

Revised 11/4/18

Safe Sanctuaries Policies for Erwin United Methodist Church

Mission Statement of the Erwin United Methodist Church: Love God, Love One Another and Make Disciples for Jesus Christ by Welcoming, Worshipping, and Witnessing.

As a people of faith united in our love of Jesus Christ whose beliefs are based upon the teachings of the Bible, it is our desire to make our church a welcoming and safe place for our most vulnerable individuals including children and adults with special needs. It is our charge to ensure that our actions demonstrate that these individuals are valued and that we are committed to ensuring their safety when in our care.

It is with great joy that we welcome children to study, worship and fellowship in our church. It is our intent that children will be treated with respect and will be nurtured by caring and compassionate adult leaders in a place that does not tolerate or ignore abuse.

The following policies will be shared with all current adult church members, and with new adult attendees/members who join us. The policies will apply to the adults interacting with children and youth, including those who are serving as leaders or volunteers in Sunday school, nursery, Children's Church, Bible school, youth meetings and outings outside of church. These policies will be reviewed during training sessions and a copy will be provided to each person working with children and youth.

Safety in Classroom Settings

Adult / Child Ratios and Supervision

It is our goal that each class for children and youth be staffed by at least two adults, including the nursery. In those situations where there is only one adult, such as during Sunday School, an open-door policy will be maintained. During Sunday School, the Sunday School superintendent or other designated person can observe the classroom activity when walking through the building during the class time. This person will also be available to collect the class attendance and offering envelopes so that a child or the teacher does not have to leave the classroom to deliver the envelope to the office.

Children ages infant through age 5 will be supervised by an adult once arriving in the designated classroom and will remain in the room until the parent, or guardian, or another designated individual (adult or older sibling) arrives, or the teacher delivers the child to the parent. For Children's Church, a list will be created for the children which indicates the individuals they can leave with (this can include adults or older siblings). The list will be posted in the Children's Church classroom. Children who are visitors will remain in the classroom until the adult that brought them to church arrives at the classroom.

Age and Attendance

We will support those who volunteer to work with our children and youth with training and resources targeted towards their assigned area. Those in leadership of a youth class should be at least five years older than the youth in the class. To ensure that proper adult supervision is provided, workers in classes or the nursery should be at least 18 years of age. Individuals younger than 18 can serve as assistants in these settings if there is at least one adult available.

Revised 11/4/18

New attendees or members can volunteer to work with youth once they have attended the church for six months or more. Individuals who wish to volunteer that have attended the church for less than six months can assist other adult members.

Respectful and Nurturing Behavior

It is important that our children and youth observe the actions of adult leaders as examples of appropriate ways to relate to others. This applies to the adult's behavior in church settings and outside the church. Respectful and nurturing behavior that does not interfere with another's privacy is the example we wish to set. Adult leaders should be attentive to appropriate use of language and appropriate demonstrations of affection and encouragement.

First Aid and Emergency Information

A first aid kit will be maintained in the office and on the church van for treatment of minor injuries. The EUMC Fire and Tornado Emergency Plans will be reviewed periodically with all members of the church. Individuals who are medically trained will be identified to the adult leaders for events involving children and youth such as Vacation Bible School, Youth Outings, etc.

Safety in Other Settings

Outings or Overnight Events

When the children and youth participate in outings outside of the church, parents or guardians will be provided advance notice so that written permission to participate in the outing can be provided. The leader in charge of the outing should arrange for additional adults to accompany the group to ensure proper supervision as needed.

When overnight events occur, adult supervision will be provided; however, adults will not share rooms with non-related youth unless parental permission has been provided prior to the outing. Before going on an overnight outing, expectations about appropriate behavior should be discussed with the youth such as separate sleeping arrangements for girls and boys, staying together as a group and not allowing opportunities for two youth or one adult and one youth to separate themselves from the group.

Counseling Sessions

It is important our youth and children feel supported and are comfortable talking with adult leaders. Leaders should be open to listening, but should minimize one on one counseling sessions that involve only the adult and an individual youth. If there is a need to talk one on one with a youth, an open door policy should be maintained and the discussion should occur when others are nearby. If the adult leader recognizes that he or she is not qualified to address the youth's needs effectively, a referral should be made to a qualified individual. Every effort will be made to maintain confidentiality as issues are addressed.

Transportation

Transportation requirements related to individuals eligible to be drivers of the church van will be developed and implemented by the Trustees; however, it is a requirement of these policies that there be at least two adults present when transporting children and youth in the church van.

Photography, Videography and Social Media Policies

The policies of the church will be followed regarding photos, videos and posts on social media. Parents or guardians that do not wish for their children to be photographed, videoed and/or included in social media posts related to church activities must complete and return a “Do Not Post or Publish” Form that can be obtained from the church secretary.

Training for Volunteers

Information will be provided to new volunteers who work with children and youth in the church that includes information about the class or activity the adult is responsible for, the expectations regarding preparation for the activity and providing coverage when unable to attend. All volunteers will be provided with written information regarding the Safe Sanctuaries policies. Volunteers will also be informed throughout the year of training opportunities offered by the district and other entities. The importance of confidentiality of sensitive information will be stressed in the training session(s).

Plan for Responding to Allegations of Abuse

If an incident of suspected abuse has occurred within the church, the incident should be reported to the pastor or chairperson of the PPR Committee. These individuals should be familiar with the local and state reporting requirements. (For example, reports of abuse or neglect of a child or adult with special needs by his/her parent or legal guardian are made to the county department of social services while reports of abuse of a child by a non-family member are made to the local law enforcement agency.) The [insert name of designated individual] will collect information about any alleged incidents in the form *Report of Suspected Incident of Abuse*. The pastor and the chairman of the Administrative Board will receive a copy of the report and will discuss the action to be taken. If an incident of alleged neglect or abuse occurs with a paid staff member, the report will be shared with the individual or board who has oversight for that individual.

Criminal Record Background Checks

All volunteers from the EUMC who are working with children and youth will undergo a criminal record background check every three years with the designated company selected by the church. To respect the confidentiality of sensitive information, information from background checks will remain private and will only be reviewed by the designated individual(s). Reimbursement of the cost of the background check will be provided to the individual if requested.