



Safe Sanctuaries for Children and Youth

In order to provide a safe environment for children and youth, West Market Street United Methodist Church (“the Church”) requires all employees and non-employees (whether paid or volunteers) to adhere to and provide support to the following procedures and practices:

Screening Procedures: All employees and non-employees (whether paid or volunteers) who have regular and direct contact with children and youth through the Church are required to submit to the following screening procedures:

- Completion of a Screening Form (which will be maintained in a confidential file) that includes, but is not limited to:
 - Standard contact information
 - Experience and qualifications for the position
 - Voluntary disclosure of past criminal history and allegations of criminal history
 - Waiver of confidentiality allowing the church to secure the background check for the position being applied for
 - Listing of three (3) non-related references
- Demonstration of an active relationship with the Church for at least six months before being allowed to be in a supervisory role in children’s and youth activities. For new employees, adequate references may be substituted for the six-month period of active relationship with the Church if necessary to function in the position for which the employee is hired.

Training: All employees and non-employees (whether paid or volunteers) must engage in training regarding the Safe Sanctuaries policy before working directly with children or youth. After initial training, an annual review of the Safe Sanctuaries policy is required.

Supervision: All employees and non-employees (whether paid or volunteers) must adhere to the following for supervision of children and youth:

- No matter the size of the group of children or youth, there must be two unrelated adults present with the group. This may include the presence of an adult “roamer” who moves in and out of the rooms.
- No child will be left unsupervised while attending a Church activity.
- All children and youth activities should occur in open view, utilizing only rooms with a window in the door or leaving the door to the room open.
- No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 18 years of age and is 5 years older than the children/youth being supervised.
- At least one adult present at every Church activity should be certified in basic first aid and CPR.
- Adults are to wear nametags when supervising children and youth.

- For overnight children or youth retreats or mission trips all adult supervisors must be at least 21 years of age. On an overnight retreat where there are both male and female children or youth, there must be both male and female adult supervisors. No child or youth will share a bed with an adult. A minimum of three persons shall be assigned to a room, males and females housed separately, with the exception of married couples. Visitation between males and females in bedrooms is prohibited unless directly supervised in a group setting with the adult supervisors for devotional or group discussion times.
- Adult supervisors of children and youth activities should report any safety issues with facilities or equipment used by children or youth to the Church administrator.

Parent/Guardian Communications:

- Adult supervisors of children and youth activities must give parents/guardians enough information in advance to understand the nature of the activity in which the children and youth will be participating.
- Adult supervisors of children and youth activities must get permission forms with medical information from parents/guardians before children or youth can leave Church property with a Church group.
- Adult supervisors of children and youth activities are to regularly remind parents/guardians of the following:
 - Children should always be signed in and out of activities in which they participate.
 - Children in fifth grade and younger must be accompanied by an adult at all times in the Church, including when leaving an activity or worship service to use the restroom.

Additional Church Commitments:

The Church will conduct an annual inspection of facilities and equipment used in children and youth activities (including, but not limited to the nurseries, classrooms, youth room, and play areas).

The Church shall maintain at all times liability coverage regarding the occurrence of child abuse on the Church premises or in connection with Church sponsored activities. The insurance coverage shall be in an amount that the Trustees deem adequate, and the Trustees shall periodically review the adequacy of such coverage.

West Market Street United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuaries Virtual Communication Policy

Texting, e-mailing, and other forms of electronic communication have become common today, especially among students. Texting and electronic communication can be a vital part of ministry work, but their improper use can produce serious consequences.

West Market Street United Methodist Church (“WMSUMC”) desires to promote safety and to create a healthy environment for texting and electronic communication between its employees, volunteers and children and youth who participate in ministry activities. As a result, WMSUMC has developed the following guidelines:

1. Employees and volunteers who want to communicate with minors using text messaging, e-mail, social networking websites or other forms of electronic media must first sign a consent form and be trained on the recommended practices, limitations, and legal parameters for texting and other forms of electronic communication within ministry.
2. Ministry workers (employees and volunteers) may not transmit any content that is illicit, unsavory, abusive, pornographic, discriminatory, harassing, or disrespectful when communicating with each other or with minors involved in ministry activities.
3. Except in an emergency, ministry workers may not transmit any personal information pertaining to a minor without the ministry participant and his or her parents or guardians signing consent forms. This applies to group texting, group e-mail, or any other public method of electronic communication. Personal information may include such things as a minor’s name, phone number, e-mail address, or photograph.
4. Many times, the use of cell phones or technology may be built into ministry programs (e.g., looking up a Bible verse on a Bible app, Instagram scavenger hunts, etc.) In all other cases, ministry workers will discourage students from using cell phones during ministry programs except in an emergency, to contact a parent or guardian, or to place calls specifically approved by a leader.
5. Ministry workers will instruct youth occasionally about the Safe Sanctuaries Virtual Communications Policy and the dangers of such conduct as “sexting.”
6. Ministry workers who become aware of possible child abuse through electronic media must immediately notify their supervisor. The ministry will consult with its attorney and report abuse as required by law.
7. All information, images, or videos shared electronically through public ministry communications channels aren’t considered confidential.
8. To participate in ministry electronic communications, minors and their parents/guardians must sign a related consent form.
9. Minors who violate this policy may lose electronic communications privileges or be removed from the ministry program. The ministry’s pastoral leadership will notify parents immediately of any violation.
10. Cellular phones can cause distraction if used while driving. For safety reasons, youth workers driving on ministry business are not to make calls unless they use a hands-free device. If they receive a cell phone call while driving, the youth worker should answer it using a hands-free device or pull off the road to a safe location as soon as possible.
11. Ministry workers driving on ministry business are to avoid cell phone use—even hands-free—when transporting children, while driving in heavy traffic, during hazardous weather conditions, or when it violates local law.
12. Ministry workers are never to send or read text messages or post to or read social media while driving.