

Highland United Methodist Church Policy

SUBJECT: PREVENTION OF ABUSE AGAINST CHILDREN

I. OBJECTIVES:

- A. The children of Highland United Methodist Church (“HUMC”) shall be protected from abuse and violence of any kind, based on conduct of Church clergy, supervisors, staff, management or others (including volunteers) involved in the Church ministries while on HUMC premises and/or involved in HUMC ministries. “Child” or “children” shall include any person who is eligible to participate in any of HUMC’s child or youth programs. “Staff” shall include all church employees including employees of the Children’s Center. “Adult” is anyone who is not eligible to participate in any of the HUMC’s child or youth programs.

II. POLICY:

- A. All forms of abuse and violence are expressly prohibited, whether on HUMC premises or in activities in furtherance of HUMC ministries.
- B. This policy applies to all HUMC clergy, staff, and volunteers. Furthermore, none of the individuals listed in this section may use any relationships developed with a child while a part of the Church ministry - - to abuse these children outside of church ministries or off Church premises.
- C. “Abuse” is categorized in five primary forms: physical, emotional, neglect, sexual and ritual. They are defined as follows:

i. Physical Abuse

When a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a Child including but are not necessarily limited to: violent battery with a weapon such as a knife or belt, burning, choking, fracturing bones, spanking, striking, jerking, pushing, shoving or causing any other non-accidental injuries.

ii. Emotional Abuse

When a person exposes a child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty, sending a message to the child that he or she is worthless, unloved, and undeserving of love and care. Examples include, but are not necessarily limited to, being bullied, threatened, shamed, intimidated, verbally demeaned in any derogatory manner, or locked in closets or other confining spaces.

iii. Neglect

When a person negligently endangers a child's health, well-being, welfare, and safety by withholding food or medical care, or leaving children without age-appropriate supervision.

iv. Sexual Abuse

When an adult engages in any sexual contact with a child. The child is not capable of consenting to such contact or resisting such sexual acts. The child may be psychologically dependent on the perpetrator (for example, a teacher or a youth minister). Examples may include, but are not necessarily limited to, fondling, intercourse, incest, suggestive communications, and the exploitation of and exposure to pornography and/or prostitution.

v. Ritual Abuse

When physical, sexual, or psychological violence is inflicted on a child, intentionally and in a stylized way, by an adult or adults with responsibility for a child's welfare. Typically, the perpetrator appeals to some higher authority or power to justify the abuse. Examples may include, but are not necessarily limited to, cruel treatment of animals or repetitious threats of sexual or physical violence to the child or to people related to the child.

D. Violent Behavior

HUMC has zero tolerance for violence. Violence includes but is not limited to any type of physical or verbal harm to another and the exercise of physical force so as to inflict injury. In addition, no weapons are allowed on HUMC property or at a HUMC sponsored event. The term "weapon" includes but is not limited to the following: all types of firearms; knives; dangerous chemicals; explosives including blasting caps; chains; and other objects carried for the apparent purpose of injuring or intimidating. This policy does not apply to certain kitchen or craft utensils or other devices that are designed and commonly used for a purpose other than the infliction of bodily injury. Such devices brought onto HUMC property, or to a HUMC sponsored event must actually be used for an intended and lawful purpose.

E. Report of Complaints

Any child who has been subjected to any abuse or violent act should be encouraged to report this incident immediately to any of the individuals set forth below. (Such a report may be made by a parent or guardian, or other individual, on behalf of the child.) Any reports of abuse must be documented and will be investigated promptly by the Church Council. All investigations will be kept confidential, to the extent possible in

conformity with applicable State law and *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church*.

F. Complaint Process

i. Complaint Relating to Employee of Highland Children's Center

- a. The report should be made to the Director of the Children's Center. If the incident involves the Director, then the report should be made directly to the Director of Children's Ministry.
- b. If the complaint alleges that a juvenile has been abused or neglected by a caretaker as defined in N.C.G.S. §7B-101, then the matter shall be reported to the Director of Wake County Social Services in accordance with N.C.G.S. §7B-301.

ii. Complaint Relating to Employee of Highland United Methodist Church

- a. The report should be made to the Chair of the Staff Parish Committee.
- b. If the complaint is alleged against HUMC clergy, then the Staff Parish Committee will report the matter to the District Superintendent.
- c. If the complaint is alleged against a member of the HUMC staff, then the Clergy will report the matter to the District Superintendent.

iii. Complaint Relating to Volunteer of Highland United Methodist Church

The report should be made to either of the following:

- a. Director of Youth Ministry, or;
- b. Director of Children's Ministry.

iv. Others to whom report may be made

The child (or individual making report for a child) may report the incident to any of the following individuals:

- a. Senior Pastor;
- b. Associate Pastor;
- c. Chair of Staff-Parish Committee, or;
- d. Chair of Church Council.

- G. HUMC shall not retaliate in any way against a child, parent or guardian for making a report of alleged abuse or participating in the Church's investigation of a report. The Church also will not tolerate retaliation by the alleged abuser.

- H. This policy will be disseminated to all HUMC clergy, staff and volunteers on an annual basis.
- I. Any employee violating this policy shall be subjected immediately to disciplinary action ranging from a written warning to discharge, depending upon the nature and severity of the violation in each case. Any other individual (who is not an employee) who violates this policy, depending on the nature and severity of the violation, may no longer participate in the youth/children ministries program.
- J. When deemed appropriate, the HUMC Business Manager shall report the matter to the HUMC insurance carrier.

III. ENFORCEMENT:

The Chair of Church Council and the Chair of Staff Parish are jointly responsible for the investigation of any incident reported, for management of media (if required) and for enforcement of this Policy.

BY ORDER OF THE HIGHLAND UNITED
METHODIST CHURCH COUNCIL

Ruth P. Moore, Chair, Church Council

Date Adopted: November 15, 2006