

**Child Abuse Prevention and  
Risk Management Policy  
Trinity United Methodist Church  
Grand Rapids, Michigan**

**Effective Date: January 1, 2007  
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# Table of Contents

## Child Abuse Prevention and Risk Management Policy Trinity United Methodist Church Grand Rapids, Michigan

<b>I.</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>Theological Rationale</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>Statement of Purpose</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>Definitions</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>Prevention Guidelines</b>	<b>5</b>
	A. Screening and Selection of Volunteers and Staff	
	B. Supervision of Activities	
	C. Transportation to Activities	
	D. Discipline	
	E. Restroom Guidelines	
	F. Building Usage	
<b>VI.</b>	<b>Allegations and Known Incidents of Abuse</b>	<b>9</b>
	A. Response Guidelines	
	B. Reporting Requirements	
	C. Response to the Victim and Victim's Family	
	D. Notification of Judicatory Officials and Others	
	E. Notification of the Congregation and Pastoral Care Concerns	
	F. Dealing with the Media	
	G. Response to the Accused and to the Family of the Accused	
	H. Response Procedure When a Child or Youth is the Alleged Offender	
<b>VII.</b>	<b>Procedures for Involving Sex Offenders in the Life of the Congregation</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>Education and Training</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>IX.</b>	<b>Emergency Policy</b>	<b>18</b>
	A. Injury or Illness	
	B. Fire	
	C. Severe Weather	
	D. Lock Down	
<b>X.</b>	<b>Abuse Response Team</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>XI.</b>	<b>Storage and Retention of Records</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>XII.</b>	<b>Updating of Policy and Procedures and Access to Policy</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>XIII.</b>	<b>Appendices</b>	<b>21</b>
	A. Qualified Privilege	
	B. Indicators of Child Sexual Abuse	
	C. Resources	
	D. Forms and Covenants	
<b>XIV.</b>	<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>41</b>

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**Trinity United Methodist Church**  
**Grand Rapids, Michigan**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

The mission of Trinity United Methodist Church is to be “...an inclusive, progressive community of faith in which persons grow in faith, love and service in the spirit of Jesus Christ.” To live out this mission, Trinity must provide ministries of Christian nurture within the context of a safe and caring community. Child sexual abuse stands in the way of this mission or of any mission of the Christian Church and so cannot be tolerated. Churches must take proactive steps to prevent child sexual abuse and must have caring response procedures in place before an incident or allegation occurs. Churches also must take steps to ensure the general wellbeing and safety of children and youth by having in place general safety precautions and procedures.

**II. THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE**

The sacrament of baptism draws people into the household of God and so into a covenant of Christian care. In our baptismal liturgy, we invite children and others into the hospitality of the Church by promising to live out our discipleship before them, to nurture them in faith, to care for them, and to welcome them into the family of God. It goes without saying that protecting children and youth from abuse must be central to this covenant.

Scripture also calls us to a covenant of justice with “the least in our midst,” (Matt. 25: 31-45). Scripture suggests that failure to be advocates for the least in society is a failure to minister to Christ himself. Children in our world today, and especially in the context of child sexual abuse, are “the least” in terms of power.

One specialist on child sexual abuse notes that such abuse only happens when there is an imbalance of power, and that a child cannot achieve a balance of power in the face of adult authority.<sup>1</sup> A balance of power must be achieved by other adults in community taking seriously their covenant to protect children and to be advocates on their behalf. As our United Methodist Social Principles state, “...children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse,” (2012 *Book of Discipline*, Para. 162c). Trinity is committed to providing such protection and to being a safe sanctuary for children and youth, and a community of care for all who enter its doors.

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<sup>1</sup> *Reducing the Risk II: Making Your Church Safe from Child Sexual Abuse*, Christian Ministry Resources/Church Law & Tax Report, DVD, 2003.

### **III. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

Trinity's *Child Abuse Prevention and Risk Management Policy* seeks to ensure that Trinity UMC is a safe sanctuary for all who participate in its ministries. As such the purpose of this policy is as follows:

- a. To protect children, youth and vulnerable adults from abuse;
- b. To protect the staff and volunteers who carry out the ministries of the church;
- c. To reduce the risk of legal liability to the church and its officers and to protect the church from impairment of its effectiveness in ministry;
- d. To outline preventative safety procedures and ways to respond to accidents, injuries, and disasters;
- e. To establish procedures for responding, in keeping with Michigan law, to an allegation or proven incident of abuse and for being sensitive to the needs of all involved. To outline procedures for providing compassionate care to all involved in an alleged incident, including the victim, the victim's family, the accused, the family of the accused, other children and families in the congregation, and the congregation as a whole;
- f. To outline procedures for involving a known sex offender in the ministries of the church in a way that ensures the safety of children and seeks to restore the offender to Christian fellowship while providing appropriate means of accountability;
- g. To outline circumstances in which a known sex offender would be denied participation in church ministries;
- h. To outline procedures for providing education to staff, volunteers, and church members about safety, child sexual abuse awareness and prevention, and restorative justice issues as they relate to sex offenders;
- i. To strengthen the ministries and outreach of the church by engendering trust in Trinity's staff, volunteers, and officers that every measure has been taken to protect children and youth involved in church ministries.

### **IV. DEFINITIONS**

#### **Church**

"Church" generally means the building and properties of Trinity United Methodist Church and any other locations where the church may sponsor activities. "Church" may also refer to the congregation of Trinity United Methodist Church.

#### **Child/Youth**

The word "child" or "children" refers to anyone under the age of 18. The term "youth" refers specifically to children between the ages of 13 and 18.

#### **Vulnerable Adult**

"Vulnerable adult" refers to a person over 18 years of age who is incapacitated or has mental or developmental impairments that create a vulnerability to abuse. Such persons are subsumed under this policy and in all references to "child" or "children."

## **Child Abuse**

According to Michigan law, child abuse refers to "...harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare that occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or maltreatment, by a parent, a legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare or by a teacher, a teacher's aide, or a member of the clergy."<sup>2</sup> Child abuse can include emotional or physical abuse, sexual abuse, neglect and ritual abuse.

## **Sexual Abuse**

According to Michigan law, "'Sexual abuse' means engaging in sexual contact or sexual penetration as defined in section 520a of the Michigan penal code, Act No. 328 of the Public Acts of 1931, being section 750.520a of the Michigan Compiled Laws, with a child. "Sexual exploitation" includes allowing, permitting, or encouraging, or engaging in the photographing, filming, or depicting of a child engaged in a listed sexual act as defined in section 145c of the Michigan Penal Code, 1931PA 328, MCL 750.145c."<sup>3</sup> In general, sexual abuse constitutes any act in which an adult or child more than four years older than the child victim/vulnerable adult receives sexual gratification from a child, including sexual contact, intercourse, incest, fondling, and engaging in, allowing, or encouraging child prostitution or pornography.

## **Neglect**

According to Michigan law, neglect refers to "...harm or threatened harm to a child's health or welfare by a parent, legal guardian, or any other person responsible for the child's health or welfare that occurs through either of the following:

- (i) Negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.
- (ii) Placing a child at an unreasonable risk to the child's health or welfare by failure of the parent, legal guardian, or other person responsible for the child's health or welfare to intervene to eliminate the risk when that person is able to do so and has, or should have, knowledge of the risk."<sup>4</sup>

## **Abuse Response Team**

The Abuse Response Team shall consist of lay members and staff. Its primary responsibility is to insure, in conjunction with staff, that Trinity's Child Abuse Prevention and Risk Management Policy is carried out. It is also responsible for carrying out the policy, in conjunction with staff, in the event of an allegation or incident of abuse or in the event that someone who has a sexual misconduct history becomes involved at Trinity. The Abuse Response Team will consist of a chair, whose sole leadership responsibilities in the church will center on the carrying out of this policy. The Abuse Response Team will also consist of the pastors, the church attorney, the executive secretary, a media spokesperson, a representative staff person (or persons) directly responsible for ministries with children and/or youth, and the chairs of the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the Church Council.

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<sup>2</sup> *Child Protection Law*, State of Michigan Family Independence Agency Publication 3, p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

## V. PREVENTION GUIDELINES

### A. SCREENING AND SELECTION OF VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

1. All volunteers and paid staff who have significant contact with children and youth are required to complete an application which includes permission to run a background check. Volunteers are required to sign a *Participation Covenant Statement*. (See *Forms and Covenants* in the appendices of this policy). Pastors are screened and selected by the bishop, the cabinet, and the Board of Ordained Ministry. All forms will be in office.
2. Applicants being considered for a paid staff position will be interviewed and the checking of references will be required.
3. Applicants being considered for a volunteer position will be interviewed and have their references checked at the discretion of the pastor or supervisor responsible for the ministry.

*Indications that an interview and/or the checking of references would be advisable include:*

- a. The person is a newcomer to Trinity UMC and/or Grand Rapids, Michigan.
- b. The person wants to work alone.
- c. The person wants to work with a specific age group.

*Indications that an interview and/or the checking of references must take place include:*

- a. The person has indicated that they have been charged with a crime.
  - b. Upon reviewing the application, issues are raised which require clarification.
4. A background check will be run on all applicants for a paid staff or volunteer position and reviewed annually. Other checks may also be run at the discretion of the pastor or supervisor, and may include the following:
    - a. Family Independence Agency Child Abuse or Neglect Report (Request for Central Registry Clearance).
    - b. Proof of Identity (Driver's License or State ID).
  5. *Six-Month Rule*: Applicants for a volunteer position must be members or constituents of Trinity UMC for at least six months before working with children and youth. This requirement can be waived at the discretion of SPRC, provided that other screening and supervisory measures have been satisfactorily completed.
  6. All paid staff and volunteers in supervisory roles with children and youth will be at least 18 years of age. In most cases, paid staff and volunteers in supervisory roles will be at least 5 years older than the children or youth they serve. In some cases, this requirement can be waived (such as in the case of a student intern working with youth), but in such cases, the pastor

or supervisor responsible for the ministry will provide additional supervision and adequate screening.

## **B. SUPERVISION OF ACTIVITIES**

1. Supervision of Classroom Activities: It is preferable to have at least two adults present for all classroom activities involving children and youth. However, when it is not possible to have at least two adults present, a designated person will check the rooms on a random basis. Depending on the age of the children/youth being supervised, there shall be an adequate ratio of adults to children/youth as determined by the pastor or supervisor responsible for the ministry.
2. Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities: With the exception of the circumstances identified under *Special Rules for Supervision of Specific Activities* (see below), at least two adults will be present for all non-classroom activities involving children and youth. (Please note that at least three adults are preferable so that in the case of an emergency, there will be adequate supervision.) The following additional guidelines will also be followed:
  - a. There shall be at least one adult of each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single-gender overnight events, at least one of the two or more adults present will be of the same gender as the children/youth.
  - b. Permission slips, including permission for emergency medical care, shall be carried by the person in charge of the trip and/or retreat. Signed permission slips shall be signed in advance by the parent or legal guardian.
  - c. All drivers will meet church driving guidelines and standards (See section on *Transportation to Activities*, p. 8).
  - d. Depending on the function, there shall be an adequate ratio of adults to children/youth as determined by the pastor or supervisor responsible for the ministry.
  - e. All non-classroom activities require the awareness and previous consent of the pastor or supervisor responsible for the ministry.
3. Special Rules for Supervision of Specific Activities: Certain ministries require that adults meet with children and youth on a one-to-one basis. When this is the case, the pastor or supervisor responsible for the ministry will rely on the screening, supervision, and accountability of staff and volunteers to ensure the well-being and safety of our children and youth. Specific instances in which these special rules apply, and the guidelines that should be followed in such instances, include the following:
  - a. Child Counseling: In instances of child counseling where circumstances dictate that counseling is most effective on a one-to-one basis, a paid staff person may meet individually with a child with the awareness and written consent of that

individual's parent or legal guardian. Volunteers will not counsel children on a one-to-one basis.

- b. Youth Counseling: In instances of youth counseling where circumstances dictate that counseling is most effective on a one-to-one basis, a paid staff person or volunteer may meet individually with a youth with the awareness and written consent of that individual's parent or legal guardian and the awareness and consent of the pastor or supervisor responsible for the ministry. Exceptions to consent may be made for emergencies or confidentiality concerns, but in such cases, the supervisor or pastor responsible for the ministry should be informed preferably before, or, if necessary, after the counseling takes place. When counseling does not require a private setting, paid staff and volunteers will meet with youth in public places.
- c. Mentoring:<sup>5</sup> In instances of mentoring where circumstances dictate that mentoring is most effective on a one-to-one basis, a church staff person or volunteer may meet individually with a child or youth with the awareness and written consent of that individual's parent or legal guardian and the approval of the pastor or supervisor responsible for the ministry. Mentors will meet with their children or youth in public places

### **C. TRANSPORTATION TO ACTIVITIES**

1. Drivers must be at least 21 years old.
2. In addition to the volunteer application (including permission to run a background check) and the *Participation Volunteer Statement*, drivers must complete a *Volunteer Driver Application* form, including proof of a valid state driver's license and insurance. (See *Forms and Covenants* in the appendices of this policy). A criminal background check will be run for all volunteer drivers and renewed annually. At the discretion of the pastor or supervisor responsible for the ministry, a driving record background check may also be run with the permission of the driver.
3. Vehicles carrying more than 12 passengers will not be used unless driven by a professional with a valid State of Michigan license to operate such vehicle.
4. There must be a seatbelt or appropriate restraint available for every person, and every person must wear a seatbelt or other appropriate restraint.

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<sup>5</sup> Mentoring is part of the programming of the church, as is the case, for instance, in mentoring programs for members of a confirmation class. Counseling is not a part of church programming and involves meeting with children and youth as needed to address spiritual and emotional concerns.

5. Once youth arrive at the church, they will not be allowed to drive to church events away from the building unless written permission has been given by their parents or legal guardians. Those youth who are given permission to drive to church events will not drive any other youth, unless written permission has been given by the parents or legal guardians of all youth riding in the vehicle.
6. In group events, it may be inevitable that during one child's or youth's transportation by an adult to or from an event, the child or youth may be in the individual presence of that adult. When this circumstance is unavoidable, a permission slip to parents informing them that their child will have one adult driver will be secured. The adult is responsible for exercising his/her best judgment for the child, youth's or vulnerable adult's well-being.

#### **D. DISCIPLINE**

1. In most cases, children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be disciplined in public view, in areas such as the corner of the classroom or a public room or hallway.
2. Corporal punishment (e.g., hitting, slapping, and spanking) will not be allowed under any circumstance. Physical restraint will only be used when someone's safety is at risk.

#### **E. RESTROOM GUIDELINES**

1. Young children, and others who may require it, may be helped in the bathroom by a caregiver. The door will remain open.
2. For children or vulnerable adults who can help themselves in the bathroom, the caregiver will wait outside.

#### **F. BUILDING USAGE**

1. Whenever possible, there will be an unobstructed view into all classrooms by the use of clear windows, half doors, or keeping the door to the classroom open.
2. The church will make a reasonable effort to provide supervision of the building to maintain security.
3. Parents or guardians are responsible for the supervision of their children, youth or vulnerable adults whenever their children, youth or vulnerable adults are on church premises and not involved in a church activity.

## **VI. ALLEGATIONS AND KNOWN INCIDENTS OF ABUSE**

Sexual abuse is criminal behavior. Any allegation of abuse must be taken seriously and dealt with immediately and compassionately. Under no circumstances should the church undertake its own investigation. The church should cooperate fully with investigating authorities.

As well, an incident of child abuse within a congregation constitutes a crisis that requires compassionate pastoral care for all involved including: the victim and victim's family, the peers of the victim, other volunteers and staff members, the accused and the family of the accused, and the congregation as a whole.

### **A. RESPONSE GUIDELINES**

An alleged incident or suspicion of abuse must be immediately reported to the senior and associate pastors who will notify the *Abuse Response Team*. (See page 20 for the makeup of this team). Initial notification can also be made to the Director of Children and Family Ministries, the Director of Community Ministries, the Youth Director, the Director of Music Ministries or the Director of the nursery, who shall in turn notify the pastors or a representative of the *Abuse Response Team*.

*In no case will an accused clergy person, staff member, or lay person handle any of the response requirements, and that person will be excluded from service on the Abuse Response Team as otherwise defined in the policy. This applies also to cases where the staff, clergy, or lay person's family member is involved as the accused person or as the alleged victim.*

Church employees and volunteers shall not conduct any investigation of reports or accusations of abuse or neglect. Following the guidance of an attorney representing the church, the church shall cooperate in any investigations by Children's Protective Services, Adult Protective Services, a law enforcement agency, liability insurer and the parties involved.

### **B. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

In the case of allegations that generate a report to civil authorities, the following steps should be taken. Note that some of these steps may occur concurrently.

1. Under the direction of the pastors and the *Abuse Response Team*, the person who has observed or had contact with the child regarding the abuse should make an oral report to Child Protective Services within 24 hours of the disclosure or observance. Note that the identity of the reporting person will not be made public. This report should be made in the presence of a staff member or other designee who is coordinating the reporting process.

- The report can be made to the Michigan Department of Human Services/Child Protective Services/Adult Protective Services, 24/hour line at 855.444.3911.
2. If the accused is a clergy member of the annual conference, a local pastor, diaconal minister or retired clergy, then a member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee, in coordination with the *Abuse Response Team*, will handle reporting to Child Protective Services. A verbal report also will be made immediately to the District Superintendent who will notify the bishop. The incident will then come under the dictates of the *Clergy Misconduct Policy* of the West Michigan Annual Conference.

Grand Rapids District Superintendent  
11 Fuller, SE, P.O. Box 6247  
Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6247  
616-459-4503

3. If the allegations involve lay staff, the pastors and the *Abuse Response Team* will coordinate reporting and documentation in conjunction with the Staff Parish Relations Committee in accordance with State of Michigan law.
4. When notification of the authorities is made by phone, and time permits, an independent witness or the church's attorney should be present in the room to witness the report being made and verify the identity of the reporter and the time of the report. Make a written record of the oral report being made and other aspects of the church's response, including the filing of the written report (see below). (See *Trinity UMC Notification Record of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse* in *Forms and Covenants* in the appendices of this policy).
5. The State of Michigan requires that mandated reporters file a written "**Report of Known or Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect**"/**Form 3200** with the Michigan Department of Human Services (DHS) Child Protective Services or that its equivalent be filed with Adult Protective Services within 24 hours of the filing of an oral report with DHS. Form 3200 is included in the *Forms and Covenants* section in the appendices of this policy. This form can be faxed to the Department of Human Services at 616-247-1767. This form also can be found on-line at [www.michigan.gov/documents/FIA3200\\_11924\\_7.pdf](http://www.michigan.gov/documents/FIA3200_11924_7.pdf).
6. All written reports should be done in ink to avoid reports being changed. Reports should be signed by the reporter and by a witness. A copy of all reports and documentation should be kept in a secure location by the *Abuse Response Team*.
7. Failure to report suspected or known incidents of child abuse or neglect can result in criminal and civil penalties. However, civil and criminal immunity is granted a person making a report in good faith. Information about reporting requirements can be found on the DHS website at [www.michigan.gov](http://www.michigan.gov).  
[Type "protective services" into the home site search engine].
8. Note that the above reporting requirements refer to an incident that has occurred on church property or at a church-related event or that has been disclosed during a church-related event or to a representative of the church. This also refers to

situations where a child or youth comes to a church-related event with observable signs of abuse. *Also note that the reporting requirements in this policy are minimum requirements.*

### **C. RESPONSE TO THE VICTIM AND VICTIM'S FAMILY**

**The following response guidelines seek to achieve a careful balance between the pastoral care of the victim and others involved in an alleged incident of abuse and the need to protect a possible criminal investigation. The guidelines are as follows:**

1. The victim of the alleged abuse should immediately be placed in a situation of safety. The victim should be protected from any contact with the alleged abuser. Care of the victim's emotional safety should also be taken into account. Do not engage in denial or minimization. It is inappropriate to suggest or insinuate that the victim is lying, exaggerating or fantasizing the incident. Such suggestions cause further victimization. It also is inappropriate to suggest that the victim is in any way responsible for the abuse.

***NOTE:** Child abuse is the responsibility of the abuser alone and never the fault or responsibility of the child or alleged victim. Sexual contact between an adult and a child is never consensual. Because of their relative powerlessness in the face of adult authority, children cannot be considered, in any legal sense, to give consent to sexual contact with an adult. Such contact is always inappropriate and criminal behavior on the part of the adult.*

2. If possible, allow Child or Adult Protective Services to notify the parent or legal guardian of the alleged abuse. If this is not possible or practical, the pastors may notify the parent or legal guardian and offer pastoral care in a way that will not imply an investigation on the part of the church of the alleged incident.
3. Provide supportive care for the victim and the family. Refer the victim and family to qualified professionals who can assist them in dealing with the trauma of abuse.

#### **D. NOTIFICATION OF JUDICATORY OFFICIALS AND OTHERS**

If the alleged abuse has happened on church property or at a church-sponsored event, or if the accused is a representative of the church, the pastor and the District Superintendent shall be notified of the incident. The District Superintendent will notify the Bishop. The pastor or church official will notify the church's attorney and insurance company.

Grand Rapids District Superintendent  
11 Fuller, SE, P.O. Box 6247  
Grand Rapids, MI 49516-6247  
616-459-4503

Church Mutual Insurance Company  
300 Schuster Lane  
P.O. Box 357  
Merrill, WI 54452-0357  
800-554.2642

#### **E. NOTIFICATION OF THE CONGREGATION AND PASTORAL CARE CONCERNS**

1. The *Abuse Response Team* will determine if notification of the congregation is appropriate. Such notification may be done through a letter or at a congregational meeting.
2. A designated "congregational spokesperson" chosen by the *Abuse Response Team* will coordinate all communication with the congregation. This person should be familiar with legal issues surrounding the dissemination of sensitive information. See *Appendices* on "qualified privilege," (p. 22).
3. If the congregation is to be notified, the congregational spokesperson will prepare a brief and honest written statement. Care should be taken to protect the confidentiality of the victim and the accused in such notification. All statements should avoid placing blame, drawing conclusions, or providing unnecessary or irrelevant details.
4. [The possibility of rumor and gossip are sufficient reason to do the following]. The church will sensitively address feelings of anger, fear, and grief on the part of many members of the congregation. The church should initiate a process for healing, taking into consideration the needs of those with a history of abuse. Note that this is not a short-term process but will likely involve long-term action. It will be helpful to identify congregational, denominational and community resources that can help the congregation deal with feelings associated with the abuse. A list of community and denominational resources is included in the appendices of this policy.

## **F. DEALING WITH THE MEDIA**

1. If deemed appropriate by the *Abuse Response Team*, notify the designated media spokesperson and have that person prepare a statement to the media if this becomes necessary. It is better to respond to media inquiries with a prepared statement on the church's policy on child abuse than to respond with "no comment." Communicate that the allegations are being taken seriously, that authorities have been advised and that an investigation is in progress. Also communicate that the victim of the alleged abuse is being cared for and that the accused has been removed from any contact with children at the church.
2. No one, except this spokesperson or his/her designee, should speak to the media on behalf of the church. Also, the spokesperson, in answering media queries, should take care to maintain the confidentiality of the alleged victim and the alleged abuser, and should avoid offering unnecessary information. It is appropriate to say that an investigation is in progress and that we don't have all of the information at the present time.

## **G. RESPONSE TO THE ACCUSED AND TO THE FAMILY OF THE ACCUSED**

1. After the victim's safety has been assured, and the authorities have been notified (and upon the advice of the authorities), the pastor, Staff Parish Relations Committee, member of the *Abuse Response Team* or designated person may tell the accused that an allegation has been made and an investigation is in progress. In no circumstances should the victim's name be revealed to the alleged abuser. The accused should be approached compassionately and sensitively but should be removed from further contact with children. Even though the investigation is still in progress, removal of the accused from contact with children insures the protection of the children. Even if the allegation proves to be false, removal of the accused from contact with children and youth also insures the protection of the accused from further allegations or suspicions of abuse. Such initial removal, pending the investigation, does not mean that the person will not be allowed to work with children or youth in the future in the event that the investigation proves the allegations to be false.
2. Offer supportive care to the accused and to the family members of the accused. Remember that a person who has been accused of child abuse has not yet been proven guilty. And remember that even a person who is a known abuser is still a person of sacred worth.
3. If the accused person is proven to be guilty, offer concrete support, but under no circumstances should the person be allowed to have any contact at any time with children or youth (no matter how long ago the abuse or allegation occurred). This includes persons who have been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest to child sexual abuse or who have had a civil verdict rendered against him/her or who has admitted to being a perpetrator of sexual abuse.
4. Insure that all who have been accused or proven to have abused children be treated the same, whether they are male or female, lay or clergy, etc.

## H. RESPONSE PROCEDURE WHEN A CHILD OR YOUTH IS THE ALLEGED OFFENDER<sup>6</sup>

Young people can be perpetrators of sexual offenses. However, when a child or youth inappropriately touches another child it can sometimes be difficult to determine if the behavior is inappropriate sexual exploration and ignorance of the importance of boundaries or sexually abusive and coercive behavior. It should be noted however, that sexual abuse encompasses any use of a child for sexual gratification by an adult or by a child four or more years older than the child victim. And, any youth who coerces a younger child into sexual activity has committed abuse. Both children will need support and professional help. In the event of an incident involving a child or youth as the accused, the following steps should be taken by the pastors or person responsible for the ministry:

1. Contact the parents of both children and discuss further steps. Parents should be talked to separately.
2. If the incident is determined to be simply a case of ignorance of the importance of boundaries, discuss appropriate behavior with the youth or child and emphasize that the behavior should not happen again.
3. If deemed appropriate, encourage the parents to seek help for both the abused child and the alleged offender. Provide resources to parents for such help. Keep in mind that a youth or child offender may be acting out a history of sexual abuse.
4. If deemed appropriate, make the necessary reports to Child Protective Services. Refer to the reporting section of this policy (p.10). Also follow other guidelines in this policy for how to deal with an allegation of child sexual abuse and how to respond to a sexual offender.
5. For information purposes, involve the *Abuse Response Team* and initiate assessment and the signing of a *Limited Access Agreement* (See *Procedures for Involving Sex Offenders in the Life of the Congregation*, pp. 16-18). Note that this agreement may need to be modified, for instance by restricting access to and interaction with younger children but allowing access, with supervision, to the youth's peer group.
6. Provide ongoing pastoral care and support for the alleged offender, the alleged victim and both families.

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<sup>6</sup> This section is adapted with permission from *Balancing Acts: Keeping Children Safe in Congregations*, by Rev. Debra W. Haffner, published by the Unitarian Universalist Association, Boston, MA.

## VII. PROCEDURES FOR INVOLVING SEX OFFENDERS IN THE LIFE OF THE CONGREGATION<sup>7</sup>

It is likely that at some point, Trinity will face the dilemma of how to include a known sex offender in the ministries of the church. We are called by our baptismal covenant and by Scripture to the nurture and care of such people, no matter how disturbing we may find the nature of their crime. It is indeed our hope that sex offenders who have received treatment may be helped not to re-offend by inclusion in a faith community where their spiritual and social needs can be met in ways that maintain accountability and safety. However, such inclusion in the church community can only happen when the needs of children and youth and of adult survivors are given priority and when the offender is willing to abide by church policies that protect children and youth.

We must remember, however, that the United Methodist Church is theologically a place of grace, openness, inclusion and restorative justice. Trinity reflects this ideal in its mission statement which declares that this church is "...an inclusive, progressive community of faith in which persons grow in faith, love and service in the spirit of Jesus Christ."

### **As such the following guidelines apply when considering how to involve a known sex offender in the life of this congregation:**

1. People who have committed sexual offenses will be treated as people of sacred worth. Such people will be held accountable and will always be treated with caring and respect.
2. Family members of sexual offenders will be included in the ministry of the church and welcomed into a community of care and support.
3. However, no person who has a history of sexual offense will be allowed to volunteer with children, youth and vulnerable adults as part of any church-sponsored activity or event no matter how long ago the offense occurred.
4. Congregation members are encouraged to share discretely with the pastors or members of the *Abuse Response Team* any concerns they may have about the sexual offense history of a person attending the church rather than sharing such information publicly. The name of the offender may be released to select persons in accordance with the *Limited Access Agreement*.
5. Anyone who has a history of sexual offense must agree to sign a *Limited Access Agreement* and abide by this agreement. (See the section on Forms and Covenants at the end of this policy for templates for the *Limited Access Agreement*.)
6. Trinity's *Limited Access Agreement* asks the person to avoid all contact or interaction with children and youth. Such restricted contact or interaction would include conversation, volunteering, teaching, mentoring, tutoring, chaperoning events, etc. The agreement also denies the person access to keys to the building.

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<sup>7</sup> This section is adapted, with permission, from *Balancing Acts: Keeping Children Safe in Congregations*, by Rev. Debra W. Haffner, published by the Unitarian Universalist Association, Boston, MA.

The person also would be asked to avoid entering the building unsupervised during activities designated by the *Limited Access Agreement*.

7. If a pastor or staff person becomes aware that a person has a history of sexual offense the following steps may apply:
  - a. The pastor will initiate a meeting to address the concern. The pastor may consider checking the sex offender registry prior to the meeting. The pastor should make note of the number and type of offenses and when the offenses occurred.
  - b. The person may be asked to sign a release form allowing the church to perform a background check and contact their parole officer, their sex offender treatment provider, or their current therapist. These professional may be asked to assess the likelihood that the person will re-offend and if any additional restrictions beyond the *Limited Access Agreement* should be placed upon the person.
  - c. If the person is not receiving treatment or has already received treatment and is no longer under the care of a therapist, the church may ask the person to go for a professional assessment by a therapist of the church's choosing. This therapist should ideally be a member of The Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers and will be asked to assess the level of risk posed by the person. The church will provide funding for this assessment.
  - d. The church must make decisions about an offender's involvement in the life of the congregation that insures the safety of the congregation. But under no circumstances should the church try to make its own assessment as to the likelihood of recidivism.
  - e. If a professional assessing the offender indicates that there is a high risk of recidivism, the person will be excluded from all involvement with the congregation until the person receives treatment and is re-assessed.
  - f. If the person is deemed by a professional making the assessment to be an acceptable risk, the person may participate in the life of the church in a limited way and must sign a *Limited Access Agreement*. The person's spouse, partner, or closest family member should be included in the discussions about this agreement.
  - g. If the person refuses to sign a release form for access to their therapist or parole officer; refuses to go for a professional assessment; or refuses to sign or abide by a *Limited Access Agreement*, the person will be excluded from the life of the community. If the person is to be excluded, the person and his/her partner should be advised that if the person comes on church property or to church-sponsored activities he/she will be escorted out of the area. If the person refuses to leave, the police will be called. If the person reconsiders and decides to comply with church policy, the church will reinstitute the assessment process to determine if the individual can be included in the life of the congregation.
  - h. As part of the *Limited Access Agreement* the person will be assigned one or more supervisory partners who will accompany the person at activities designated by the *Limited Access Agreement*.

- i. The pastor will notify staff and lay members who are responsible for ministries for children and youth of anyone who has signed a *Limited Access Agreement* or been excluded from the life of the congregation because of issues related to sexual offense. Staff and lay members to be informed might include other members of the pastoral staff, members of the *Abuse Response Team*, the director of Children and Family Ministries, the youth director, the director of the Nursery, the director of Music Ministries, children's choir directors, the custodians, and the chairs of the Church Council, Board of Trustees, and the Staff Parish Relations Committee. Such notification does not need to give details but should include the limits which the person has been asked to respect.
- j. In the event of changes in leadership at Trinity, the departing pastor will notify incoming clergy of any person within the congregation who has a history of sexual offense. The pastor may also consider notifying the pastor of another church if a member who has a history of sexual offense changes membership.

### **VIII. EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

Trinity United Methodist Church will provide education and training to staff members, volunteers, and to other members of the congregation. Such training to be directed by SPRC and will adhere to the following parameters:

- A. All staff and volunteers working with children, youth or vulnerable adults will be required to become acquainted with Trinity's *Child Abuse Prevention and Risk Management Policy*.
- B. All staff working with children, youth or vulnerable adults will be required to receive periodic training on ways to prevent and recognize child sexual abuse.
- C. Optional safety/First Aid/CPR and Disaster Response Training will be offered periodically to all staff and volunteers working with children, youth and vulnerable adults.
- D. Because abuse prevention is the responsibility of the entire congregation, education on abuse prevention and ways to recognize and respond to sexual abuse may be offered periodically to members of the congregation, especially targeting parents.
- E. When needed, education or support groups geared to adult survivors of sexual abuse may be made available.
- F. When needed, the church may provide parenting classes and respite or support groups for parents.
- G. Age-appropriate education on sexual abuse and ways to seek help for oneself or a friend may be provided to children and youth. Children may also be provided access to resources and education on self care and protection and on babysitting.
- H. Upon request, all members of the congregation will be provided with community resources that offer information and/or counseling on sexual abuse.
- I. All members of the congregation may be offered periodic educational sessions on restorative justice issues as they relate to sex offenders. Such sessions will include

education on Trinity's *Child Abuse Prevention and Risk Management Policy*. When needed, support groups for sex offenders may be offered.

- J. All new members will be introduced to Trinity's *Child Abuse Prevention and Risk Management Policy* during New Member's classes. All new members interested in volunteering with children and youth will be given an opportunity to fill out a Participation Covenant Statement and a Background Check Information Form with the understanding that they must abide by the "six-month rule," (See **Screening and Selection of Volunteers and Staff**, p. 6 and the **Forms and Covenants** in the appendices of this policy).

## **IX. EMERGENCY POLICY**

The following emergency policy refers to emergencies that occur during children and youth events that are held on church premises. The policy is designed to ensure the safety of children, youth, and vulnerable adults, as well as the volunteers and staff who care for them. This policy will be introduced to paid staff at the start of employ and to volunteers during new-volunteer orientations. This policy will also be periodically reviewed with volunteers during regular training sessions.

### **A. INJURY OR ILLNESS**

1. At least one staff member or volunteer will be certified in American Red Cross First Aid and CPR Procedures for each area of ministry involving children and youth (i.e. Children, Youth, Family, and Community Ministries). There will be an annual in-service on any special updates needed held at the church.
2. If the injury or illness appears serious (e.g., severe bleeding or stopped breathing), one person should remain with the injured person while a second is sent to call 911. If there is only one person present, that person should call 911 and then return to care for the injured person. Unless circumstances dictate that a person must be moved, the injured person should not be moved until professional help arrives. The supervising staff person should be notified as soon as possible.
3. If injury or illness does not appear serious, the supervising staff person should be notified as soon as possible.
4. All Universal Precautions must be followed:
  - i. **The use of gloves** is mandatory in dealing with any bodily fluid, blood, urine, vomit, etc.
  - ii. Responding people (including custodians) will follow directions found in Universal Precaution Kits located on each floor (kitchens, bathrooms, gym).

- iii. The custodian will be notified of injuries when any clean up is required post accident.
5. If hospital treatment is necessary, the *Trinity Children/Youth Information Form* (health form) will be consulted to determine the hospital preference. The *Trinity Children/Youth Information Form* (health form) will accompany the patient in order to provide medical information to professional treating staff. (See the Appendices for a copy of the *Trinity Children/Youth Information Form*).
6. Every attempt will be made to provide for privacy and confidentiality. Every attempt also will be made to eliminate crowds/spectators from gathering.
7. If the situation warrants, the adult witness to the injury or illness will complete an incident report. If no one witnessed the event, the responding person will do so. The form will be given to the supervising staff and kept on file at the church.
8. If an incident report is deemed necessary, every attempt will be made to notify parent/guardian (or family member in the case of adults) of the nature of the injury or illness. For children aged twelve years and under, every attempt will always be made to notify the parent or guardian, regardless of the necessity of an incident report or the severity of the injury or illness.

## **B. FIRE**

1. Fire exit procedures will be placed in each room. In the event of evacuation, these procedures will be followed by volunteers and staff. Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, people will be evacuated via stairs, not the elevator.

## **C. SEVERE WEATHER**

1. In the event of severe weather, the supervising staff person will stay abreast of the situation either by radio or phone whenever possible.
2. If a supervising staff person becomes aware of a tornado warning, students and adults will be kept safely in the building until the warning has been lifted.
3. In the event of a tornado, persons will remain inside and be directed to the basement areas, away from windows. Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, people will be directed to the basement via the stairs, not the elevator.
4. Activities and/or departures will resume when weather conditions allow.

## **D. LOCK DOWN**

(see addendum in back)

## **X. ABUSE RESPONSE TEAM**

The *Abuse Response Team* and the Trinity staff have primary responsibility for carrying out this policy. The Abuse Response Team, in conjunction with staff, also is responsible for carrying out the policy in the event of an allegation or incident of abuse or in the event that someone who has a sexual misconduct history becomes involved at Trinity. Leadership for the Abuse Response Team will be provided by a Chair whose sole leadership responsibilities in the church will center on the carrying out of this policy. The Chair of the *Abuse Response Team* shall complete annual training on ways to recognize and prevent child abuse and neglect and on State of Michigan reporting requirements for child abuse and neglect. The Chair will then provide training to the rest of the team. The Chair will organize a meeting of the *Abuse Response Team* at least once annually, preferably after the Annual Church Conference at which new members will be elected. The *Abuse Response Team* shall be made up of the following:

### ***Abuse Response Team***

Chair of Abuse Response Team (This position will be the only leadership position for this person in the church).

Charge Appointed Pastors

Church Attorney

Administrative Assistant

Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee

Chair of the Church Council

Media Spokesperson

A Representative Staff Person (or persons) Directly Responsible for Ministries with Children and Youth

Other persons as necessary

## **XI. STORAGE AND RETENTION OF RECORDS**

All records and documentation having to do with an allegation or incident of child abuse, will be stored indefinitely in a locked and secure file cabinet in the church office. Access to such records is restricted to the pastoral staff, members of the *Abuse Response Team* and the Staff Parish Relations Committee under the supervision of the senior and associate pastors. The Participation Covenant Statement (which includes permission to run a background check) as well as background check reports will be kept indefinitely in a locked and secure file cabinet. However, Background Check Information Forms will be shredded once the background check has been run.

## **XII. UPDATING OF POLICY AND PROCEDURES AND ACCESS TO POLICY**

This policy will be reviewed and updated biennially by the Abuse Response Team to ensure that it is in accord with Michigan State law and the policies and procedures of Trinity UMC. This biennial review will be approved by Church Council. Trinity's *Child Abuse Prevention and Risk Management Policy* will be made accessible to the congregation by being posted on the church website. A paper copy will be kept in the church office, on the door racks on main, lower, and second floors in a designated area near the Children and Youth classrooms.

## **XIII. APPENDICES**

### **A. QUALIFIED PRIVILEGE**

Qualified privilege is a legal protection against defamation lawsuits arising from the dissemination of sensitive information. To insure qualified privilege, the church must insure that sensitive information is only communicated to people with a vested interest in the communication. To maintain qualified privilege, only current members of the congregation should be informed of an allegation or incident of abuse. If church members receive official notification about the alleged abuse via a letter, ensure that such communication is covered by qualified privilege by sending the letter only to current church members. The words "Privileged and Confidential" must be on the outside of the envelope. If notification is done in a congregational meeting, and the church wishes to insure qualified privilege, only current members of the church should be invited to attend.

### **B. INDICATORS OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE<sup>8</sup>**

A child who is being abused will often be coerced into silence or afraid to tell someone out of shame or fear. Therefore it is important to be aware of general signs of abuse. The following are indicators that might lead to a suspicion of abuse. However, some of these may be indicators of other problems. The purpose of this list is indicative only. It is not designed to offer definitive proof of abuse. However, the presence of any of these indicators should lead to concern for the child.

- Promiscuity or knowledge of or interest in sexual acts inappropriate for the child's developmental stage.
- Nightmares (especially featuring specific adults), bedwetting in a child that has not been wetting the bed, running away.
- Unexplained changes in behavior, such as excessive fear, withdrawal, depression or aggression.

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<sup>8</sup> This list is adapted, with permission, from information in *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*, by Joy T. Melton, Discipleship Resources, (Nashville: 2003), p. 17.

- Difficulty walking or sitting.
- Bleeding or soreness in the genital or anal area.
- Sexually transmitted diseases.
- Pregnancy in a young child or youth
- Reluctance to be in the presence of certain adults or to engage in activities that the child had previously enjoyed.
- Unexplained hostility toward or fear of certain people.

## **C. RESOURCES**

### **National Resources**

Center for the Prevention and Treatment of Child Abuse  
 1205 Oneida St.,  
 Denver, CO 80220  
[www.cptcsa.org](http://www.cptcsa.org)

National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information  
 330 C Street, SW  
 Washington, DC 20447  
[www.calib.com/nccanch](http://www.calib.com/nccanch)

Childhelp USA  
 15757 N. 78th St.  
 Scottsdale, AZ 85260  
[www.childhelpusa.org](http://www.childhelpusa.org)  
 (Operates the National Child Abuse Hotline/Staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 1-800-4-AChild)

Children's Defense Fund  
 25 East St., NW  
 Washington, DC 20001  
[www.childrensdefense.org](http://www.childrensdefense.org)

Parents Anonymous, Inc.  
 675 West Foothill Blvd., Ste. 220  
 Claremont, CA 91711-3475  
[www.parentsanonymous.org](http://www.parentsanonymous.org)

## **Denominational and Church Resources**

Christian Ministry Resources  
P.O. Box 2301  
Matthews, MC 28106  
[www.churchlawtoday.com](http://www.churchlawtoday.com)

General Board of Discipleship  
The United Methodist Church  
Section on Christian Education and Age-Level Ministries  
P.O. Box 840  
Nashville, TN 37202-0840  
615-340-7170  
[www.gbod.org](http://www.gbod.org)

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women  
1200 Davis St.  
Evanston, IL 60201  
[www.gcsrw.org](http://www.gcsrw.org)

General Council on Finance and Administration,  
The United Methodist Church  
1200 Davis St.  
Evanston, IL 60201  
[www.gcfa.org](http://www.gcfa.org)

Office of Ministries With Women, Children, and Families  
General Board of Global Ministries  
475 Riverside Dr., Room 1549  
New York, NY 10115  
[www.gbgm-umc.org](http://www.gbgm-umc.org)

## **Community Resources**

Abuse Prevention Office  
Christian Reformed Church in N.A.  
2850 Kalamazoo Ave., SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49560

Child and Family Resource Council  
118 Commerce Ave., SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616-454-4673  
Produces the Family Resource Guide  
[www.familyresouceguide.info](http://www.familyresouceguide.info)

Children's Assessment Center  
901 Michigan, NE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
616-336-5160

Michigan Department of Human Services  
Adult and Child Protective Services  
415 Franklin St., SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49507  
616-247-6300  
[www.micigan.gov/dhs](http://www.micigan.gov/dhs)

## D. FORMS AND COVENANTS

### PARTICIPATION COVENANT STATEMENT

Trinity United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, vulnerable adults, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following covenant statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a sacred place of safety and protection for all who enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. No adult or youth who has been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest to, has had a civil verdict rendered against him/her, or who has admitted to being a perpetrator of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) shall volunteer to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity. This applies no matter how long ago the abuse occurred.
2. All adult volunteers involved with children or youth of our church must have been members or constituents of the congregation for at least six months before beginning a volunteer assignment working directly with children and youth. Exceptions to this rule are detailed under *Prevention Guidelines and Screening and Selection of Volunteer* guidelines in Trinity's *Child Abuse Prevention and Risk Management Policy*.
3. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall observe the "Two-Adult Rule" as stipulated in Trinity's *Child Abuse Prevention and Risk Management Policy* so as to minimize the occasions when an adult is alone with children or youth. Exceptions to this rule can be found under sections on *Supervision of Activities* and *Transportation to Activities* in Trinity's *Child Abuse Prevention and Risk Management Policy*.
4. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep volunteers informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
5. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to their supervisor or to one of the pastors any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.
6. All adult volunteers shall abide by Trinity's *Child Abuse Prevention and Risk Management Policy*.

#### **Please answer each of the following questions:**

1. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adults?  Yes  No
2. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to observe the "Two Adult Rule" as stipulated in this policy?  Yes  No
3. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to abide by the six-month rule as stipulated in this policy?  Yes  No

4. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to participate in training and education events provided by the church related to your volunteer assignment?  Yes  No
5. As a volunteer in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior or any suspicion of child abuse to your supervisor or to one of the pastors as stipulated in this policy?  Yes  No
6. Have you ever been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest to anything other than a traffic violation or had a civil verdict rendered against you for child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse)? This applies no matter how long ago the incident occurred.  Yes  No

I have read this Participation Covenant Statement, and I agree to observe and abide by the policies set forth above. I also give Trinity UMC permission to run a background check.

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Signature of Volunteer

Date

---

Print Full Name

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
BACKGROUND CHECK INFORMATION FORM**

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PREVIOUS OTHER NAMES OR ALIASES YOU HAVE USED:**

\_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **BIRTHDATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**RACE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **GENDER IDENTITY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DRIVER'S LICENSE#:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*PLEASE NOTE THAT THIS FORM WILL BE SHREDDED ONCE A  
BACKGROUND CHECK HAS BEEN RUN.**

## Volunteer Driver Application Trinity United Methodist Church

In addition to the *Participation Covenant Statement* and *Background Check Information Form*, this form must also be filled out in order for you to be a driver during events involving children, youth and vulnerable persons. Please attach a copy of your driver's license and proof of insurance to this application.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Previous Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Race \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's License # (include state): \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_

Auto Insurance

Carrier: \_\_\_\_\_

Has your driver's license ever been suspended or revoked? (Yes or No)

If yes, please explain:

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I agree to the following:

I am 21 years of age or older.

I will wear and agree to require all passengers to wear seat belts or appropriate restraint at all times.

I will drive in a safe and responsible manner, and will not exceed posted speed limits.

I consent to a driving record background check.

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Signature

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Date

**Permission Form  
Transportation to Youth Events  
Trinity United Methodist Church**

**Section A: Permission for Youth to Drive**

This section must be filled out in order for a youth to drive to a youth related event beyond church premises. Once youth arrive at the church, they will not be allowed to drive to events unless this section has been filled out and signed by their parent(s) or guardian(s). No other youth will ride in a vehicle driven by a youth, unless written permission has been given by the parent(s) or guardian(s) of all youth riding in the vehicle (see Section B, reverse side).

Name of Youth Driver: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Youth's Driver's License # (include state): \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date: \_\_\_\_\_

Auto Insurance

Carrier: \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as the parent or guardian of the youth named above, give my consent and permission for this child to drive to youth related events away from church premises. In consideration of this child's participation in one or more programs at Trinity United Methodist Church, I (on behalf of myself, the child's other parent and the child) waive, release and relinquish any and all claims for liability and cause(s) of action against Trinity, including for personal injury, property damage or wrongful death occurring to the child, arising out of the child's transportation to any events beyond church premises, and/or activities incidental thereto, whenever or however they occur and for such period as those activities may continue. By this release, any such claims, rights, and causes of action that I, the child's other parent or the child may have are hereby waived, released and relinquished. I (on behalf of myself, the child's other parent and the child) agree if any claim arising out of the child's personal injury or wrongful death is commenced against Trinity, I (and the child's other parent and the child) shall defend, indemnify Trinity and save Trinity harmless from all costs (including judgments, amounts paid in settlement, litigation expenses and attorney fees) that Trinity incurs in connection with my child's personal injury or wrongful death.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**(For Permission for Youth to Ride in a Youth Driven Vehicle,  
please see Section B on reverse side.)**

## Section B: Permission for Youth to Ride in Youth Driven Vehicle

This section must be filled out in order for a sibling or other youth to ride in a vehicle driven by another youth to an event beyond church premises. No other youth will ride in a vehicle driven by a youth, unless this section has been filled out and signed by the parent(s) or guardian(s) of all youth riding in the vehicle.

Name(s) of Youth Passenger(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Youth Driver: \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as the parent or guardian of the youth named above, give my consent and permission for this child/these children to ride in a vehicle driven by the above named youth when traveling to events away from church premises. In consideration of this child(ren)'s participation in one or more programs at Trinity United Methodist Church, I (on behalf of myself, the child(ren)'s other parent and the child(ren)) waive, release and relinquish any and all claims for liability and cause(s) of action against Trinity, including for personal injury, property damage or wrongful death occurring to the child(ren), arising out of the child(ren)'s transportation to any events beyond church premises, and/or activities incidental thereto, whenever or however they occur and for such period as those activities may continue. By this release, any such claims, rights, and causes of action that I, the child(ren)'s other parent or the child(ren) may have are hereby waived, released and relinquished. I (on behalf of myself, the child(ren)'s other parent and the child(ren)) agree if any claim arising out of the child(ren)'s personal injury or wrongful death is commenced against Trinity, I (and the child(ren)'s other parent and the child(ren)) shall defend, indemnify Trinity and save Trinity harmless from all costs (including judgments, amounts paid in settlement, litigation expenses and attorney fees) that Trinity incurs in connection with my child's personal injury or wrongful death.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**TRINITY UMC NOTIFICATION RECORD OF  
SUSPECTED INCIDENT OF CHILD ABUSE**

**1. Notification of the Chair of the Abuse Response Team and the Pastor**

Person Notified \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Oral Report to Child/Adult Protective Services (855.444.3911)**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Person Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Instructions from CPS if Any \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**3. Written Report to Child/Adult Protective Services (Form 3200)**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Log # \_\_\_\_\_

(Please attach documentation of these reports).

**4. Call to Local Law Enforcement Agency**

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Person Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Instructions from law enforcement agency if any \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**5. Notification of Parent or Guardian**

(If possible, allow Child or Adult Protective Services to notify the parent or legal guardian of the alleged abuse. If this is not possible or practical, the pastors may notify the parent or legal guardian and offer pastoral care in a way that will not imply an investigation on the part of the church of the alleged incident. *See Response to the Victim and Victim's Family, item 2, pg. 12 of this policy.*)

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_ Person Contacted \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Notification of Insurance Company**

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Person Contacted\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Notification of Judicatory Authorities (459-4503 GR District Office)**

Date\_\_\_\_\_ Person Contacted\_\_\_\_\_

**8. Additional Information or  
Notes:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name\_\_\_\_\_

Signature\_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

Printed Name of Witness\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Witness \_\_\_\_\_ Date\_\_\_\_\_

**INCIDENT REPORT**  
**(For Accidents, Injuries or Illness)**

**TODAY'S DATE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**NAME OF INJURED/ILL PERSON:** \_\_\_\_\_ **AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PARENT/GUARDIAN:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_ **PHONE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**LOCATION OF INJURY/NATURE OF ILLNESS:** \_\_\_\_\_

**DATE OF INJURY/ILLNESS:** \_\_\_\_\_ **TIME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF INCIDENT:**

**ACTION TAKEN:**

**NAME OF PERSON RESPONDING:** \_\_\_\_\_

**FIRST AID/MEDICAL ATTENTION ADMINISTERED:** \_\_\_\_\_

**TREATING MEDICAL PERSONNEL AND/OR FACILITY:** \_\_\_\_\_

**FOLLOW UP REQUIRED:**

**OTHERS INVOLVED AND WHO?** \_\_\_\_\_

**WITNESSES:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPERVISING STAFF PERSON:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Insurance information if necessary:**

**Insurance related action:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name of insurance company:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Agent:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Action taken:** \_\_\_\_\_

**REPORT PREPARED BY:** \_\_\_\_\_

## LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT<sup>9</sup>

### CONFIDENTIAL

#### **Introductory Paragraph in cases of allegation:**

A serious complaint or allegation, now under review, has been made about you to the *Abuse Response Team* and the appropriate government authorities. While this complaint is being investigated, and in order to protect the children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our programs from potential risk, and in order to protect you from further suspicion, we ask you to abide by this interim agreement. Signing this document in no way constitutes a presumption or confession of guilt. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances. This document will be made known only to the pastors, other selected staff as stipulated by the agreement, and to the *Abuse Response Team* (or other appropriate congregational entity). It will be kept in a locked file in the office.

#### **Introductory Paragraph in cases of convicted sex offender:**

Trinity United Methodist Church affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshipping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your legal background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation. We welcome you to our congregation and our membership, and your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of our children and youth and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations in our congregation.

Within these guidelines, the congregation welcomes your participation in adult worship services, coffee hour, committee meetings, adult education, all adult social events, and well-supervised intergenerational events. You are to avoid all contact with children on congregation property or in congregation-sponsored events. This includes the following:

- Please do not talk with children.
- Please do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone or participate in events for children, youth and vulnerable adults including such things as religious education classes, stories or talks for worship, youth group events, activities during intergenerational events, driving or otherwise transporting children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults.

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<sup>9</sup> Used with permission from *Balancing Acts: Keeping Children Safe in Congregations*, by Rev. Debra W. Haffner, published by the Unitarian Universalist Association, Boston, MA.

- Please remain in the presence of an adult support person at all times when children are present. A support person is a person who knows about your history/situation and has been designated by you with our approval to accompany you to activities where children and youth may be present.
- If a child in the congregation approaches you, either at church or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the situation.
- Please avoid being in the building unsupervised when activities involving children are in session, such as nursery school or youth group.

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect those for whom they care: INSERT NAMES AND/OR POSITIONS WITHIN THE CONGREGATION \_\_\_\_\_

I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future church functions and church property.

I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly, every \_\_\_\_\_ and will remain in place for an indefinite period.

Signature	Date
_____	_____
Print Name	_____

_____	_____
Witness Signature	Date
_____	_____

Printed Name of Witness	Date
_____	_____

Appointed Pastor	_____
_____	_____

_____	Date
Appointed Pastor	_____

Chair Abuse Response Team	Date
_____	_____

Church Council Chair	Date
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## LIMITED ACCESS AGREEMENT<sup>10</sup>

### CONFIDENTIAL

#### Check List Format

#### **Introductory Paragraph in cases of allegation:**

A serious complaint or allegation, now under review, has been made about you to the *Abuse Response Team* and the appropriate government authorities. While this complaint is being investigated, and in order to protect the children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our programs from potential risk, and in order to protect you from further suspicion, we ask you to abide by this interim agreement. Signing this document in no way constitutes a presumption or confession of guilt. This is a routine safety precaution, activated without prejudice toward particular individuals or circumstances. This document will be made known only to the pastors, other selected staff as stipulated by the agreement, and to the *Abuse Response Team* (or other appropriate congregational entity). It will be kept in a locked file in the office.

#### **Introductory Paragraph in cases of convicted sex offender:**

Trinity United Methodist Church affirms the dignity and worth of all persons. We are committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshipping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. However, based on your legal background, we have concerns about your contact with children and youth in our congregation. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to both you and them of an incident or accusation. We welcome you to our congregation and our membership, and your participation will be limited to ensure the safety of our children and youth and to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations in our congregation.

You understand that you will not be allowed to volunteer or chaperone events for children and adolescents, including children's religious education classes, talks with children/adolescents during worship, youth group, children's and adolescents' activities during intergenerational events, and driving children and young people.

The following activities checked "Yes" are activities that we feel are appropriate for your participation.

Worship services No ( ) Yes ( ) With support person\* No ( ) Yes ( )

Coffee Hour: No ( ) Yes ( ) With support person\* No ( ) Yes ( )

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Adult meetings with children in building, such as choir: No ( ) Yes ( ) With support person\* No ( ) Yes ( )

Adult meetings without children in building: No ( ) Yes ( ) With support person\* No ( ) Yes ( )

Intergenerational church activities No ( ) Yes ( ) With support person\* No ( ) Yes ( )

Intergenerational group outings such as ice skating, baseball games, etc:  
No ( ) Yes ( ) With support person\* No ( ) Yes ( )

Alone in building with minister or other staff: No ( ) Yes ( )

Access to church computer: No ( ) Yes ( )

Social activities in other member's homes with children present:  
No ( ) Yes ( ) With support person\* No ( ) Yes ( )

Other:

\_\_\_\_\_: No ( ) Yes ( ) With support person\*  
No ( ) Yes ( )

\_\_\_\_\_: No ( ) Yes ( ) With support person\*  
No ( ) Yes ( )

\_\_\_\_\_: No ( ) Yes ( ) With support person\*  
No ( ) Yes ( )

\*A support person is a person who knows about your history/situation and has been designated by you with our approval to accompany you to activities where children and youth may be present.

I accept that the following people will be told of my circumstances in order for them to protect the children/young people for whom they care: INSERT NAMES AND/OR POSITION IN CONGREGATIONAL LEADERSHIP. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I agree that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future church functions and church property.

I understand that this contract will be reviewed regularly every \_\_\_\_\_ and will remain for an indefinite period.

Signature	Date
_____	_____
Print Name	_____
_____	_____
Witness Signature	Date
_____	_____
Printed Name of Witness	Date
_____	_____
Appointed Pastor	_____
_____	Date
Appointed Pastor	_____
_____	_____
Chair Abuse Response Team	Date
_____	_____
Church Council Chair	Date

## Trinity Children/Youth Information Form for 2019-2020

Student Legal Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender Identity: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthdate: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent's E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

### PARENT/GUARDIAN: Parent/Guardian contact for illness, emergency, teacher contact

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship: \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Work/Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### **Consent to Participate, Consent for Medical Treatment and Release from Liability**

#### **PLEASE READ CAREFULLY**

I \_\_\_\_\_, as parent or guardian of the child named above, give my consent and my permission for this child to participate in one or more programs at Trinity United Methodist Church. I also give my consent and my permission to Trinity United Methodist Church, its staff and volunteers (all or whom are collectively called "Trinity") to obtain medical care from any licensed physician, hospital, urgent care center or clinic for the child for any injury or illness that may arise while the child is at the church or participating in any church program. I understand that if Trinity seeks medical care for this child, any caregiver who renders treatment will bill me for services rendered, and I agree that I will either pay for that care or cause an insurance company or other responsible payer to pay for that care. To facilitate emergency care, I certify that I have accurately completed the medical questionnaire for this child on the last page of this Information Form.

In consideration of this child's participation in one or more programs at Trinity United Methodist Church, I (on behalf of myself, the child's other parent and the child) waive, release and relinquish any and all claims for liability and cause(s) of action against Trinity, including for personal injury, property damage or wrongful death occurring to the child, arising out of the child's participation in any programs at Trinity United Methodist Church, and/or activities incidental thereto, whenever or however they occur and for such period as those activities may continue. By this release, any such claims, rights, and causes of action that I, the child's other parent or the child may have are hereby waived, released and relinquished. I (on behalf of myself, the child's other parent and the child) agree if any claim arising out of the child's personal injury or wrongful death is commenced against Trinity, I (and the child's other parent and the child) shall defend, indemnify Trinity and save Trinity harmless from all costs (including judgments, amounts paid in settlement, litigation expenses and attorney fees) that Trinity incurs in connection with my child's personal injury or wrongful death..

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature of Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_

**Medical Information**

**PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING:**

If the answer to any of the following questions is or was yes, please explain in the space provided below, so that this information can be shared with any hospital, physician or other healthcare provider in the event of an emergency.

**Have this child had (or does he or she presently have) any of the following? Circle One**

Head injury (concussion, skull fracture) Yes No

Fainting spells Yes No

Convulsions/epilepsy Yes No

Neck or back injury Yes No

Asthma Yes No

High blood pressure Yes No

Kidney problems Yes No

Hernia Yes No

Diabetes Yes No

Heart murmur Yes No

Allergies Yes No

Please Explain any "yes" answers: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Have this child had (or does he or she presently have) any Injuries to:**

Shoulder Yes No

Knee Yes No

Ankle Yes No

Fingers Yes No

Arm Yes No

Impaired vision Yes No

Impaired hearing Yes No

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Explain any "yes" answers: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Have this child had a recent tetanus booster? \_\_\_\_\_ If so, when? \_\_\_\_\_**

**Is this child currently taking any medications? \_\_\_\_\_ What? Why? \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Hospital Preference: \_\_\_\_\_**

#### **XIV. REFERENCES**

*Child Protection Law*, State of Michigan, Family Independence Agency, 2004.

James F. Cobble, Jr., et al., *Reducing the Risk II: Making Your Church Safe From Child Sexual Abuse*, Christian Ministry Resources/Church Law & Tax Report, (North Carolina, 2003). (Text, training manual and DVD).

*The Guide for Mandated Reporters: A Toolkit for Identifying and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect*, Family Independence Agency, Child and Family Resource Council, State of Michigan, 2003.

Rev. Debra W. Haffner, *Balancing Acts: Keeping Children Safe in Congregations*, Unitarian Universalist Association, (Boston: 2003).

Joy T. Melton, *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*, Discipleship Resources, (Nashville: 2003).