



White Oak Pond Cumberland Presbyterian Church Safe Sanctuary Policy Approved August 2022

Purpose

Our purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of all. The term “safe sanctuary” describes exactly what it sounds like. A safe sanctuary policy attempts to provide a safe environment for ministry to take place and for all persons participating in church ministries from fire, injury, intruder, sexual abuse and natural disaster.

Covenant Statement

White Oak Pond Cumberland Presbyterian Church hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with minors and vulnerable persons on our procedures and policies.

A. Staff Selection Policies

All volunteer and paid staff who works with minors or vulnerable adults at White Oak Pond Cumberland Presbyterian Church will comply with the following guidelines:

- 1) Minimum Age:
 - a) 21 years old to supervise youth (6th grade and above) or vulnerable adults.
 - b) 18 years old to supervise children (infant – 5th grade)
- 2) Must be reviewed and receive the consensus of the Session.
- 3) Minors may serve as an assistant to adult volunteers/staff and act at their direction but must not be considered as an adult volunteer. Assistants must be competent to assist in the ministry or activity/service in which they are working and must be approved by the Christian Education Committee or a Pastor.
- 4) Will have demonstrated a commitment to White Oak Pond for a preferred minimum of 6 months. (Exceptions in special situations can be made but must be approved by the Pastor but should be rare.)
- 5) All who supervise minors/vulnerable persons will undergo a criminal background check every three years at the expense of the church. Any criminal records will be reviewed by the Pastor and the Session. Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect or elder abuse may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for minors/vulnerable persons.

B. Training

All clergy, elders, volunteers and employees will:

1. Receive orientation to the church Safe Sanctuary policy prior to working with minors/vulnerable adults, serving as an elder or beginning their employment at the church.
2. Covenant to abide by the Safe Sanctuary policy, reviewing any changes to the policy and renewing their covenant annually.
3. Complete comprehensive training on this policy and abuse awareness and prevention at least every three years.

C. Supervision Guidelines

Whenever supervising activities involving minors/vulnerable adults:

- 1) There should always be at least two screened adults present. This can include but is not limited to:
 - a) A vehicle while transporting a minor/vulnerable person
 - b) A classroom with windowless, closed or locked doors
 - c) When supervising young children or vulnerable adults in the bathroom
 - d) An isolated area where there is no visibility by another screened adult volunteer
 - e) All communication through texting, online platforms and social media channels
- 2) If the two-adult rule cannot be observed, another screened adult may be a designated roamer who will regularly check on groups with only one adult.
- 3) All classroom and office doors will have a window with visibility from a hallway or remain open while occupied.
- 4) Windows will be kept completely clear.
- 5) One-on-one interactions are sometimes necessary and appropriate but must comply with the following:
 - a) One-on-one interactions with minors/vulnerable adults will be with an open/windowed door or in an openly visible area of others or passers-by.
 - b) If possible, another adult is to have knowledge of an employee or volunteer whereabouts and with whom they are meeting.
 - c) Children and youth receiving individual counseling should be told they are free to discuss any aspects of the counseling process with a parent or other adult especially if they are uncomfortable about anything that occurs in counseling.
- 6) Whenever the Church sponsors an activity involving minors/vulnerable persons, anyone has the right to visit and observe the activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced.
- 7) There must be access to a telephone, cell phone or other form of communication when groups are at or away from the church facility for assistance in case of emergency or notification.
- 8) Screened adult volunteers/staff persons should avoid transportation of minor/vulnerable adult by one's self during a church sanctioned event unless written consent is obtained from a parent or guardian.
- 9) Van drivers will be covered by the Church insurance when driving the Church van.
- 10) Drivers should go through the same screening process as all other volunteers/employees.

- 11) All minors participating in activities sponsored by the Church must have a completed medical/parental release form.
- 12) At activities involving overnight lodging, adult volunteers and staff may not sleep in the same hotel room, bedroom, or tent with minors/vulnerable persons, unless it is a guardian-minor situation and no other minors/vulnerable persons are housed in the same room/tent. They may sleep in the same large facility as minors/vulnerable persons, but in separate designated areas (i.e. Camp Cumberland dorms, large/open rooms like gymnasiums, sanctuaries, etc.)
- 13) Whenever the Church hosts an activity involving children or youth from another church or community organization, the groups using the church facility will follow White Oak Pond Cumberland Presbyterian Church's Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures.

D. Appropriate Touch and Prohibited Conduct

The sense of touch is extremely powerful and can wordlessly convey messages on many levels. Touch is necessary to all human thriving, but when used to manipulate, control or harm another, touch can be deadly. Appropriate touch may be used when calming another person. Authority figures are always responsible to: protect minors/vulnerable persons under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others, and to discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior witnessed with a Pastor, or active Elder.

Appropriate touch to any other person in the context of an authority figure supervising and/or teaching another is minimal and platonic, including during games and recreation. Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing or be forced upon a reluctant person. Inappropriate touch is touching that is unsolicited or unwanted of either a sexual nature or of a physical nature involving physical harm or the threat of physical harm. Exception to this might be tending to a minor/vulnerable person injury, where the “Rule of 3” would apply.

Disciplinary actions must not include striking or spanking.

Prohibited conduct includes any form of physical, emotional, or mental abuse of a minor/vulnerable person, including but not limited to exploitation, which breaches Christian ethical principles by misusing a trust relationship. Sexual exploitation of a child includes, but is not limited to, any interaction between a child and an adult in which the child is being used for the sexual stimulation of an adult. This may or may not include touching. Prohibited conduct may include but not be limited to:

- a) Any display or demonstration of sexual activity, abuse, insinuation of abuse, or evidence of sexual conduct towards a protected minor/vulnerable person;
- b) Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between any adult and a protected minor/vulnerable person;
- c) Sexual advances or sexual activity of any kind between an older child and a younger child;
- d) Infliction of physically abusive behavior or bodily injury to a minor/vulnerable person;
- e) Physical neglect of a minor/vulnerable person, including failure to provide adequate supervision;
- f) Causing mental or emotional injury to a minor/vulnerable person;

- g) Possessing obscene or pornographic (sexually explicit) materials at any function of the Church;
- h) Possession of illicit images on electronic devices;
- i) Possession or being under the influence of any illegal substances;
- j) Consuming or being under the influence of alcohol while leading or participating in a minors'/vulnerable person's function of the Church;
- k) Any kind of verbal remarks with sexual connotations, overtones, or innuendo directed to or about a minor/vulnerable person.

E. Reporting

Concerns about breaches of this policy should be reported to the Pastor or an active Elder who will report it to an Elder on the Safe Sanctuary Committee for review.

If a suspected incident of child abuse or neglect occurs or is revealed to a volunteer/paid staff person at White Oak Pond Cumberland Presbyterian Church, they will:

- 1) Ensure the safety of the child, youth or other vulnerable adult
- 2) Call and inform the Pastor or an active Elder
- 3) Work with the support of the pastor or active elder to make a report to the appropriate agency:
 - a) Adult Abuse Reporting: Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services at 1-800-392-0210 or https://apps4.mo.gov/APS_Portal/
 - b) Child Abuse Reporting: Hotline of Missouri Division of Social Services Children's Division: 1-800-392-3738 or <https://apps.dss.mo.gov/OnlineCanReporting>
- 4) Complete a Critical Incident Report

All persons involved with the report or investigation shall keep the information in strictest confidence.

If the incident occurred on White Oak Pond Cumberland Presbyterian Church property, at an event sponsored by or participated in by the White Oak Pond Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the incident will be brought to Session for further action.

Upon accusation, the accused is entitled to prompt and fair disposition of such serious charges. It is acknowledged that Church members and ministers are subject to inquiry and discipline under the Confession of Faith and the Rules of Discipline of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Physical, mental or emotional misconduct shall be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including dismissal of any Church employee or authority figure.

F. Registered Sex Offenders

White Oak Pond Cumberland Presbyterian Church may allow a Registered Sex Offender to participate in church activities under the following conditions:

1. They will complete a request to attend
2. Complete a background check
3. Sign a covenant to abide by the following conditions:
 - a. They will be assigned an active Elder as an escort by the session and they will remain with that escort 100 percent of the time while on Church property.
 - b. Use only the restroom located in the vestibule by the main door of the Church building.
 - c. Not attend Church sponsored activities if their victim is present.
 - d. Not serve or be put in a position of leadership in the Church.
 - e. Not associate with any minors/vulnerable persons attending or participating in any Church sponsored activity/service.
 - f. Not allow any minor/vulnerable person into any motor vehicle to which they have access.
 - g. Comply with any court-mandated restrictions or other legal restrictions or conditions (such as conditions of probation, treatment, etc.) and recognize that these shall supersede any conditions in the Church policy referenced in this covenant that are less restrictive or contradictory.
4. Are approved by the Session to attend

G. Emergency Situations

Medical Emergency:

1. In the event of a medical emergency call 9-1-1.
2. An AED is located in the hallway between the sanctuary and gym. Video training can be found at <https://americanAED.com/dvd/onsite>
3. A Medical Log will be maintained for illness, injury, or administration of prescription medication, authorized by parent/guardian.

Fire Safety:

In the event of a fire, all persons will be directed to the nearest available exit and proceed to the wooden cross in the front lawn grass. Wait for fire personnel to arrive. No person shall re-enter the building until cleared by an emergency professional. If a Pastor or Active Elder is not present, one will be informed as soon as possible.

Storm Warning:

In the event of a storm warning, such as a tornado, all persons should proceed should remain in the building and report to the basement and wait until the storm warning has passed. No person should leave the building during this time. If a Pastor or Active Elder is not present, one will be informed as soon as possible.

Spokesperson for the Church

In the event of any type of incident, all media should be directed to the Senior Pastor or the Elder of the Month in this order of priority. This should be the only person in conversation with the media at any time.

H. Definitions

1. **Mandated Reporter:** Persons who are responsible for the care, custody, and control of vulnerable people or persons who know or suspect that abuse of vulnerable persons has occurred and are therefore legally required to ensure a report is made when abuse is observed or suspected. (210.115 RSMo)
2. **Child Abuse** is defined as: "...Any physical injury, sexual abuse, or emotional abuse inflicted on a child other than by accidental means by those responsible for the child's care, custody, and control, except that discipline including spanking, administered in a reasonable manner, shall not be construed to be abuse." (210.110.1 RSMo)
 - a. **Physical Abuse** occurs any time a child's physical health or welfare is harmed or threatened with harm. Physical abuse refers to the infliction of physical pain, and may include injury, disfigurement, impairment of a bodily organ, or death.
 - b. **Sexual Abuse** occurs any time a minor is used for the sexual stimulation of an adult or older minor. The minor is powerless either to consent to or resist such sexual acts. This includes fondling, sexual intercourse, participation in sexual acts, incest, exploitation for the purpose of pornography or prostitution and/or exposure to adult sexual activity.
 - c. **Emotional Abuse** deeply affects a minor's self-esteem by submitting him/her to verbal assault or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse most often occurs in conjunction with another form of abuse, but is the only kind of abuse that can occur alone. It does not always involve injuries we can see.
3. **Child Neglect** is defined as; "...Failure to provide, by those responsible for the care, custody, and control of the child, the proper or necessary support, education as required by law, nutrition or medical, surgical, or any other care necessary for the child's well-being."
4. **Self-Injury** or harm to oneself, typically through cutting or choking (choking game or self-strangulation).
5. Those responsible for the **care, custody and control** of the child are defined as: "...Those included but not limited to the parents or guardian of a child, other members of the child's household, or those exercising supervision over a child for any part of a 24 hour day. It shall also include any adult, who, based on the relationship to the parents of the child, members of the child's household or the family, has access to the child." (210.110.16 RSMo)
6. **Screened Adults** are the clergy, active Elders, staff and adult volunteers who have been screened, trained in this policy and approved to serve by the Session.

7. **Assistants** are defined as minors who lend aid to a screened adult volunteer and act at their direction.
8. **Escort** is defined as an active Elder of the Church who provides 100 percent visual presence supervision to a Registered Sex Offender (RSO) who has been given permission to attend Church sponsored activities/services by the Session.
9. **Vulnerable Persons** are defined as children (age 17 and below), adults age 60 and older and people with disabilities between 18 and 59. These individuals may live in the community or in long-term care facilities. Either way, they are unable to protect their own interests or adequately perform or obtain services necessary to meet their essential human needs (192.2400, RSMo).
10. **Elder Abuse**:
 - a. Abuse – the infliction of physical, sexual, or emotional injury or harm including financial exploitation by any person, firm, or corporation ([192.2400. RSMo](#)).
 - b. Neglect – the failure to provide services to an eligible adult by any person, firm or corporation with a legal or contractual duty to do so, when such failure presents either an imminent danger to the health, safety, or welfare of the client or a substantial probability that death or serious physical harm would result ([192.2400. RSMo](#)).
 - c. Financial Exploitation – A person commits the crime of financial exploitation of an elderly or disabled person if such person knowingly and by deception, intimidation, or force obtains control over the elderly or disabled person's property with the intent to permanently deprive the elderly or disabled person of the use, benefit or possession of his or her property thereby benefiting such person or detrimentally affecting the elderly or disabled person ([570.145. RSMo](#)).
 - d. Bullying – intimidation or harassment that causes a reasonable person to fear for his or her physical safety or property and may consist of physical actions including gestures; cyberbullying; oral, electronic, or written communication; and any threat of retaliation for reporting of such acts. ([192.2400, RSMo](#))