



Brucetown United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuaries Child Protection Policy Brucetown United Methodist Church * Clear Brook, VA Revised May 7, 2024

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at eliminating any potential for child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, *"Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me."* (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, *"If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones..., it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea."* (Matthew 18:6) Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that *"...children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse."* (para. 162C)

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse (ritual abuse refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be) occur in churches, both large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and it is increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church, and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. (From *"The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church"* P. 384-386). Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, Brucetown United



2024

Brucetown United Methodist Church

Methodist Church adopts this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

Contents of Child Protection Policy

Table of Contents

Purpose	3
Covenant Statement	3
Theological Reflection	3
Commonwealth of Virginia Statutes	4
Definitions	5
Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse	7
Staff Recruitment and Selection Guidelines	8
Staff Supervision Guidelines	10
Response by Church Workers to Allegations of Abuse	14
Electronic and Social Media Policy	17
Participation Covenant Statement	22
Volunteer Referral Check	23
Sample Witness Statement of Abuse	26
Permission Slip	27



Brucetown United Methodist Church

I. Purpose

Our purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional, and spiritual safety of all our children, youth and vulnerable adults. We also seek to establish these procedures to guard staff and volunteers from false allegations of misconduct.

II. Covenant Statement

Brucetown United Methodist Church hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth and vulnerable adults as well as each person working with that population. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement appropriate operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults on our procedures and policies and require them to have updated background checks on a regular basis (every three (3) years). We will also require background checks on all paid church staff. We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse consistent with State law, which is detailed in Section IX beginning on Page 14.

III. Theological Reflection

We adopt this policy in accordance with the statement we as a congregation make at each Baptism; that we will *"nurture children and youth in the Christian faith and life and include them in our care."* With this policy, we renew our Baptismal pledge to *"live according to the example of Christ"* and surround children, youth, and vulnerable adults with a *"community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be thus confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal."* (Baptismal Covenant II, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, p.96).

The Bible is foundational to our understanding upon which all policies, procedures and ministries must stand. We recognize Jesus' teaching throughout the Gospels about the sacred duty we hold to protect children. Jesus teaches us explicitly that young persons have the right and the keys to the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:13-16). He demonstrated this through blessing and touch. Our goal in response to this Biblical mandate is to maintain a safe, secure, and loving place where children may grow.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

IV. Commonwealth of Virginia Statutes

Under Section 63.2-100 of the Code of Virginia, an abused child is defined as one who is less than 18 years of age,

1. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care creates or inflicts, threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon such child a physical or mental injury by other than accidental means, or creates a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily or mental functions, including but not limited to, a child who is with his parent or other person responsible for his care either (i) during the manufacture or attempted manufacture of a Schedule I or II controlled substance, or (ii) during the unlawful sale of such substance by that child's parents or other person responsible for his care, where such manufacture, or attempted manufacture or unlawful sale would constitute a felony violation of § 18.2-248;
2. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care neglects or refuses to provide care necessary for his health. However, no child who in good faith is under treatment solely by spiritual means through prayer in accordance with the tenets and practices of a recognized church or religious denomination shall for that reason alone be considered to be an abused or neglected child;
3. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care abandons such child;
4. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care commits or allows to be committed any act of sexual exploitation or any sexual act upon a child in violation of the law;
5. Who is without parental care or guardianship caused by the unreasonable absence or the mental or physical incapacity of the child's parent, guardian, legal custodian, or other person standing in loco parentis; or
6. Whose parents or other person responsible for his care creates a substantial risk of physical or mental injury by knowingly leaving the child alone in the same dwelling, including an apartment as defined in § 55-79.2, with a person to whom the child is not related by blood or marriage and who the parent or other person responsible for his care knows has been convicted of an offense against a minor for which registration is required as a violent sexual offender pursuant to § 9.1-902.

An act of child abuse may be committed by any person responsible for the care of another individual who is less than eighteen years of age. It does not matter whether the person caring for the child under the age



Brucetown United Methodist Church

of 18 (hereinafter referred to as a "Child" or "Children", which term as used in this Policy also includes youth ages 12-18) is a compensated or a volunteer worker. It does not matter whether the person routinely is entrusted with the care of children or whether such individual only occasionally meets children. It does not matter whether the person was entrusted with the care of a child for an hour or only a moment. It only matters that a child was abused or neglected by the person who, on the occasion in question, was responsible for the child's care.

V. Definitions¹

a. Child Abuse

Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, care giver or person in a position of trust (even though he/she may not care for the child daily) which is not accidental and which harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare.

b. Physical Abuse

A physical injury, threat of injury or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threat of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means. Examples: asphyxiation; bone fracture; brain damage, skull fracture, subdural hematoma; burns, scalding; cuts, bruises, welts, abrasions; internal injuries, poisoning; sprains; dislocations; gunshot, stabbing wounds.

c. Physical Neglect

The failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child if the child's health or safety is endangered. Physical neglect may include multiple occurrences or a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler left alone. Other types of neglect include abandonment, inadequate supervision, inadequate clothing, inadequate shelter, inadequate personal hygiene, inadequate food, and malnutrition.

d. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse includes any act defined in the code of Virginia which is committed, or allowed to be committed, upon a child by his/her parent or other persons responsible for

¹. The following definitions and explanations in this section are from the Virginia Department of Social Services.



Bruce town United Methodist Church

the child's care. Examples of such abuse are sexual exploitation, sexual molestation, intercourse/sodomy, and other sexual abuse.

e. Medical Neglect

Refusal or failure by caretaker to obtain and/or follow through with a complete regimen of medical, mental, dental, or other care for a condition, which if untreated, could result in illness or developmental delays.

f. Failure to Thrive

A syndrome of infancy or early childhood which is characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation. Children are in this category only when the syndrome is diagnosed by a physician and is caused by non-organic factors.

g. Mental Abuse/Neglect

A pattern of acts or omissions by the caretaker which result in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development.

h. Educational Neglect

The child's caretaker is solely responsible for the failure of the child to attend school or an approved alternative program of study.

i. Bizarre Discipline

Any actions in which the caretaker uses eccentric, irrational or grossly inappropriate procedures or devices to modify the child's behavior.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

j. Vulnerable Adult

As defined in the Code of Virginia § 18.2-369, a vulnerable or “incapacitated adult” is any “person 18 years of age or older who is impaired by reason of mental illness, intellectual disability, physical illness or disability, advanced age or other causes to the extent the adult lacks sufficient understanding or capacity to make, communicate or carry out reasonable decisions concerning his well-being.

VI. Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse

To create the safest possible environment within Brucetown United Methodist Church, several abuse prevention measures will be utilized. These measures include:

- a. Screening of paid and volunteer workers for past child abuse convictions or expungements
- b. Providing for regular training on child abuse issues to paid and volunteer staff members
- c. Maintaining the use of the “two leader” rule
- d. Following standards of appropriate classroom discipline
- e. Keeping open classrooms
- f. Following Guidelines for Electronic and Social Media
- g. Requiring all volunteers to be made aware of our Safe Sanctuaries Child Protection Policy and to sign a Participation Covenant Statement annually [\(See Page 22\)](#)
- h. Establishing a Safe Sanctuaries Team that consists of the Pastor, SPRC Chairperson, Trustee Chair, Lay Leader, Education Chair, and Administrative Assistant, and Lead Children’s Ministry Teacher.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

VII. Staff Recruitment and Selection Guidelines

a. Age

In recruiting and hiring volunteers and paid staff to work with children, youth and vulnerable adults in any position of authority, they must be at least **18 years of age** and at least 5 years older than the age of the persons they are working to serve. This standard allows persons to be separated by enough years that they may better have perspective and recognition of their role as an authority figure with the group they are serving. Persons not meeting these standards may not serve in a role of authority; however, they may be utilized as assistants to those in leadership positions. **Note: Brucetown UMC has stipulated that persons 13-years of age may serve in an assistant capacity in a non-authority capacity; however, they are not permitted to be left alone with children, youth, or vulnerable adults at any time.**

b. “Six Month” Rule

Brucetown UMC will not use **non-church members** as a workers for children, youth, or vulnerable adults in the church unless they have been invested in the life of the church for at least six (6) months or have become a member. In the case of paid staff workers, the applicant may have been a member of another United Methodist Church at least six (6) months prior to employment.

This time of interaction between ministry leaders and the applicant allows leaders to better evaluate the suitability of an applicant for youth work. In some situations, this rule is not feasible and may be waived on basis of probation. *If the six-month rule is waived, program leaders may take additional steps to screen the applicant at their own discretion in coordination with the Safe Sanctuaries Team.*

VIII. Application

Applicants must complete and sign an application and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

a. Interview for Paid Positions

All applicants must be interviewed in person as feasible for the work they desire to do. Interviews will be conducted by the leader of the program and Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) Chair in which the applicant will work. A team of interviewers may be used. Church policy and guidelines should be discussed, as well as copies provided, during the interview.

b. Background Checks

Criminal background checks shall be made of all clergy, and paid staff who have program responsibility for youth (e.g., youth group leaders) and all other church employees, to the extent permitted by law, prior to employment, to determine current or historic child abuse or sexual misconduct, criminal records, violent or pedophilic behavior. Brucetown UMC uses ScreeningONE (<https://screeningone.com/>) as a resource for completing background checks. ScreeningONE is recommended by the Virginia Conference of the UMC. Each individual will have a check done every three (3) years. Note: Volunteers will be asked to complete a "Screening Form" on **page 23**. This form must be completed prior to access be provided to the aforementioned individuals.

c. Reference Checks

Church leaders will check three (3) references for each primary worker. The references will be done by phone, mail, or in person. For applicants for compensated positions, additional former supervisors may be checked.

d. Prior Convictions

Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children, youth or vulnerable adults.

e. Confidentiality of Information

The church will keep confidential all information received in the applicant selection process. Selection information will be marked as such and stored in a locked location with limited access afforded only to church staff and others with a need to know. The Administrative Assistant will ensure the maintaining and safeguarding of all documentation in the Church Office.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

IX. Staff Supervision Guidelines

All meetings of children, youth, or vulnerable adults affiliated with Brucetown UMC will be governed by the following guidelines:

a. Staff Screening

Before beginning the first year of service, each employed or volunteer leader, teacher, or worker that participates in ministry with children, youth, or vulnerable adults will be asked to sign a statement General information

- Criminal convictions - Anyone who has had a child abuse conviction or expungement, as well as anyone refusing to sign the statement, will not be permitted to work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- Prior church membership
- Prior church volunteer work
- Prior experience with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.

b. “Two Leader” Rule

Two approved adult leaders, floater or church leader must always be present. These two leaders must be from different households. This applies to classroom activities, activities away from the church facility and when transporting children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Whenever possible, teachers will be assigned in teams of two or more per Sunday School hour to every class of children, youth, or vulnerable adults. A concerted effort will be made to recruit enough volunteer teachers/leaders to permit such team teaching. Other church sponsored or community groups of children, youth, or vulnerable adults who meet at the church should have two or more leaders present whenever possible. When feasible, both male and female leaders would be present. If the group stays overnight at the church, or if a church sponsored group leaves the premises, two or more leaders must be present and must include at least one male and female if the group is mixed gender.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

c. Goals for Worker to Child Ratios

Brucetown UMC has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry workers to children whenever feasible. These ratios are goals. The church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible, such as an unexpected number of children showing up for an event.

Age	Workers	Children
Birth-12 months	2	8
12-36 months	2	10
3-5 years	2	12
6-8 years	2	18
9-12 years	2	20
13-17 years	2	25

d. Nursery/Sunday School Checkout Procedure

All individuals utilizing the church nursery/Sunday school will check children in and out by providing the adult’s name, contact phone number, and location during the activity. Children must be picked up by a pre-approved adult, whether designated at check in or in another written format.

- Note: When a parent or guardian is going out of town and another designee will be dropping off/pick-up a child, the parent/guardian should make advance notification to the Church Office in writing with the name and telephone of their representative. The Church Office will then notify the nursery/Sunday school staff may be apprised of the change in routine.

e. Open Door Policy

Further protection for the children requires that an open-door policy be followed. This policy states that the parents of the children served, the clergy, and professional staff of the Brucetown UMC have the right to visit and observe any classroom, church-sponsored program or activity associated with children, youth, and vulnerable adults at any time, unannounced.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

f. Outside Access

There must be access to a phone or cell phone when groups are at or away from the church facility when at all possible. The church office or authorized church representative will be given this number prior to the groups' departure from church property.

g. Doors and Windows

All classroom and office doors will have a window or visibility from hallway or remain open while occupied. Windows will be kept free from adornment. Windows will also be monitored for security and kept locked during non-business hours.

h. Touch

Touching should only be initiated by the child or youth. It should be a response to the child's need for comforting, encouragement, or affection. It should not be based upon the adult's emotional need. The same is true for vulnerable adults, and any touching should be a response to their need for comfort or encouragement.

Note: A child or adult's preference not to be touched should be respected. Do not force affection upon a reluctant person. Church workers are responsible to protect children, youth, and vulnerable adults under their supervision from inappropriate touching by others as well.

Ideally, touching and affection should only be given when in the presence of other volunteers. It is much less likely that touches will be inappropriate or misconstrued as such when two adult workers are present, and the touching is open to observation. This is especially important when diapering a baby or helping a young child change clothes or use the restroom.

Touching behavior should not give even the appearance of wrongdoing. As ministry workers our behavior must always foster trust; it should be above reproach.

Church workers must promptly discuss inappropriate touching or other questionable behavior by other workers with their ministry leader, staff member, or a pastor in accordance with the procedure detailed in **Section X on Page 14.**



Brucetown United Methodist Church

i. Outings Away from Church Property:

All children, youth and vulnerable adults participating in outings must have written consent and a notarized medical release form. (Medical release and consent forms may be completed for a one-year period and must be renewed annually).

There must be access to a phone or cell phone when groups are away from the church property. If the outing involves water activities such as swimming, it will only be to a facility staffed by certified lifeguards.

j. Classroom Discipline

All teachers and workers will use the following discipline measures:

- i. If a child is behaving inappropriately, the teacher or worker will tell the child specifically what he/she is doing that is not acceptable and state what the expected behavior is, e.g., "We do not throw the blocks. We use blocks for building."
- ii. If this measure is not effective, the child will be guided to another activity.
- iii. If inappropriate behavior continues, the child may be placed at a table to work alone away from the other students.
- iv. If the child's disruptive behavior continues after these steps have been taken, a teacher will immediately notify the parent.

k. Training

Paid and volunteer staff will undergo Safe Sanctuary Training prior to working with youth and vulnerable adults, and an annual review will be conducted.

Individuals will be required to sign the Participant Covenant Statement on **page 22** indicating they have read and that they understand the policy and agree to abide by it. This Covenant Statement will be reviewed and renewed annually. All documentation will be maintained on file in the Church office.

Anyone failing to follow the above guidelines will not be permitted to serve until the policy has been read and the form signed. All leaders will be encouraged to attend a training session offered by the church annually on child protection.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

Leaders of non-community groups of children, youth, or vulnerable adults will provide a copy of their policy for working with children and youth prior to utilize the church facility, including its outdoor facilities. Non-community leaders will be required to read the Brucetown UMC policy and sign the acknowledgment form prior to utilizing the Brucetown UMC facilities, including outdoor facilities, will not be available to groups whose leaders refuse to read and sign the policy.

I. Gifts

No staff, either paid or volunteer, are to give gifts to individual children, young people, or vulnerable adults without the prior knowledge of the parent(s) and clergy. Because gift giving can be a form of buying loyalty or silence, gift giving should be done on a group basis, or for special occasions only. Gifts may not be elaborate but should be modest and appropriate to the occasion.

m. CPR/First Aid Requirements

Church employees who supervise young people must maintain current certification in basic first aid and basic CPR. The church will pay expenses for this training. New employees must get this certification within 90 days of the start of their employment. Nursery workers and others serving young children may also want training in infant and toddler CPR. Other workers are encouraged, but not required, to get training if they frequently accompany children or youth on such activities as: water sports, camping, home-building mission trips, etc. Outings away from church property will require at least one staff certified in CPR and First Aid.

X. Response by Church Workers to Allegations of Abuse

As caring Christians, we are committed to protect and advocate for children, youth, and vulnerable adults participating in the life of the church. The church is entrusted to provide an emotionally safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, youth, and vulnerable adults in which they are protected from abuse.

It is our legal and moral responsibility to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to our attention regardless of where that abuse takes place. We shall report suspected abuse to stop potentially existing abuse and to prevent further abuse. If abuse occurs, it is our intention to function as an advocate for all affected persons, providing support, information, assistance, and intervention. We seek to provide a supportive atmosphere, offering both objectivity and empathy as we seek to create a climate in which healing can take place.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

a. Suspected Abuse

If abuse is suspected by, observed by or disclosed to a volunteer and/or paid staff member of the church, that person shall report the incident immediately to the pastor and to the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) Chairperson. (If the accused is the pastor, see information below.) Be prepared to do the following:

- i. Ensure the protection of and tend to the immediate needs of the child, as the situation requires.
- ii. IMMEDIATELY contact the senior pastor or pastor on call.
- iii. IMMEDIATELY notify the proper authorities (immediate supervisor, designated church child protection representative or the adult in charge of the event). This person will:
 1. Provide written documentation concerning the incident on the designated form.
 2. Notify the Winchester City Department of Social Services (540-662-3807). This is a requirement of the law. (Note: Do not attempt an investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.)
 3. Notify the pastor in charge. **If the accused is a clergy (deacon or elder) member of an annual conference, local pastor, or diaconal minister, provisions of "The 2016 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church" must be followed.**
 4. Give written documentation to the pastor and/or SPRC Chair.
 5. The pastor or SPRC Chair will notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety of the child/youth/vulnerable adult until the parent(s) arrive. It is important to emphasize that the proper authorities must be notified even if the parent(s) do not wish the incident to be reported. (Note: If one or both parents is the alleged abuser, contact the proper authorities listed above. Follow their advice about notification of the parents.)
 6. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the incident is to be reported immediately to the church's attorney, the church's insurance company, and the district superintendent. The district superintendent will report the allegation to the Bishop's office. Do not try to handle this without professional assistance.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

b. Treatment of the Accused

If the accused is working in a volunteer or paid position with children, youth or vulnerable adults in the church, immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the person, remove the accused from further involvement with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.

Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child or youth is secured, the pastor or other designated person may tell the accused that a report has been made. If the accused is a volunteer or paid staff of the church, that person shall be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the accused is a paid staff person of the church, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.

The pastor should extend whatever care and resources are necessary to those impacted by the allegation, but under **no** circumstances should the pastor or any church leader or member investigate the allegation. In providing care to the principals (alleged victim and the accused) and their families, the pastor or church leader, should under **no** circumstances be drawn into a discussion of the truth or falsity of the allegation which could contaminate the investigation. Do not assign blame or take any steps that involve establishing or refuting the allegation.

c. Contact with News Media

Any contact with the media should be managed by a pre-determined spokesperson with the District Superintendent consent. Care will be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved. The spokesperson should convey that the matter is under investigation and any comments made prior to the conclusion of the investigation would be premature.

A written report of the basic information shall be kept to ensure on-going ministry to, and advocacy for, victims and others involved. A form for this purpose shall be available in the church office. The report shall be brief and contain only information relevant to the situation and shall be filed in a secure place in order to ensure confidentiality. It shall be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed. The church must also file a copy of the report with the bishop's office of the State Conference where it shall remain confidential.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

d. Emergency Numbers

A list of emergency numbers will always be available to Church Staff. This list will be kept in the main office.

XI. Electronic and Social Media Guidelines

a. Introduction

As an ever-increasing number of people use and prefer digital communication over other forms, it is essential that the church be present in this mission field. Social networking sites, mobile devices and email can enhance communication, faith sharing and deepen relationships.

The following recommended practices and guidelines apply principles of healthy boundaries and safe church to the virtual world of digital networking and communication. They are intended to raise awareness of issues and open doors of conversations with ministry teams. We encourage all ministry teams to discern together the following guidelines, considering the nature of your ministry and being mindful that our calling is to meet children, youth, and vulnerable adults where they are; model healthy boundaries; and love and care for them safely. Adults engaged in ministry to youth, children, and vulnerable adults should consider their relationship with the youth, child, or vulnerable adult when interacting with them using digital media and should conduct themselves in a manner that would be acceptable on church grounds and church sponsored activities elsewhere off church grounds.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

b. Connecting on Social Networking Sites

In addition to participating on the ministry pages, youth may wish to establish social media connections with church leaders and adult volunteers engaged in youth ministry.

- i. It is strongly recommended that no “friend requests” be received or solicited from or to a youth under 17-years old. There are **no exceptions**. Any need for contact via email or texting should be strictly conducted through the parent or guardian.
- ii. Due to the greater potential for misinterpretation, inappropriate discussions, and inadvertent exposure of youth to inappropriate content, personal pages should be maintained appropriately. Church leaders and adult volunteers should avoid relationships with children/youth/vulnerable adults via Social Networking sites, texting and email, unless an actual relationship (ministry, family friendship, etc.) already exists between them.
- iii. Given the continuing evolution of privacy settings and capabilities on social networking sites, church leaders and adult volunteers must be willing to continue to set strict privacy setting on church social media networking sites and educate themselves on what settings are needed to protect their church’s networking sites. Additionally, the child, youth and vulnerable adult ministry programs should establish education for adult volunteers who wish to use social media as part of their ministry efforts.

c. Online Worship

Brucetown UMC currently prerecords a worship service that airs on Sundays at 11:00 AM via Facebook Live (Meta), and YouTube. We will communicate this information to constituents and those who plan to serve as worship leaders.

- i. **Receive Parental/Guardian Permission**
In addition to general permission to participate in activities at Brucetown UMC, it is advisable to receive advanced parental permission for children, youth, and personal permission for vulnerable adults in writing for the posting photos of participants on any websites, YouTube, or marketing communications. Note: No identifiable or contact information for the youth will be shared.
- ii. **Never Post Easily Identifiable Information Online.**
 1. If you communicate by email, do not use "broadcast" emails. Use the



Brucetown United Methodist Church

"BCC" (blind carbon copy) so that each recipient sees only his or her address when a message is received.

2. Be cautious when transmitting easily identifiable information like event dates, times, locations, or participants.
3. Limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests. When placing anyone on an electronic prayer list, consider using only first names.

iii. **Limit individual communications with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.**

1. Conduct any communications in a professional manner. (Even though you may be a sounding board for a person having a difficult day, the reverse is not true.)
2. Save all confidential cyber-communications you have with children, youth, and vulnerable adults (i.e., text and or instant messages (IM's) chat room conversations, emails, etc.). An electronic paper trail can be important.
3. If you are uneasy about any topic addressed in an email or in an email in general, send a BCC to a parent/guardian (if appropriate) or another trusted adult. Honor privacy, but not secrecy.
4. **If abuse is divulged electronically, follow standard reporting procedures.**

Note: You are not to solicit contact from youth under 17 years of age. This is to protect you and them.

iv. **Safety Measures for Sharing Photos Electronically**

1. ALWAYS obtain permission to use photos.
2. When posting photos, refrain from using names and never use last names or identifiable information.
3. Check photos for vulnerable/compromising situations and make sure they uphold your mission.
4. Block "save photo as" options on websites
5. Limit access to photos by employing the use of a password.

v. **Safety Measures for Using Social Networking Sites**

Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Snap Chat, Instagram, TikTok and others are popular with many people.

1. Set privacy settings to limit who can see your profile, otherwise people may still be able to view your full profile. Restrict who can be your friend.

Note: You are not to solicit contact from youth under 17 years of age.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

This is to protect you and them.

2. Use higher level security features even if you have a restricted profile (such as requiring your approval of all comments posted to your site).
3. Do not post anything to your social networking site that you would not want attached to your resume or printed in the church bulletin or newsletter (the same goes for blogs).
4. Remove or do not post inappropriate comments, photos, etc..
5. Encourage youth to follow these same guidelines.

d. Communication

Social media is an excellent way to quickly share both good and sad moments in a person's life with many people. However, as with all forms of communication, users should be respectful of the privacy of others. This is particularly the case with children, youth, and vulnerable adult ministry leaders. Leaders should be especially mindful of how information is presented in such a permanent medium and should never share news about another person without their express prior consent.

- i. **Reminder! All contact should be conducted through the parent or guardian. No exceptions.**

e. Communication Concerns

- i. Face-to-face meetings are the preferred mode of communication, when responding to emotionally driven communication or pastoral emergencies, and should be used, when possible, to provide the appropriate level of support.
Note: It is recommended that in the above instances, a third party be present.
- ii. When the content of received communications raises concerns or questions, it should be shared with a member of the Pastoral team, and law enforcement, where appropriate.
- iii. Email is not an appropriate communication method for matters that are pastorally sensitive, emotionally charged, or that require extensive conversation. Understand, there may be instances when email may be more appropriate due to the sensitivity of the situation.
- iv. Humor and sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted and should only be used where appropriate and with the appropriate audience.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

- v. All communication sent digitally (email, social networking sites, notes, or posts, etc..) may be shared or reposted. Adults should be mindful that comments sent to a youth can be shared in several ways and misinterpretation of those comments may occur.

f. Identity Protection

We will seek to protect the privacy and identity of all minors in our use of social media. All church leaders and adult leaders in children, youth, and vulnerable adult ministries should closely monitor the privacy settings of any posted youth images to ensure that they are not accessible to individuals who do not have permission to view them.

- i. All church leaders and adult volunteers engaged in ministry with minors must not post photos or videos that identify children, youth, or vulnerable adults on any online site or printed publication without the written consent from a parent or legal guardian.
- ii. Even with the written consent from a parent or legal guardian, pictures should only be posted on approved Brucetown UMC social media sites.
- iii. We strongly encourage the respect and dignity of every person depicted in an image. Only pictures depicting youth in an appropriate light should be posted. "Appropriate" pictures may include silly pictures that the youth's parents are comfortable being posted. If a picture would make the youth feel self-conscious, vulnerable, or would subject the youth to ridicule, the picture should not be posted.
- iv. There should be no tagging of location in photographs related to images associated with Brucetown UMC.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

Brucetown United Methodist Church Participation Covenant Statement Rev. May 8, 2024

The Safe Sanctuaries Child Protection Policy and Procedures of Brucetown UMC shall be reviewed annually by the Church Council. A verification follow-up report will be made annually at Church Council prior to Charge Conference to ensure the integrity of the policy and procedures.

After reviewing the foregoing Policy and Procedures, please sign, date, detach and return this portion to indicate that you have read, understood, and accept the Safe Sanctuaries Child Protection Policy and Procedures of Brucetown United Methodist Church.

Please complete the below, and return to the Administrative Assistant of Brucetown, UMC. Please maintain a copy for your records.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone Number _____

I have read and understand the Safe Sanctuaries Child Protection Policy and Procedures of Brucetown United Methodist Church. I agree to abide by those policies and procedures. I have no convictions for child abuse or expungements of such convictions. I authorize and release any references or churches which I might provide to Brucetown United Methodist Church to provide the Church any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my work with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.

Signature _____

Received In Brucetown UMC Office: Date/Initials: _____



Brucetown United Methodist Church

VOLUNTEER REFERRAL CHECK (rev. 5/16/2024)

Please complete all fields listed below.

BACKGROUND

Name Click or tap here to enter text.(**First**) Click or tap here to enter text.(**Last**)

Email Click or tap here to enter text.

Home PhoneClick or tap here to enter text.(Put N/A if no home phone.)

Cell PhoneClick or tap here to enter text.

Date of Birth (month/day/year)Click or tap to enter a date.

Driver License Number:Click or tap here to enter text.

Issuing State: Click or tap here to enter text.

List your current address and your TWO most recent previous addresses in the past 10 years.

Current Address:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Previous Address 1:

Click or tap here to enter text.

Previous Address 2:

Click or tap here to enter text.



Brucetown United Methodist Church

REFERENCES

Please list three references (not related) who may vouch to your character, morality, and compatibility to work with youth and at-risk adults.

Reference 1:

Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Address: Click or tap here to enter text.

Telephone Number: Click or tap here to enter text.

Reference 2:

Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Address: Click or tap here to enter text.

Telephone Number: Click or tap here to enter text.

Reference 3:

Name: Click or tap here to enter text.

Address: Click or tap here to enter text.

Telephone Number: Click or tap here to enter text.



2024

Brucetown United Methodist Church

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND

Have you ever plead guilty to felony charges?

Yes No

Have you ever been charged or plead guilty to crimes against a child?

Yes No

Are you currently charged with a criminal offense?

Yes No

Signature

Date



2024

Brucetown United Methodist Church

Witness Statement of Abuse

Today's Date: Click or tap to enter a date.

Name: Click or tap here to enter text.(First) Click or tap here to enter text.(Last)

Telephone Number: Click or tap here to enter text.

Email Address: Click or tap here to enter text.

DETAILS OF EVENTS:

Date of Event: Click or tap to enter a date. **Time of Event (if known):** Click or tap here to enter text.

Location of Event: Click or tap here to enter text.

Statement (Please provide as many details as possible): Click or tap here to enter text.