

Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church Child/Youth Protection Policy

Revised October 2020

Introduction

A church is a sanctuary in several respects. It is sometimes a place of refuge from the turmoil of the secular world; it is a nurturing community of faith; and it is a source of empowerment for leading lives of faith and witness. Even so, the church is never fully removed from contemporary society, and the church is required to be mindful of the reality of and the possible dangers inherent therein. Assuring the safety of children and youth in our care, our facilities and our programs is a sacred duty.

The facilities of Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church pose unique challenges to its ministry to children and youth. Because of our location on the campus of Emory University and on a public bus route and Emory bus route, our facilities are often open to the public. With three different buildings each with multiple entrances, it is difficult to have a central knowledge of the occupants (adult and youth alike) in all buildings at all times.

Both secular law and Christian teaching remind us that we are to exercise special care in attending to the safety and well being of children and youth. It is never possible to guarantee safety, as there are many hazards and dangers that cannot be predicted, as well as persons who intend to do harm in spite of all precautions. But we can and must take reasonable measures to try to minimize those risks which can be anticipated.

The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church (2012) (“*Discipline*”) provides in the *Social Principles* (para. 162): “[C]hildren must be protected from economic, physical, emotional, and sexual exploitation and abuse.”

Throughout this document, the term child is inclusive to mean all children/youth considered minors under the law – typically 17 years of age and under. The term the “Grounds of Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church” means the Church School Building (CSB), including the playground and amphitheater; the Youth and Activities Building (YAAB), including its front lawn, parking lot and “Scout Hut”; and the Glenn Memorial Auditorium (the “Sanctuary”) and its lawn when in either is in use for a Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church activity. The Grounds of Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church shall also include any future improvements at the locations identified above.

This Child/Youth Protection Policy applies to all ministries of the church, with the understanding that the affiliate ministries will have additional policies that can add to, but not detract from, our guidelines.

In an emergency situation where health and/or safety are at risk, a call should immediately be placed to 911 Emergency services.

A. Child/Youth Physical and Emotional Abuse

1. No corporal punishment of any child associated with any church program is allowed. "Corporal punishment" means any conduct which would cause any degree of physical pain or discomfort to a child.
2. No threatening, menacing, or verbally degrading actions or words are allowed – this includes tone, words, and actions used in such a way as to cause a reasonable apprehension of physical pain, discomfort, or mental/emotional anguish on the part of the child.
3. No conduct is permitted which would knowingly expose a child to physical or emotional pain, discomfort or endangerment. The only exception to this policy is a program such as a hike or other outing in which normal and non-harmful physical exertion is involved.
4. If a child is behaving in such a way as to present a threat to his/her own physical safety or the safety of others, the child should be safely restrained and the adult(s) responsible for the child is to be notified as soon as practicable and the child removed from the program as soon as practicable until such time as the child no longer poses a threat to safety. Any costs, such as transportation or special custodial costs, incurred as a result of removing a child from a program are the responsibility of the child's parent(s) or responsible adult(s).

B. Child Sexual Abuse

1. No sexual abuse of any child is to be permitted or tolerated.
2. "Child sexual abuse" is any act which involves any kind of physical contact with or visible exposure of the genitals, genital area, or breasts of a child or an adult interacting with a child, or any depiction of same. This provision does not apply to reasonable and necessary changing of diapers or toilet training of a young child. "Child sexual abuse" also includes any conduct intended to cause sexual arousal in or in the presence of a child.

Child physical, emotional, and sexual abuse also includes any definitions of such misconduct contained in current state statutes and regulations.

C. Reporting Procedures Regarding Actual or Suspected Child Physical or Sexual Abuse

1. If an incident of child physical or sexual abuse occurs or is suspected of having occurred, both the church staff member/volunteer in charge of the program and the church pastor or pastor-on-call are to be notified immediately.
2. If it is impracticable to notify the staff member/volunteer and pastor, and imminent danger of the child is suspected, then the state Department of Family and Children's Services (DFCS) should be notified as soon as practicable and not later than within 24 hours through their statewide toll-free hotline then in effect. The State of Georgia child protection reporting number in effect at the time of adoption of this policy is 877.210.KIDS. Alternately, if an event occurs in

DeKalb County, the number of the DeKalb County child protection unit is 404.370.5066 as of the time of adoption of this policy.

3. The pastor or the pastor's designee(s) will immediately investigate any report of actual or suspected child physical or sexual abuse, and if there are reasonable grounds to believe that an act of abuse may have occurred, the pastor or the pastor's designee will notify DFCS or the county child protection unit, and in no case more than 24 hours after receiving the report. A written report of any such internal inquiry will be prepared as soon as practicable.
4. If no imminent danger to the child is perceived and the investigation does not require DFCS involvement – under the direction of the United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries guidelines, the pastor or the pastor's designee(s) will follow up with the involved parties with referrals for counseling and professional support, while acknowledging the documentation of the incident(s) or suspected incidence.
5. All incidents and suspected abuse will be documented and confidentially kept on file in the church office, with the accident, incident, and suspected abuse forms readily available on the church website.

D. Ministerial Confidentiality and Pastoral Care for Victims of Abuse

1. Ministers are ordinarily required to keep inviolate all confidences, including confessional confidences. The Discipline (para. 341.5) provides, however, for a partial exception to confidentiality in cases of suspected child abuse or neglect “where mandatory reporting is required by civil law”.
2. Additionally, ministers bear a four-fold responsibility to the congregation: Word; Sacrament; Order; and Service. Under “Order” ministers are designated as “the administrative officer of the local church”. (Discipline, para. 340.3(a)). Matters which involve local church administration are not confidential communications and must be acted upon as a matter of administrative necessity. Thus, a report of misconduct by a member of the church staff or a church volunteer, while acting in their capacity as a staff member or volunteer, involves an administrative matter which cannot be treated as confidential. All ministers will, in handling such matters, act as discreetly as administrative necessity may permit.
3. In addition to the investigation, reporting, and referral specified in section C, the ministers of Glenn UMC will provide pastoral care and resources for support of victims of abuse.

E. Prevention Guidelines

All programs of children or youth shall be governed by these guidelines:

1. Two adults, or more, shall be present at all times for any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving children and/or youth. If two adults cannot attend, the event must be canceled. For example, this includes informal use of the playground during events such as meals & programs in the Fellowship Hall. The requirement of a second adult can be satisfied by the presence of a supervising minister, staff member, or lay volunteer who has overall responsibility for a program and is available to check in frequently with each classroom or setting where another adult is present.

2. Confidential counseling between a staff person or volunteer and a child or youth will not occur behind a closed door. During such counseling sessions another adult will be present, in the room or in an adjacent room, who is aware that a counseling session is in progress and who could hear and respond in the event of an outcry. If another adult is not continuously present as described above, the counseling session must occur in a public place, such as a table at a local coffee shop or restaurant, where sufficient confidentiality can be maintained while keeping the session in constant public view.
3. Confidential counseling will not occur in private settings where the two-person rule above cannot be maintained. In the event that a child or youth approaches a staff person or volunteer under circumstances contrary to those outlined above, the adult will be responsible for immediately moving the counseling session to a setting where the two-person rule can be observed, for example, by suggesting a walk down the sidewalk of a well-traveled street or moving the conversation to a public establishment such as a local coffee shop or restaurant.
4. Counseling between a professionally certified pastoral counselor (or licensed clinician) and a child or youth shall not be bound by the above restrictions. Rather, licensed counselors or therapists shall adhere to the accepted standards of professional conduct as established by their licensing organization, which govern such counseling situations.
5. When transporting children or youth, staff and volunteers will make reasonable efforts to maintain the two-person rule, as described above, or to have more than one child or youth in the vehicle. When it is impracticable to have two adults present the adult should seek parental permission to transport the child or youth. Such permission may be given in advance for an as-needed only situation.
6. Classroom doors will have windows; or doors will be left ajar when children and/or youth are present in the room.
7. There shall be access to a telephone in the buildings.
8. Written parental permission shall be obtained when groups of children or youth leave church property or enroll in a long-term recurring activity such as Club 1012. Such permissions shall include space for the parent(s) or other responsible adult(s) to furnish information concerning allergies or other special needs. If, in the judgment of the adult supervisor of an event, a special need cannot be accommodated, the child may be obligated to participate in an alternate activity or program. It is the obligation of the parent(s) or child's other responsible adult(s) to furnish Glenn with complete and accurate information concerning the child's allergies, medical conditions, or special needs, so as to afford the church a full opportunity to determine in advance of an event whether it would be appropriate for the child to participate in the event. It is imperative also that the parent(s) or other responsible adult(s) furnish the church with accurate, up-to-date emergency contact information. Reasonable steps will be taken to give advance notice about activities and any unusual circumstances. For example, outside youth mission organizations may have a policy that specifies that only one adult will be on each van with youth and children during the project. As this is a variation from the Glenn policy (see above), reasonable steps should be taken to disclose this circumstance to parents when registering their youth for mission trip for youth.

9. Unauthorized persons will not be allowed to remain with a children's or youth group. Unauthorized persons include, but are not limited to: persons with no affiliation with the program, event or ministry in progress; and children and youth attending an activity for which parental permission is required who do not have consent to attend. A staff person or volunteer will notify a fellow staffer/volunteer that they are asking the unauthorized person to leave and then politely do so. If the unauthorized person does not honor the request to leave in a timely manner, staffer/volunteer should call Emory Police at 404.727.6111 to request an escort off campus.
10. No child or youth shall leave a designated meeting area without permission or supervision. For overnight events and events occurring away from the church site, children or youth must have written parental permission to leave an event early except in emergency situations. In instances where a third party is to pick up a child or youth from an event, the parent or custodial adult must give prior written authorization or telephone permission to a staff member and/or Glenn volunteer in charge.
11. Children age 10 and under must be signed in and out of Sunday School or other drop-off ministry events. The sign in/out sheet will include the name and telephone number(s) of the adult responsible for the child, as well as notification of any allergies or special conditions. Sign in/sign out procedures particular to the ministry programs such as Club 1012, Basketball, Youth Group, etc. will be coordinated with the input and guidance of Glenn staff and the Education Team.
12. Glenn School and Glenn After School program, as well as independent programs for which Glenn is a sponsoring institution (such as Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts) are responsible for developing and implementing their own child and youth protection policies, so long as they are at least as rigorous as the standards set forth in this policy. These programs are free to adopt these policies as their own if they so choose. All staff and volunteers of these ministries are required at a minimum to complete the Glenn Memorial UMC online Safe Sanctuaries training and background check (see Section F below.)
13. In an instance in which a child or youth is not picked up in a timely manner at the conclusion of an event, the event leaders will attempt to contact the parent or custodial adult, followed by the Emergency Contacts on file. If no authorized person still comes forward to pick up the child or youth three hours following the close of the event, the event leader is authorized to report the child or youth as abandoned to public safety authorities, in consultation with the Senior Pastor and/or Chair of Trustees.
14. Virtual/Online events: For virtual ministry events and communications online such as teleconferencing (i.e. Zoom, Skype) and cellular phone applications ("apps" i.e. Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, GroupMe), all efforts will be made to adhere to the two adult rule for events on live video communications and all personal communications between church staff and volunteers with children/youth via texting, e-mailing, etc. will be in open communication with the parent/guardian of the child/youth. Reasonable timing (i.e. office hours) are expected for communications unless mental health crises or other extraordinary circumstances warrant communications during the hours of 8pm-8am. Records of

communications will be kept for these circumstances and shared transparently with supervising staff and/or parents/guardians with pastoral care confidentiality guidelines followed. More resources are found here:

<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/articles/safe-sanctuaries-supporting-a-shift-to-online-youth-ministry-meetings>

F. Selection and Screening of Staff

1. Employed Staff

a. Clergy Staff

The character and fitness of ordained and commissioned United Methodist clergy are determined by the Board of Ordained Ministry and Clergy Session of the home conference of the clergy. Clergy staff will be required to give consent for a criminal background check upon commencement of appointment or employment at Glenn. Any questions raised by the criminal background check will be submitted to the appropriate conference Board of Ordained Ministry for review.

b. Other Staff

All persons employed by Glenn Memorial Church shall:

- i. Be at least 14 years of age and be at least four years older than the children or youth with whom they are volunteering to work and if under 21, supervised by an adult over the age of 21;
- ii. Complete a Glenn Memorial UMC Employee Information form.
- iii. Provide at least two institutional references. These references may be oral or in writing;
- iv. Complete a training session on the prevention, procedures and reporting of suspected abuse; and
- v. Complete a consent form for a National criminal record check. Individuals must pass this criminal record check to the satisfaction of supervisory church staff.

c. First Aid/CPR Training

First Aid/CPR training is offered annually for all church workers who work with children and youth. Employed workers are encouraged to take this course and keep their certification up to date.

2. Volunteers

a. All volunteers working with children or youth shall:

Be at least four years older than the children or youth with whom they are volunteering to work and if under 21, supervised by an adult over the age of 21.

b. All volunteers working with children or youth on a continuing basis shall:

- i. Complete Volunteer Children and Youth Workers Profile form.
- ii. Complete consent for a National criminal record check. We are screening for offenses that pose a risk to the health and safety of others only.
- iii. Complete a training session that includes information on the prevention, procedures, and reporting of suspected abuse the next time it is offered after becoming a volunteer. The Glenn Memorial

UMC online Safe Sanctuaries training or the Stewards of Children Training are two of the trainings offered regularly to meet this requirement.

- iv. Be active in the Glenn Memorial Church community for at least six months and supply at least two institutional references. The references may be oral or in writing.
3. Staff or volunteers may not be supervised by a parent, spouse, sibling, or other close relative.
4. Records. Documentation of background checks and training will be maintained in the church office, and supervised by the Minister for Children or their representative.

G. Ministry to Convicted and/or Registered Sex Offenders or Child Abusers

1. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church declare: “We recognize that family violence and abuse in all its forms—verbal, psychological, physical, sexual—is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the Church to provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the victim. While we deplore the actions of the abuser, we affirm that person to be in need of God’s redeeming love” (Social Principles ¶ 161G). United Methodist Safe Sanctuaries guidelines declare, “Increasingly, churches are faced with a dilemma in their attempt to be faithful to both of the last two sentences above. Assuring the safety of children in our care, our facilities and our programs is a sacred duty. We must weigh that duty in the balance with what often seems the conflicting value of participation in the life of the church by a convicted child abuser. Being part of a worshipping community is not the only way for a person to experience God’s redeeming love, but it is an important one.”
2. An individual registered sex offender, (1) whose obligation to register as a sex offender arises from an offense involving a minor (including but not limited to offenses related to pornography involving a minor), and (2) who is known to the pastors of Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church, may only seek to be a part of the activities of Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church through a covenant relationship approved by the Senior Pastor, and a majority approval by a quorum of the current members of each of the following: Children's Education Committee, Youth Council, Church Council, and the Trustees. This approved covenant would allow for adult volunteers (approved by the offender's probation/parole officer, if required by law) to share in prayer and worship, organized by or in the name of Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church, with the offender in a location off-site of the Grounds of Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church and with no children or youth present. Nothing in this Section G is intended to limit or in any way control individual members, employees or the pastoral staff of Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church from interacting with a registered sex offender at events that are neither organized by nor in the name of Glenn Memorial United Methodist Church.

H. Implementation

This policy shall replace the existing child protection policy, adopted in 1999 and revised in 2008, 2011, & 2016 immediately upon approval by the Glenn Church Council. It is recommended that upon adoption these policies be made readily available on the church web site and that a printed copy be furnished upon request.

It is further recommended that the Church Council, or other church governing body at the time, review these policies at least quadrennially.

Revised by Children's Education Team, Youth Council, and Education Team, September 2015. Approved by Church Council, September 2015. Revised & Approved by Church Council, December 2016.

Revised & approved by Children's Committee & Youth Council, September 2020.
Approved by Church Council, October 2020.

Glenn Child Protection Policy Sex Offender FAQ

What is the Goal of the Child Protection Policy?

To recognize the conflict between ministering to all those in need of God's redeeming love and provide a safe sanctuary, both mental and physical, to the children of Glenn, their families, and the victims of sexual abuse who attend Glenn.

Who is affected by the Glenn Child Protection Policy?

A person who is both a Registered Sex Offender and with parole restrictions prohibiting their contact with children. This is primarily an individual convicted of sex crimes relating to children. A description of what constitutes a "Registered Sex Offender" is contained in the Sex Offender FAQ which follows.

Who is not affected by the Glenn Child Protection Policy?

A Registered Sex Offender without parole restrictions prohibiting their contact with children. As Registered Sex Offenders include both those convicted of crimes against children and those convicted of sex crimes against adults, this would be any an individual convicted of sex crimes relating to children whose probation has expired or alternatively an individual convicted of a sex crime whose parole has no restrictions on their interaction with children. A list of the crimes that require registry as sex offender are included in the Sex Offender FAQ below.

Does the Child Protection Policy prevent the Registered Sex Offender from attending Glenn volunteer activities off the Grounds of Glenn?

No, unless children are scheduled to be present. The Child Protection Policy allows participation in events such as a habitat build, Good Neighbor Day (adult only events), etc.

Does the Child Protection Policy affect other members from Glenn from participating in activities with the Registered Sex Offender?

No, Members and their children are in no way barred by the Child Protection Policy from interacting with the Registered Sex Offender on their own schedules. Only at Glenn organized events, at which children are anticipated being present, could the Registered Sex Offender be barred from attending.

What happens if a known sex offender attends the 11:00 service or any other service on the Grounds of Glenn?

The authority to have the person removed would remain with the pastoral staff. The Child Protection Policy does not in any way change that. Whether such attendance is a violation of parole is a separate issue between the individual and the court system.

What happens if a member of Glenn is convicted of a sex crime and becomes a Registered Sex Offender?

If the individual's parole terms prohibit his or her interaction with Children, the individual would be prohibited in taking part in activities at which children are present; this would include the 8:30, 11:00 and 5:05 services. A violation of this could be a violation of their parole. Any covenant with Glenn would prohibit their taking part in activities on the Grounds of Glenn or from attending Glenn activities in which children are present.

If the individual's parole terms do not prohibit their interaction with Children, nothing would happen under the terms of the Child Protection Policy. The Child Protection Policy does not affect an individual's status as a member of Glenn.

Does Glenn conduct background checks?

Glenn does not conduct background checks of members or those attending a service. Glenn does conduct background checks for all volunteers who may have direct contact with children or youth. The Child Protection Policy does not change that practice.

What are the "Grounds of Glenn"?

The Grounds of Glenn include the Church School Building, including the playground and amphitheater; the Youth Activity Building, including its front lawn, parking lot and "Scout Hut"; and the Glenn Memorial Auditorium (the "Sanctuary") and its lawn when in use for a Glenn activity. The definition acknowledges the dual use of the Sanctuary and therefore, it does not include the Sanctuary when in use by Emory for a non-Glenn event such as a concert.

What is the United Methodist Church's Position on Participation by Registered Sex Offenders?

The UMC's position is last document attached to this FAQ. It identifies that there is "a low likelihood that pedophiles can or will change." It recommends that any covenant with a Registered Sex Offender address: (1) professional counseling; (2) adults to accompany the offender while on church property or attending church activities; (3) the areas of church facilities that are "off limits;" (4) restrictions on leadership; (5) prohibition on a role in church that includes contact with children or youth.

What happens if the Child Protection Policy is found to be overly broad or alternatively ineffective?

The authority to amend the Child Protection Policy remains with the Church Council. The Child Protection Policy is required to be reviewed every five years (we are at the five year window now) but it can be revised at any time.

Sex Offender FAQ

From the Forsyth County Sheriff (DeKalb does not have a similar page)

Who is required to register?

In order for an offender to qualify for registration in the state of Georgia, the offender must either be released from prison or placed on probation, parole or supervised release after July 1, 1996. If an offender who is registered in another state moves to Georgia, the offender is required to register in the state of Georgia.

What crimes require a person to register?

Any conviction resulting from an underlying sexual offense against a victim who is a minor.

Aggravated assault with the intent to rape in violation of Code Section 16-5-21;

Aggravated child molestation in violation of Code Section 16-6-4; or

Aggravated sexual battery in violation of Code Section 16-6-22.2.

Aggravated sodomy in violation of Code Section 16-6-2;

Criminal sexual conduct toward a minor;

False imprisonment of a minor, except by a parent;

Kidnapping of a minor, except by a parent;

Rape in violation of Code Section 16-6-1;

Solicitation of a minor to engage in sexual conduct;

Solicitation of a minor to practice prostitution; or

Use of a minor in a sexual performance;

(Only these below are occurring after June 30, 2001)

A second conviction for sexual battery in violation of Code Section 16-6-22.1;

Aggravated child molestation in violation of Code Section 16-6-4, unless the person was convicted of a misdemeanor offense;

Any conduct which, by its nature, is a sexual offense against a victim who is a minor or an attempt to commit a sexual offense against a victim who is a minor.

Child molestation in violation of Code Section 16-6-4;

Computer pornography and child exploitation prevention in violation of Code Section 16-12-100.2;

Conspiracy to transport, ship, receive, or distribute visual depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct; or

Creating, publishing, selling, distributing, or possessing any material depicting a minor or a portion of a minor's body engaged in sexually explicit conduct;

Electronically furnishing obscene material to minors in violation of Code Section 16-12-100.1;

Enticing a child for indecent purposes in violation of Code Section 16-6-5;

False imprisonment in violation of Code Section 16-5-41 which involves a victim who is less than 14 years of age, except by a parent;

Incest in violation of Code Section 16-6-22;
Kidnapping in violation of Code Section 16-5-40 which involves a victim who is less than 14 years of age, except by a parent;
Obscene telephone contact in violation of Code Section 16-12-100.3; or
Sexual assault against persons in custody in violation of Code Section 16-6-5.1;
Sexual exploitation of children in violation of Code Section 16-12-100;
Sodomy in violation of Code Section 16-6-2;
Statutory rape in violation of Code Section 16-6-3, if the individual convicted of the offense is 21 years of age or older;
Transmitting, making, selling, buying, or disseminating by means of a computer any descriptive or identifying information regarding a child for the purpose of offering or soliciting sexual conduct of or with a child or the visual depicting of such conduct;
Use of a minor to engage in any sexually explicit conduct to produce any visual medium depicting such conduct;

Can an Offender be around children?

The offender may be restricted if it is a provision of the offender's probation or parole.

Can a sex offender attend church?

Yes.

Can a sex offender be employed at a church? Can he volunteer at a church?

It depends upon when the sex offender committed his offense. If the sex offender committed his registerable offense between July 1, 2006 and June 30, 2008, he cannot be employed by a church, but he can volunteer. If he committed the offense on or after July 1, 2008 he cannot be employed or volunteer at a church.

What is Risk Assessment Classification?

The notification level into which a sexual offender is placed based on the Sexual Offender Registration Review Board's assessment.

What is Level 1?

Level I Risk Assessment Classification means the sexual offender is a low sex offense risk and low recidivism risk for future sexual offenses.

What is Level 2?

Level II Risk Assessment Classification means the sexual offender is an intermediate sex offense risk and intermediate recidivism risk for future sexual offenses and includes all sexual offenders who do not meet the criteria for classification either as a sexually dangerous predator or for Level I risk assessment.

What is Level 3?

Level III Risk Assessment Classification is a Sexually Dangerous Predator which means the sexual offender was designated as a sexually violent predator between July 1, 1996, and June 30, 2006; or who is determined by the Sexual Offender Registration Review Board to be at risk of perpetrating any future dangerous sexual offense. A sexually

dangerous predator shall report to the sheriff of the county where such predator resides six months following his or her birth month and update or verify his or her required registration information.

What is Level 0?

Level 0 means that the offender has not been leveled yet or was convicted prior to 7/1/2006. Exception all offenders moving from another state will be leveled.

What is an area where minors congregate?

Public & private parks, recreation facilities, playgrounds, skating rinks, neighborhood centers, gymnasium, school bus stops, public libraries, and public & community swimming pools.

<http://www.forsythsheriff.org/updates/sex-offenders/sex-offender-f-a-q/>

UMC Church Participation by a Registered Child Sex Offender

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Increasingly, churches are faced with a dilemma in their attempt to be faithful to both of the last two sentences above. Assuring the safety of children in our care, our facilities and our programs is a sacred duty. We must weigh that duty in the balance with what often seems the conflicting value of participation in the life of the church by a convicted child abuser. Being part of a worshipping community is not the only way for a person to experience God's redeeming love, but it is an important one.

Recent studies suggest a low likelihood that pedophiles can or will change. Without extensive professional treatment, virtually all child sexual offenders will re-offend. Repentance, prayer, and pastoral support, always in combination with lifelong professional treatment, can be crucial in helping to change behavior but, in themselves, offer slim hope of changing the behavior of perpetrators. Welcoming a child sex offender into a congregation must be accompanied by thorough knowledge, careful planning, and long-term monitoring.

A convicted and/or registered sex offender who wishes to be part of a church community should expect to have conditions placed on his or her participation. Indeed, offenders who have been in treatment and are truly committed to living a life free of further abuse will be the first to declare that, in order to accomplish that, they must structure a life that includes on-going treatment, accountability mechanisms, and lack of access to children.

The following steps should be taken in order to be faithful to the Social Principles' commitment both to safety from abuse and to ministry with abusers:

A. Local churches should:

- hold discussions in the church council and in adult education settings about the possibility of facing the situation of a convicted sex offender returning to or joining the church. These discussions should be held and general agreements reached about actions to be taken should the church find itself in this circumstance;
- develop a carefully constructed and openly negotiated covenant between the offender and the church community. The covenant should include agreements in the following areas: participation in a professional counseling program for at least the entire time of church membership or participation; adult "covenant partners" to accompany the offender while on church property or attending church activities; areas of church facilities that are "off limits;" restrictions on leadership in or on behalf of church; no role in church that includes contact with children or youth; any additional conditions for presence or participation; and
- assure that the covenant is maintained by having it written and signed by the offender, the pastor(s), and the chairperson of the church council. While confidentiality of victims should be respected, the covenant should not be secret. Monitoring of the covenant should be taken seriously as a permanent responsibility.

B. Annual conferences should:

- develop similar plans and covenant for situations in which a convicted and/or registered sexual offender is involved or seeks involvement in the conference, its activities or facilities;
- include information about this concern and assistance with implementation of this resolution in its training and resourcing of clergy and local church lay leaders;

C. The General Board of Discipleship and the General Board of Global Ministries should:

- cooperatively develop and promote a process and specific guidelines to assist congregations in the education and covenant tasks outlined above.

<http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/church-participation-by-a-registered-child-sex-offender>