline

It is against Christ United Methodist church policy to use corporal punishment. Staff/volunteers are instructed not to use physical force except to protect self or others. Staff/volunteers are to follow the discipline policy provided in the nursery policies and procedures when working with preschool age children. Any type of discipline issues shall be addressed to the Children's or Youth Minister.

G. Support Groups

When hosting support groups within our church building, both the support group and our church will abide by the building use policy of the trustees as it relates to support groups. Children and youth are not to be present in close proximity to these meetings. When children or youth are present in the building during a support group meeting, there shall be a staff member overseeing the integrity of the boundary.

H. Room in the Inn Ministry

'Room in the Inn' does not currently have a policy of disclosure and/or self-reporting of criminal history. For the security of both our guests and children/youth, all 'Room in the Inn' keepers shall be Safe Sanctuary trained. We require at least one formally trained volunteer to be present in case new volunteers have not been through training. When children/youth are present to serve our guests, we ask that parents supervise children by maintaining awareness of their location as well as supervising them in the restroom.

I: Third Party Building Use

All third parties using the building must adhere to the building policies outlined by the trustees committee.

Electronic Communication with Minors (ECM) – (Added 2021)

I. Introduction

Christ UMC recognizes the prevalence of electronic communication, social media and video meetings in today's world. Some incredible ministry can take place using modern technology, but there are inherent risks involved. Following the recommended procedures below can help minimize those risks.

A. Important to Know

1. There is no such thing as privacy in cyberspace. You must consider anything and everything on the internet as public information.
2. All communications between a staff/volunteer and a minor must be professional in nature to inform about church activities or for the purpose of nurturing a relationship in order to grow in Christian discipleship.
3. For the purpose of this document, electronic communication is defined as communication relayed between people using computers, mobile phones, ipods or other similar technology that allows for messages to be sent and received by groups or individuals.
 - a) We do not consider phone calls to be electronic communication but a means of taking important conversations offline.
4. All forms of electronic communication will need to be previously permitted by the parent/guardian of the minor. (See related consent addendum on page 16.)
5. When using electronic communication with a minor, it should be assumed that a responsible adult for that minor will read the communication.

II. BEST PRACTICES

A. Acceptable Hours

1. Specific guidelines for electronic communication within a time frame every day is essential to ensuring safety online.
2. Acceptable hours of communication should be from 9:00am and 9:00pm.
3. Volunteers/staff may not respond to communication during sabbath or overnight hours.
4. Only very specific scenarios warrant connecting via electronic communication beyond these allotted time frames. In the situation of a physical or emotional emergency, communication is acceptable at other times.

B. Posting Photos & Livestream

1. A consent will be available to the church community that gives specific individuals' authorization to be included in published photos and/or videos. (See related consent addendum on page 16.)
2. If an individual has not submitted their consent, they should not and will not be published on any church officiated social media page.
3. Live streaming worship services presents unique complexities as our children and youth participate in up front roles like singing, children's worship or reading scripture. Parents & children who attend and participate in these activities should be reminded that they will appear in online videos.

C. Location services & tagging

1. Similar to the principles surrounding the publication of photos and videos on a church officiated social media page, any tagging of personal accounts must be considered consensual through the consent form mentioned earlier. This ensures that all members of a post have authorized their inclusion in the photo or video and to being tagged.

III. **TEXTING, EMAIL, DIRECT MESSAGING, etc.**

A. Electronic communication includes but is not limited to: text messaging, messaging apps, emails, social networking, and direct messaging.

B. Texting with minors is permitted but encouraged to be mostly in a group format. Having a second adult as a part of the group is always beneficial.

1. Text messaging should always be well thought out so that messages are not misinterpreted or construed to be anything other than mentoring/pastoral in nature.
2. Receiving individual text messages can be encouraging and helps build relationships. For example, "I really hope your exam goes well today. I'll be praying for you as you make it through this stressful week."
3. Great care should be taken when sending emojis or other photos to the group. Hidden meanings are common with some emojis and could communicate something entirely different than you might intend.
4. Photos should not be texted to individuals.
5. Do not delete text messages. This practice might raise suspicions of an individual's intent to remove or hide inappropriate material.

C. If a minor text messages an adult and seems to be in distress, it is acceptable to respond even if we do not have explicit permission from the parent/guardian.

The adult should also:

1. Notify the youth leader/supervisor or parent when appropriate in a timely manner.
2. Attempt to move the conversation to a phone call if the student is willing. This ensures you are actually communicating with the intended person.
3. Find out where the student is and if they are in danger of harming themselves or another person.
4. In such a scenario, a timely response is critical but not always possible. Notifying the youth leader/supervisor (and parent when appropriate) as soon as possible is the next best step. If this notification does not occur, it is advisable for the youth leader to arrange a meeting with the volunteer to discuss why this did not occur, emphasize the importance of a thorough pastoral response and make sure similar future scenarios are handled more carefully.

D. Email is a perfectly acceptable means for communicating and is easy enough to carbon copy or blind copy parents and/or youth leaders. When larger amounts of information needs to be shared, (such as event details, registration links, attached forms, etc) email is preferred.

- E. Volunteers/staff should not engage with minors on any electronic applications that do not keep a history of messages or images sent (such as SnapChat.) A lack of reproducible content fosters too much risk for students and adults to be using such a platform together.
- F. Direct Messaging is a form of communication that spawns from other social media such as Instagram, Facebook and Twitter.
 - 1. Direct messaging should not be used because it is an additional layer removed from where others might read or observe.
 - 2. Direct messaging as a form of communication can be an exception due to unusual circumstances like when a student is out of the country and unable to use typical communication methods.
- G. If a volunteer/staff member receives a text message or direct message that is inappropriate, that individual should alert the youth leader/supervisor or parent as necessary as soon as possible. A screenshot should be taken.
 - 1. If a volunteer does not notify the youth leader/supervisor or parent in a timely manner, the youth leader should arrange a meeting with the volunteer to discuss the details of the incident. Based on that conversation and the severity of the event, appropriate measures will be taken to insure that there is a trustworthy arrangement with the volunteer. If the leader/supervisor deems it necessary, the volunteer may be asked to step down from their role.

IV. **SOCIAL MEDIA**

- A. Social media is defined as websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or to participate in social networking to include social networking sites (ex. Facebook, Instagram, SnapChat), microblogging sites (ex. Twitter) and media sharing applications (ex. YouTube, TikTok).
 - 1. First, know that it is perfectly acceptable for Christ UMC staff/volunteers to decide to not engage with youth on social media. Establishing and communicating social media boundaries, early on with youth, can mitigate any perceived favoritism, confusion or hurt feelings on the part of youth.
 - 2. A general guide for using social media is to let the minor initiate contact, whether that be friending, following or connecting. Then, as the adult chooses, they can engage at an appropriate level. If a minor initiates contact, follow the rule of consistency...either accept all requests or none. It's helpful to communicate this to your small group or youth group as a whole.
 - 3. Closed-Groups can also be created and managed for privacy, only allowing specific members of a group to join (as approved by the administrator). The youth pastor/staff should be consulted before a private group is created. Examples of using a closed-Group would be small groups, grade level, youth leadership team, etc.
- B. Guidelines for social media engagement with minors:
 - 1. Do not post information about minors on social media without their permission (and possibly their parent/guardian). Posting includes, but is not limited to, information, stories, photos and videos.

2. Do not post or tag info, stories, photos or videos involving a youth without the permission of the youth (and possibly their parent/guardian). Youth can choose to tag themselves.
3. Regarding engagement (liking, etc.), be aware of the perception of favoritism. Also, consider the posts you are engaging with to ensure you are not supporting negative or provocative posts.
4. When commenting, keep comments brief and positive to avoid misinterpretation.
5. Do not share a minor's post, as this takes the post out of their network of "friends" and exposes it to additional "secondary" people within the adult's connections.

V. VIDEO MEETINGS

- A. **DEFINITION:** Video meetings are a way to meet virtually with members of the church as an alternative to an in-person meeting. Whether it's Zoom, Google Meet, or another platform, meetings should be password secure and accessible on PCs and phones. This definition does not apply to in-person worship or online streaming.
- B. **WHEN TO USE:** Video meetings are convenient for when transportation to the church may be difficult due to weather conditions. They can be used to have a meeting with multiple people at one time. There should always be a minimum of two adults in the meeting if there are minors present. The host of the meeting must make sure the parent/guardian is comfortable with their child participating prior to the meeting. (See related consent addendum on page 16.)
- C. **WHEN NOT TO USE:** Do not participate in a video meeting with a minor one on one. An exception to this rule would be if the parent/guardian gives permission to have their child in a meeting one on one with an adult. If a minor reaches out for a video call, the adult must use a phone call instead.
- D. Video meetings with minors should not be recorded.

REPORTING PROCEDURES

A. We are under legal obligation to report suspected abuse of children in our care even if the abuse occurred outside of our church and even if the abuse did not occur during church events. Tennessee Child Sexual Abuse Law States:

“Any person who has knowledge of or is called upon to render aid to any child who is suffering from or has sustained any wound, injury disability, or physical or mental condition shall report such harm immediately if the harm is of such a nature as to reasonably indicate that it has been caused by brutality, abuse, or neglect or that, on the basis of available information, reasonably appears to have been caused by brutality, abuse or neglect.”

Tennessee State Law also states:

“If any such person knows or has reasonable cause to suspect that a child has been sexually abused, the person shall report such information, regardless of whether such

person knows or believes that the child has sustained any apparent injury as a result of such abuse.”

All known or reasonably suspected incidents of abuse are to be reported to the minister responsible for the ministry area and to the Senior Pastor or designee. Christ United Methodist will report abuse in accordance with the Tennessee Child Sexual Abuse Law. This does not mean that the individual staff/volunteer cannot report suspected abuse him/herself.

B. Whenever any type of abuse is suspected, the individual with this information is to use the following steps:

1. Report immediately.
2. Maintain all confidentiality. This includes not speaking with fellow workers or the child/youth’s caregivers or continued questioning of the child.
3. Seek out the minister responsible for the ministry area immediately and give him/her the information so that the abuse can be reported immediately and so that the Senior Pastor or designee can be informed.
4. The Senior Pastor or designee shall call the Department of Human Services and fill out the form entitled “A Report Form for Suspected Child, Abuse or Neglect.”

MEDIA RESPONSE

The Senior Pastor shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse. If investigations or allegation of abuse should come to the attention of the media, a response shall only come from the Senior Pastor or a designated safe sanctuary committee member when appropriate. Christ UMC should still seek to comply with the conference media relations policy no matter what the situation. (The Tennessee Conference Media Relations Policy is included in the addendum section to this policy.) If the Senior Pastor is the one accused, the District Superintendent shall make any response to the media.

ADDENDUM TO THE POLICY

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT REPORTING CHILD ABUSE

1. **Where do I report?**

Report to the Tennessee Department of Children's Services or law enforcement agencies.

WILLIAMSON COUNTY CHILDREN'S SERVICES
203-B Beasley Drive
Franklin, TN 37064

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
1-877-237-0004
<http://www.state.tn.us/youth/>

EMERGENCY AFTER HOURS NUMBER
Williamson County Sheriff
615-790-5554

2. **Who must report?**

Any person who knows or has reason to believe a child is abused or neglected.

Only the clergy-penitent and the attorney-client privilege are exceptions to report child abuse and neglect. Clergy are exempt only in situations of confidential counseling.

3. **Do you have to identify yourself if making a report?**

No. However the reporting person will be encouraged to identify himself or herself and relationship to the child in order to help the reporting agency assess the validity of the report and to enable a follow-up interview if necessary.

4. **What information do I have to give?**

Nature and extent of abuse or neglect, where it occurred, causes, the location of child and family, any previous incidents, any witnesses, and present danger to child.

5. **What happens if I make a child abuse report?**

The Tennessee Department of Human Services will investigate.

REPORT FORM FOR SUSPECTED CHILD ABUSE OR NEGLECT

Person Reporting suspected incident or condition: _____

Relationship to Child/Youth: _____

Child's Name: _____ Age: _____

Parent(s)/guardian(s) of child: _____

Date/time/location of incident: _____

Brief description of disclosure/allegation:

Reporting agency contacted: _____

Date/time of call to reporting agency: _____

Person(s) contacted: _____

Notes of conversation:

Signature of person completing form: _____



Tennessee Conference of The United Methodist Church Media Procedures for Church and Conference Staff

Handling Telephone Calls From Reporters

- Take a written message (*don't transfer to voicemail without taking message*)
- Use the **Crisis Communications Telephone Log for Media Calls**
- Get reporter's name, media outlet, direct phone #, and deadline
- Ask for topic of story
- Explain that church spokesperson will return the call
- Don't answer questions yourself
- Be polite, but firm
- Keep a copy of all written records of media calls

Hold Response

Telephone:

"I want to make sure we give you the most accurate and up-to-date information. Our _____ (appropriate person) can best help you. If you give me your contact information, deadline and topic that you're calling about, I'll have that person return your call as soon as possible."

On-site:

"Our job right now is to keep everyone safe. We understand that the media have a job to do. We're gathering information and our spokesperson will speak to reporters shortly."

Handling Reporters On-Site

- Refer questions to pastor, conference communicator or district superintendent
- Don't be hostile
- Don't give your personal opinion
- Don't speak "off the record"
- Don't use the term "no comment"
- Be polite, but firm

Handling Casual Conversations or Questions about Crisis

- Don't speculate, repeat unconfirmed information or express personal opinions
- Don't feel like you have to answer questions
- Do respond with a brief, positive, general statement

Contact Information for _____ (Appropriate Contact)
Office # _____ Mobile/Pager # _____

**Consent Form for Electronic Communication with Minors
Christ United Methodist Church in Franklin, Tennessee**

In order to promote transparency and parental involvement, Christ United Methodist Church has drafted this Consent Form so that parents and guardians may authorize Christ UMC staff and volunteers to communicate electronically with their minor Child according to the Christ UMC Safe Sanctuary Policy and in particular the Electronic Communication with Minors (ECM Policy) section as revised and adopted on September 20, 2021. In order to authorize my Minor Child (Child) to participate in electronic communications, I have completed this Consent Form as follows:

Initial Box for Consent

Box 1, Policy Receipt. I acknowledge receipt of the ECM Policy referenced above; I have read this ECM Policy; and I have or will discuss this ECM Policy with my Child.

Box 2, Electronic Communications. As contemplated in Sections I, II and III of the ECM Policy, I authorize Christ UMC to communicate electronically with my Child using this contact information:

Child's Name: _____ Date of Birth: ____ / ____ / ____

Child's Street Address: _____ City/State/Zip: _____

Child's Email Address: _____

Child's Home Phone Number(s): _____

Child's Cell Phone: _____

Other: _____

Box 2, A. This can include group messaging.

Box 2, B. This can include individual messaging.

Box 3, Social Media. As contemplated in Sections II and IV of the ECM Policy, I authorize Christ UMC to use church officiated social media to communicate with my Child and to post photos that may include my Child.

Box 3.A. I understand that to review or receive public communications with my Child on Christ UMC officiated social media, I must have an account with that social media or become a fan or follower of that social media. I also understand that communications may be accessible or viewable by others who are also fans or followers of that social media.

Box 4, Video Meetings. As contemplated in Section V of the Policy, I authorize Christ UMC to include my child in Video Meetings.

Box 4.A. I want to receive an advance communication from Christ UMC to confirm when a Video Meeting takes place.

Box 5. I certify that I am a parent or legal guardian of the Child named above, that I am entitled to custody and control of the Child, and that I sign on the Child's behalf. This Consent remains valid for two years from the date of my signature. If I want to rescind this Consent, I will inform Christ UMC in writing and that this rescission will not take effect until it is received by Christ UMC.

Name of Parent or Guardian Completing this Form: _____

Parent/Guardian's Email Address: _____

Parent/Guardian's Home Phone Number(s): _____

Parent/Guardian's Cell Phone: _____

Other: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____ Relationship: _____

BACKGROUND CHECK DISCLOSURE FORM

In an effort to provide a safe sanctuary for all children and youth at Christ UMC, all volunteers must undergo a background check. Please read the following information and fill out the bottom portion of the page. Thank you for both volunteering to serve and for your willingness to put the safety of children and youth first.

DISCLOSURE

As part of the volunteer process at Christ United Methodist Church, a pastor or designated staff member will procure these reports, which I understand may include information regarding my character, general reputation, personal characteristics, or mode of living.

Authorization

Throughout my time at Christ UMC, I hereby authorize ChoicePoint WorkPlace Solutions Inc., on behalf of Christ UMC to procure reports at appropriate intervals to achieve compliance, which I understand may include information regarding my character, general reputation, personal characteristics, or mode of living. These reports may be compiled with information from any source required to verify information that I have voluntarily supplied. I understand that I may request a complete and accurate disclosure of the nature and scope of the background verification to the extent such investigation includes information bearing on my character, general reputation, personal characteristics, or mode of living.

I am also acknowledging my receipt of the Child Abuse Prevention Policy for Christ United Methodist Church. I understand that it is my responsibility to read and comply with the procedures contained in this policy. Furthermore, I understand that it is my responsibility to consult with either the Youth or Children's Minister if I have any questions about this policy.

Today's Date: _____ Volunteer Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____ Social Security #: _____

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

County: _____

I hereby promise/certify that I have been attending this congregation regularly for a period of 6 months or longer.

Signature: _____

_____ Check here if you **do NOT** grant permission to Christ UMC to run your background check every three years.