

BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST SAFE CHURCH — CHURCH SCHOOL TEACHER HANDBOOK

Philosophy

Bethlehem is a welcoming place where children can come and feel warmth, love and acceptance. It is a place where children can learn about the Bible, God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit. We provide an exciting learning environment with hands-on approaches to important values and lessons of our faith. We encourage each child on their own personal faith walk.

Classroom Guidelines

Nurturing a positive classroom is one of the roles of the classroom volunteer. Address the children by name and listen attentively when they speak. In the event it is necessary to deal with a disruptive child, speak directly, quietly and firmly to a child. Tell the child specifically what behavior you expect. Encourage the child to talk about the problem. Offer love to the child. If necessary, ask for help from another adult or the Director of Christian Education.

Health and Safety

If a telephone is needed to call 911 or otherwise, they are located in the office on the main floor of the building. Teachers should bring cell phones to the classrooms whenever possible.

In the event of an emergency, the volunteer teachers will care for the children and help maintain safety. Keep the attendance sheet with you, so you know which children are present. In the case of a severe storm, students and adults will exit the classrooms and go into the basement hallway by the Cinema Room. For emergency evacuation from the basement the primary exits are: up the stairs to the door on 5th Avenue or up the stairs to the exit on 4th Avenue. From the second floor: down the stairs to the exits on 4th or 5111 Avenue. Stairs on the second floor are located by the Gym and by the Choir Room. The 4th Avenue doors may be more congested if the Sanctuary is also being evacuated. If primary exits are blocked there is also an exit in the basement located between the Cinema Room and the children's Music Room. Window evacuation from the basement is not available due to the moat. An exit map will be posted in each room. Know each classroom's evacuation route (this is important because during the WoRM rotation model, the children visit various classrooms with their teachers.)

In the case of a missing child, notify the Director of Christian Education immediately. She/He will delegate several volunteers to specified locations to look for the child. Each volunteer will search the designated spot for a specified time and report back to the Director.

ATTENDANCE

Attendance sheets are provided for each class. They are to be returned to the office at the end of Church School each week. It is critical for our children's safety that attendance is taken at the start of each class. Please write in your names so there is documentation

about adults who were present that day. Even children who are not in your grade level but are attending in your class, whether to be with a sibling, parent or other reason, need to be marked in attendance so they are also counted. In the case of an emergency evacuation of the building, please bring your attendance sheet with you so you will have an accurate record of who was in the building and now, presumably, out of the building.

TEACHER ABSENCE

Teachers who cannot be at church on a specific Sunday, need to let the Director of Christian Education know *as* soon as possible.

INCLUSION

Inclusion is a Christian value that is emphasized in our Church School. It is our invitation to all children of our church school that, regardless of race, nationality, gender, disabilities, creeds, or limitations, they will be accepted and included. All efforts will be made to help all children in attendance feel included and given opportunities to contribute. •

In order to provide a safe haven for children with food allergies, all snacks should be served with all ingredients listed.

VISITORS:

All visitors are welcome to come to Church School. In the sanctuary families can fill out a card to send with their children. Once in the classroom, please be sure each visitor is introduced. Take the time to be sure the visitor has heard each classmate's name. Do your best to make the visitor feel welcome.

OFFERTORY

There is the collection of an offering in preschool through 8th grade classes. The offering is one way we teach our children the gift of sharing. The money we collect goes toward the General Fund.

SAFE CHURCH — INCIDENT REPORT

1. Name of person filling out incident report/ date:

2. Name(s) of person/people involved in incident:

3. Name of adult observing and managing incident:

4. Relationship of the adult to the person involved in the incident:

5. Date/time of incident:

6: Brief description of incident:

7. How was the incident managed?

8. Who was informed of the incident (Name — Date/Time)

BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST SAFE CHURCH — SITE EMERGENCY PLAN

An emergency is defined as a situation in which immediate action must occur in order to keep people or the building safe. Some emergencies include: fire, tornado, severe winter weather, other severe storms, flooding, utility line break, bomb threat, hazardous material exposure, civil disturbance, and enemy attack. The most likely to occur at our site are: fire, tornado, severe weather or utility line break. In order to address the dangers of these emergencies, we have developed a building evacuation plan, a map of safe locations in the building, emergency supplies, contingencies for utility issues, and paths of communication. -

FIRE EMERGENCY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

In the event of a fire all people will exit the building on all floors. All people will exit the building following evacuation plans detailed on the facility evacuation map. Church School Evacuation procedures are: Children should form a line within the classroom and exit the room, leaving the building through the plan designated for each room. Teachers should be sure to take the attendance sheet with them. Take the children to the safe place in the play yard on 5th Avenue and take attendance.

TORNADO POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The National Weather Service - issues a *Tornado Watch* when developing weather conditions exist. Tornadoes are most common in April-July. Dark, rolling clouds, hail or driving rain, sudden increases in wind, and/or sudden changes in temperature may indicate tornado conditions. Church staff will notify teachers if a Tornado Watch is issued. A *Tornado Warning* is issued when an actual tornado has been sighted or indicated on radar.

In the event of a Tornado Warning or severe storm, teachers will take children to the Tornado Shelter area: Outside the Cinema Room on the Lower Level. Children should crouch on elbows and knees with heads down. Hands should cover the back of the head. (Most tornado deaths are caused by head injuries.)

UTILITY POLICY AND PROCEDURE

If a utility issue arises requiring evacuation, people will follow the planned routes on the facility evacuation map (The same procedure as in the instance of a fire.) If the utility issue makes the building uninhabitable, the predetermined paths of communication will be activated so all people using the building will be notified.

BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
SAFE CHURCH — Prevention of Child Abuse at Church

A. Two Adult Rule:

1. Two adults must be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event or ministry involving children including Church School, Youth Fellowship Groups, Outings and Special Events.
2. Exceptions may be counseling by ministers which will be addressed in section E.
3. Exceptions of mentors working with confirmands one on one. Mentors will have a background check.

B. Volunteers with children must be a minimum of 18 years of age

1. Youth volunteers may assist adults however there must be adult supervision at all times.
2. Volunteers must be at least 5 years older than the group with which they are working.

C. Workers with children will be provided with information which will include:

1. Church policies for the prevention of child abuse
2. Procedures to be used in all ministries with children.
3. Appropriate steps to report an incident of child abuse.
4. Details of the state laws regarding child abuse.

D. Windows in all classroom doors

1. Removes the opportunity for secrecy and isolation.
2. Protects against false allegations.
3. An open half door is also desirable.

E. Open Door Counseling

1. When providing private counseling for young children, the door must remain open at all times. Counseling in a closed office with a window in the door is appropriate for children age 18 and over.
2. Other personnel should be nearby, even if they *are* not within listening distance.

F. Advance Notice to Parents

1. Parents will be given advance notice and full information regarding the event in which their child is participating
2. Written permission must be given for events off church property or after church hours such as sleep-overs.

RESPONSE TO VICTIMS OF CHILD ABUSE

Children may choose to tell a trusted adult at church about abuse that has occurred elsewhere.

- A. All allegations of child abuse must be taken seriously and responded to according to church policy.
- B. The victim's privacy must be maintained.
- C. Faithful response to the victim includes sympathetic concern and reassurance that _ the victim is not deserving of the abuse, nor responsible for causing the abuse.

POLICIES FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF CHILD ABUSE

If a child makes an allegation regarding an adult in the church:

- A. Reassure the child that you are listening and that you will help him/ her.
- B. DO NOT ask the child questions about the allegation- simply let them tell their story
- C. Reassure the child that what happened is not their fault and that adults want to help them with the problem so this won't happen again.
- D. Tell the child that you need help from someone else in the Church.
- E. Immediately report the allegation to the Director of Christian Education and/ or ministers:
 - a. Parents must be notified.
 - b. Others with expertise in this area may be consulted at the discretion of the Director of Christian Education or the Ministers.
- F. Mandated reporters (see State Child Protection Law) call Washtenaw County Protective Services at 734-481-9110. There is a worker on call 24 hours per day.
- G. Fill out child abuse incident form as provided by the church personnel.

If a child makes an allegation about a parent, other family member or other person outside the church:

- A. Reassure the child that you are listening and that you will help him/her.
- B. DO NOT ask the child questions about the allegation- simply let them tell their story.
- C. Reassure the child that what has happened is not their fault and that adults want to help them with the problem so it won't happen again.
- D. Tell the child that you need help from someone else in the Church.
- E. Immediately report the allegation to the Director of Christian Education or the ministers.
- F. Mandated reporters call Washtenaw County Protective Services at 734-481-9110. If the child is in danger and it is felt he/she should not be released to the parent, the police can assist while waiting for a response from PS.
- G. Fill out child abuse incident form as provided by church personnel.

NOTIFICATION TO THE CHURCH AND COMMUNITY REGARDING EVENTS OF ABUSE

- A. The congregation must be informed when child abuse has occurred in the church.
 1. There will be a designated spokesperson for the church and the media.
 2. Privacy of the individuals involved will be maintained as much as is legally possible.
 3. There will be many "secondary" victim as a result of this information being revealed that will require additional attention by the church.
 4. Special letters of communication, and special meetings of the congregation will be necessary.
- B. There will be no notification of abuse that is not-church related.
- C: The Michigan Conference of the United Church of Christ offices must be notified if a minister is accused of abuse. The President of the congregation will also be notified.

**BETHLEHEM CHURCH
REPORT OF SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE**

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse:

2. Victim's Name- Age/date of Birth:

3. Date/ place of initial conversation with/report from victim:

4. Victim's statement (Give your detailed summary here. Use quotes if possible.)

5. Name of person accused of abuse:

Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other)

6. Report to minister:

Date/time: _____

7. Call to victims' parent/guardian

Date/time: _____

Spoke with:

Summary:

8. Call to local children and family service agency:

Date/time:

Spoke with:

Summary:

9: Other Contacts:

Date/time:

Spoke with:

Summary:

Name of Person Reporting Incident _____

Signature: _____

BETHLEHEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
SAFE CHURCH — REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL VOLUNTEERS

- I. Every member who desires to participate in the child/youth program of our church as a volunteer must read the Safe Church policy of this church and agree to it by signing the form. The volunteer must also provide the names of two individuals who are familiar with his/her character *as* it relates to working with children and or youth. These persons will be contacted.
- II. All volunteers must observe the "two adult" rule. This rule requires that adults are never alone with children or youth without another adult partner, or in a place that would be out of view of another adult. When off-site, the two-adult rule will apply. The only exception to this are the youth and adults participating in the confirmation program. On overnights there will be, a minimum of two adults and at least one from each sex of the children/youth that are being chaperoned. All volunteers in the child/youth program will utilize the means of communication available to them if *any* questions or needs arise.
- IV. All volunteers will report any suspicious activity immediately.
 - A, - The report will be made to the Director of Christian Education, a ministerial staff person, or a volunteer who has supervisory responsibilities.
 - B. The person making the report should immediately fill out an incident report form.
 - C. The person receiving the initial report will immediately report the incident to one of the ministers, who will then report to the President of the Church Council.
 - D. All volunteers and staff will take the allegations seriously and will be respectful of both the victim and the alleged abuser.
 - E. The alleged abuser will be relieved from his/her responsibilities in a discreet manner until an investigation is complete.
 - F. After reviewing the reported incident, the ministerial staff members and church leaders will determine whether there is reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect (as defined by the State of Michigan's Child Protection Law), then further action shall be taken as described in the Bethlehem Church policy "Responding to Allegations of Abuse-or Neglect."
- V. All volunteers and staff will abide by the Bethlehem Church child abuse policies and site emergency plan.