

**Safe Sanctuary Guidelines**  
**Salem United Methodist Church**  
Clarksville, Tennessee

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 appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually 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, Salem United Methodist Church adopts these guidelines for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

**Purpose**

Our purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Guidelines 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.

**Covenant Statement**

Salem 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 of our children and youth as well as all of our workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with children and youth on our procedures and guidelines; we will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience and we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator.

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

**I. DEFINITIONS**

1. **ABUSE:** Harm or threatened harm to the health and welfare of a child, youth or a vulnerable adult by any person responsible for the health and welfare of that child, youth or vulnerable adult, that occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury; sexual exploitation or mistreatment, sexual harassment, sexual contact, sexual molestation; disseminating, exhibiting or displaying sexually explicit material. Abuse shall also include any other conduct or activity-be it overt or unintentional-as prohibited within the definitions and prohibitions of the Tennessee Code Annotated.
2. **ADULT:** Any person at least 18 years of age.
3. **APPROPRIATE CONDUCT:** Conduct that one would reasonably assume to be acceptable to and permissible by a child's parent or guardian.
4. **CHILD OR YOUTH:** Any person less than 18 years of age.
5. **LEADER:** Anyone directly responsible for supervision and overseeing of a specific church-related function, event or activity.
6. **EMOTIONAL/ MENTAL ABUSE:** Abuse in which a person exposes another person to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional/mental abuse sends messages of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care.
7. **PARENT OR GUARDIAN:** Any parent, stepparent, foster parent, grandparent or appointed guardian with the general responsibility for the health, education, or welfare of a child, youth or vulnerable adult.
8. **PHYSICAL ABUSE:** Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to another person.
9. **RESPONSE TEAM:** All persons, individually or collectively, who have been appointed to investigate and respond to allegations of misconduct.
10. **SEXUAL ABUSE:** Engaging in any sexual conduct, sexual penetration, sexual exploitation, or sexual harassment of a vulnerable adult, a child, or a youth; or the dissemination, exhibiting, or displaying of sexually explicit material to a vulnerable adult, a child, or a youth, regardless of whether such conduct is with or without the knowledge or consent of the vulnerable adult, the child, or the youth. This abuse may be violent or non-violent. It includes any conduct that involves vulnerable adults, children or youth in sexual behavior for which they are not personally, socially, emotionally or developmentally ready.
11. **SEXUAL CONTACT:** The intentional touching of the intimate parts or the clothing covering the immediate area of the intimate parts of a child, a youth, or a vulnerable adult.
12. **SEXUAL EXPLOITATION:** Allowing, permitting, or encouraging a vulnerable adult, a child, or a youth to engage in prostitution; or photographing, filming, creating electronic or computer generated images, or engaging in other forms of depicting a child, a youth or a vulnerable adult engaged in actual or suggestive sexual contact.
13. **SEXUAL HARASSMENT:** Any unwanted sexual advance or demand, either verbal or physical, which is perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive.

14. **VERBAL ABUSE:** Any verbal act that humiliates degrades or threatens any child or youth or vulnerable adult.
15. **VOLUNTEER:** Any adult who assists in conducting children's activities under the supervision of a staff person and/or Ministry Team leader, has regular and direct contact with children, and is counted in the two-adult rule.
16. **VULNERABLE ADULT:** For the purpose of these guidelines, an adult whose mental or physical condition makes him/her susceptible to abuse.
17. **LINE-OF-SIGHT:** Unobstructed view.

## **II. TRAINING**

Salem United Methodist Church on an annual basis, (measured within a calendar year), shall provide either in- house training or provide access to training outside the Church for:

- All paid staff employees including the Pastor
- All work area coordinators
- All volunteers and others designated by the Staff Parish Relations
- Committee who periodically or routinely work with or supervise children, youth, and /or vulnerable adults.

Those who fail to receive this training shall be prohibited from working with or supervising children, youth, or vulnerable adults until such training requirement has been accomplished.

The Salem UMC Administrative Assistant shall be charged with the keeping and maintaining of training records.

The training records may be viewed by the Pastor and the SPRC.

The training may consist of but is not limited to the following:

1. Salem United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Guidelines
2. The supervision requirements under the Safe Sanctuary Guidelines
3. The reporting requirements as set forth under the Safe Sanctuary Guidelines
4. The rights and responsibilities of those covered by the Safe Sanctuary Guidelines
5. Education as to the appropriate conduct, speech, and interaction by adults with children, youth and vulnerable adults at various ages
6. CPR Training and First Aid Training
7. Emergency preparedness plan
8. Screening requirements

## **III. REQUIREMENTS FOR PAID STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**

1. All paid staff and any volunteer who will be working with children, youth or vulnerable adults will submit the required application, be interviewed and provide written permission for a background check prior to that person assuming the position.
2. Volunteers who desire to work with children (birth to 18 years) must attend Salem United Methodist Church regularly for six (6) months before they are eligible to begin a direct contact care provider position. However, such individuals may begin

the application, training and background check process any time during that six month period.

3. Two leaders, at least one of which is an adult, both of whom must be at least five (5) years older than the oldest child, will be present at all times during any church sponsored program, event or ministry involving children or youth. One person may work with multiple children as long as they are within line of sight of other adults. In an emergency situation, childcare will be relocated to a room near the meeting area and the doors will be left open.
4. The church nursery will require all parents to sign their children in and out for special events.
5. No one shall serve if she/he is known to have been previously convicted of or has pled guilty or no contest to any crime arising out of any act or conduct involving assault and/or domestic assault, stalking, harassment, sexual abuse or any act of guilty conduct which is of a sexual, molesting, seductive or criminally deviant nature, whether or not such conduct involved a child. This includes, but is not limited to; crimes involving pedophilic behavior (molestation of a pre-adolescent child), incest, rape, assaults involving vulnerable adults, murder, kidnapping, pornography, physical abuse of a vulnerable adult, and contributing to the delinquency of a minor.
6. No one shall serve as a paid or volunteer care provider who has had a verdict or judgment rendered against him or her in any civil action arising out of any personal act or conduct related to sexual abuse of a vulnerable adult or child. This qualifying rule shall apply no matter how long ago the civil verdict occurred and the judgment was rendered.
7. No one shall serve as a paid staff member or volunteer charged with the responsibility of acting as driver or of providing transportation for children or vulnerable adults who has had a conviction or criminal history of DUI/DWI/BWI (boating while intoxicated), public intoxication, or have a drug related conviction within the last three (3) years.
8. Because Jesus cares for persons who have committed abuse of any kind, our church will encourage “abusers” to participate in the ministries of the church under the following conditions:
  - a. The person may participate in any ministries except those in which the person was convicted. (Example: If the person is a child sexual offender, the person may not participate in children or youth ministries.)
  - b. The person may participate with prior knowledge and agreement of the Pastor, the chair of the PPR and the leader of the ministry in which the person plans to participate.
  - c. In order to protect others as well as the “abuser,” the person will at all times have two hosts, one to be with him/her and the other host within complete line of sight of the person.
9. Should it come to the attention of the church that a volunteer working with children, youth or vulnerable adults has become involved in an active abuse investigation outside the church, this information will be reported to the pastor and handled on a case by case basis.

## **IV. SCREENING REQUIREMENTS**

For each paid staff or volunteer charged with the supervision of children and / or vulnerable adults, prior to their engagement the said individual shall submit to a background search for criminal conviction and civil judgments for the areas of concern set forth in section **III. REQUIREMENTS FOR PAID STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS.**

The search shall be conducted and administered by the Staff Parish Relations Committee with the records of said search to be kept confidential. The Pastor and the Chairperson of the SPRC shall be the only individuals allowed to see the results of the records.

Those individuals who do not meet the requirements of section **III. REQUIREMENTS FOR PAID STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS** may not serve in a paid or volunteer capacity with children or vulnerable adults.

If, after the background search has been completed and no indication exists of a violation of those matters set forth in section **III. REQUIREMENTS FOR PAID STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS**, and it comes to the attention of the Pastor or the SPRC Chairperson that a violation either not reported in the background check or subsequent to the background check has occurred, then this individual shall be suspended from serving in a paid or volunteer capacity with children or vulnerable adults.

## **V. SUPERVISION**

### **1. Supervision for the nursery/childcare**

There shall be a minimum of two childcare providers per room. In each room where childcare is provided, the door to the room may be closed if the door has a window. If the door is without a window, the door must remain open.

### **2. Sunday School- Pre K through Grade 5**

There shall be a minimum of two leaders at all times in the Pre K- Grade 5 Sunday School classrooms. In order to maintain the two leader minimum it is within the discretion of the teachers to combine classes to meet this minimum.

### **3. Sunday School- Middle and High School**

There shall be a minimum of two leaders at all times in the Middle/Senior High youth rooms and any other rooms which the youth may use. If the two leader minimum cannot be met or maintained for the duration of the class, the teacher shall take all appropriate measures to ensure he/she is not alone with a student in said classes. Under no circumstances may a teacher be in a "one-on-one" situation with a student behind closed doors.

### **4. Church Youth Activities**

All youth activities including any that may be instituted and developed require the supervision of at least two adults at all times. If it is not possible to have two adults present for the duration of the activity, the activity must be rescheduled. If

an activity begins with two adults but one must leave before the end of the activity and no replacement is available, the activity must end.

## **5. Line of Sight**

No adult shall be away from the line of sight of at least one other adult, while “one-on-one” with an individual youth at any time during a youth activity. The only exception to this will be when youth are being transported in a motor vehicle by an authorized adult. The vehicle will be considered a “safe environment” and it will be permissible for only one adult to be present in the vehicle, as long as there are more than two youth in the vehicle and there will be at least two adults at the destination.

## **6. Overnight Activities**

All overnight activities, whether at the church or away, shall be supervised by at least two adults. When staying in a hotel, inn, lodge or other limited-space offsite accommodation, children shall sleep in a separate room from the adult supervisor unless the adult is a parent or legal guardian of the child or unless the nature of the activity requires community lodging. An adult, other than the parent or legal guardian, shall never be alone with a child at any time during an overnight activity.

- Any exception to this rule will be reviewed and approved prior to the event.

## **7. Appropriate Physical Boundaries**

Physical boundaries are important in dealing with children and adults. Keeping appropriate physical boundaries protects the child and the adult. Boundaries become more restricted as children age. Whereas an “adult initiated” hug and/or kiss may be appropriate for a preschool child, it is not appropriate for a youth of elementary/middle/senior high school age. Adults should exercise extreme caution in maintaining appropriate physical boundaries between themselves and the children, youth and vulnerable adults within their care.

## **8. Appropriate Emotional Boundaries**

It is important for adults to maintain appropriate emotional boundaries in their relationships with children and/or vulnerable adults. Adults should do everything in their power to avoid the development of inappropriate emotional and physical attraction and/or attachment. Adults should avoid conversations and inappropriate language, whether in-person or electronically, that may lead to misconduct or the appearances of misconduct. It is necessary to include another adult when conversation proceeds into areas where the adult feels uncomfortable. The adult should never initiate inappropriate or uncomfortable conversations.

## **9. Appropriate Age of Youth Supervisors**

For all Senior High youth activities, the adult supervisors must be at least 23 years of age. For all Middle High youth activities, the adult supervisors must be at least 18 years of age and at least one of the supervisors must be 23 years of age or older. For all youth activities, drivers must be at least 22 years of age.

## **10. Common Sense Exception**

Since it is impossible to state in these guidelines every situation that may arise, supervisors are required to follow all rules as defined herein and to use their own good common sense to address any issue on which a specific guideline has not been stated within this document. It will be the responsibility of any supervisor who experiences an instance of exception to document the situation and the actions taken and present it to the Safe Sanctuary Committee for post-action approval and for possible incorporation of the situation into these guidelines.

**VI. GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING OF AND RESPONSE TO ALLEGED MISCONDUCT OR CRIMINAL ACTIVITY**

*Note: The safety of our children at the church is our primary concern. Any church member who witnesses a child being physically/sexually abused by misconduct or criminal activity, will attempt to get the child to safety and contact the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department immediately. After contacting the proper authorities, continue the guidelines in Section VI.*

\*The following sections are to be used as a checklist for reporting and response of alleged misconduct.

When an incident of misconduct occurs or an allegation of an incident or misconduct is made, it is crucial that it be dealt with speedily and in a clearly defined manner. A quick, compassionate and unified response to any alleged incident of misconduct is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. The following procedure will be in effect for the reporting of and response to alleged misconduct or criminal activity.

**\*The first and most important action is to ensure the safety and privacy of the alleged victim.**

DATE, TIME  
INITIALS

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. The staff person, team leader, volunteer, or helper who observes the misconduct or to whom such alleged misconduct is reported during any activity is required **to report the incident immediately to the staff person in charge of that activity.\*\***

\*\*NOTE: If any person identified as a point of contact in these guidelines is the person who is being accused/charged with the misconduct (for instance “the staff person in charge of the activity”), then that person’s immediate supervisor or another person of authority should be used as the point of contact throughout this policy and at any place where that person’s position has been identified.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The staff person in charge of that activity is responsible for the safeguarding and care of the alleged victim. **(Caution: Do not question a child for more information than they volunteer. Leave that for trained**

officials.)

DATE, TIME  
INITIALS

\_\_\_\_\_

a. The **victim shall be immediately removed from the activity or location of the alleged misconduct to a safe place**, away from the alleged perpetrator. The victim will not be left alone.

\_\_\_\_\_

b. The staff person in charge or the other adult present shall immediately **attempt to obtain necessary information** such as the name of the alleged victim, address, phone numbers, and family information. (Can begin form "Report of Suspected Incident of Misconduct").

\_\_\_\_\_

c. If the alleged victim is a child, youth, or vulnerable adult, **notify parent(s) or guardian(s) immediately.**

\_\_\_\_\_

3. **The staff person in charge of the activity is responsible for the removal of the accused from the activity or location of the alleged misconduct to a safe place.** The accused will not be left alone and if possible, at least two adults will be present with the accused at all times. The accused will be suspended from any church related activities until further notice.

\_\_\_\_\_

4. **After securing the alleged victim and the accused, the activity coordinator shall immediately contact the Pastor.** (If Pastor is unavailable or is person being charged, contact the Chairman of Staff Parish Relations). The person who witnessed the alleged misconduct and /or the person to whom the misconduct was reported may be present and will provide a written statement of the incident. **The form, Report of Suspected Incident of Misconduct" will be completed by the activity coordinator**, the person to whom the alleged misconduct was reported and the person whom observed the alleged misconduct. This form along with all statements will be filed in the Safe Sanctuary File of Records within 2 hours of the suspected incident.

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5. **If the victim of the incident is a child, the following steps must be performed: As soon as the report has been made to the pastor, it is mandatory to contact the Department of Children's Services. The phone call must be made by the person by whom the misconduct was witnessed or by the person to whom the alleged misconduct was reported. The pastor or the SPR chairperson must be present for the phone call.**

The DCS referral form is to be completed within 2 hours and filed with the other documents of the incident. (Safe Sanctuary File of Records). In all cases of reported or observed misconduct, any staff member, team leader, volunteer, helper or any other involved person who is required to be available shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies.

DATE, TIME  
INITIALS

\_\_\_\_\_

6. **The pastor will contact the District Superintendent and appoint a Response Team** to be made up of members of the congregation who

can most effectively address the specific issue. At a minimum, in addition to the SPR Chairperson and the Senior Pastor, this team shall include the Church Lay Leader and the Chairperson of the Church Council.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. It will be the responsibility of the Response Team to do the following:
- \_\_\_\_\_ a. Insure that the appropriate reporting procedures have been followed.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ b. Insure that the appropriate documentation is completed as required. This will include initial reporting documentation, as well as written documentation of all continuing efforts of the handling of the incident, from beginning to end.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ c. Contact the insurance company with pertinent information.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ d. Pastor or designee will address any requests from any media source.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ e. It will be the responsibility of the Response Team to fully investigate the charge of misconduct, in conjunction with the Department of Children's Services. If allowed by reporting agencies, have or schedule a face-to-face meeting with the victim and/or parents. Also, meet with the person who has been charged with alleged misconduct without alleged victim or family present. Accused is allowed to have a witness present.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ f. If misconduct is confirmed, the Response Team will recommend to the Staff Parish Relations Committee any actions it feels should be taken, based upon consultation and recommendations from any other involved agency. The SPR Committee will decide on and carry out any actions for corrections which it deems to be necessary.
  - \_\_\_\_\_ h. All documentation pertaining to the reporting of and response to the alleged misconduct will be filed in the Safe Sanctuary File Of Records.

## **VII. CONFIDENTIALITY**

The Senior Pastor and the SPRC shall maintain all reports and findings of misconduct confidential except those required under section **VI. REPORTING OF AND RESPONSE TO ALLEGED MISCONDUCT OR CRIMINAL ACTIVITY**. The reporting and findings shall only be published to the parent and/or guardian of a subject child, youth or vulnerable adult, and the person against whom the misconduct was alleged.

## **VIII. EFFECT**

This policy shall take effect immediately upon the adoption of this policy by The Church Council of Salem United Methodist Church.

## **IX. IMPLEMENTATION**

The Safe Sanctuaries Committee shall consist of at least the following members; the Pastor, a representative of the SPRC, a representative of the Board of Trustees, a representative of Children's Ministries, a Lay Leader, the Administrative Council chair, Youth Minister, and Nursery Director. The Safe Sanctuary Committee responsibilities include:

1. Providing appropriate Safe Sanctuaries forms ie. background authorizations, volunteer questionnaires, etc.
2. Providing Safe Sanctuaries training for staff and volunteers.
3. Maintaining secured files such as completed background checks.
4. Answering questions about the policy.
5. Ensuring compliance with the policy.
6. Granting exceptions to the policy, in appropriate circumstances.
7. Assisting, as needed, with investigations.
8. Reviewing and renewing the policy annually or as needed.
9. Amending the policy as needed. Amendments must be approved by the Administrative Council.

## **X. MAINTAINANCE OF RECORDS**

1. The Administrative Assistant will be responsible for maintaining the following records for paid and volunteer staff:
  - a. Application
  - b. Training records
  - c. Interview
  - d. Reference check documents
2. The following records will be kept in a separate, secure file and can only be accessed by the Pastor and /or the SPRC Chair:
  - a. Results of background check
  - b. Records of alleged misconduct/criminal activity

### **Classroom Use**

- A. When children, youth or vulnerable adults are present, basement classrooms/storage rooms, not in use, must remain locked.

- B. Children, youth and/or vulnerable adults may not be in the basement classrooms unless accompanied by 2 leaders and there for a pre-planned activity.

### **Children's Activities**

- A. Children under 10 years of age should be accompanied by an adult.
- B. Children are restricted to the area of the activity and may not wander the church campus unless appropriately accompanied.
- C. When “inflatables” are in use a leader must supervise the activity on each one as long as children are present

## **Salem United Methodist Church**

### **Emergency Preparedness Plan**

We, the Body of Christ at Salem United Methodist Church strive to be fully committed for the well being, safety, and security of all people who are welcomed into God's church and Salem's facilities.

Under the guidelines of the Salem UMC Safe Sanctuary Policy, this Emergency Preparedness Plan is established for the purpose to make available for all, the knowledge and awareness of these procedures in the event of emergency situations identified in the Emergency Preparedness Plan.

During any and all operating business hours and church activities held at Salem United Methodist Church while the facilities are occupied, the following emergency procedures shall be followed:

#### **1. Fire Emergency**

Call 911 and evacuate the facilities immediately by following the exit signs in the facility to the nearest exit location to egress outside and away from the building.

Fire extinguishers will be located in the designated locations throughout the facility and may be used as needed to prevent an exit from being blocked by flames.

Designated persons (Trustees or appointed persons by trustees) shall be trained to secure any / all utilities prior to exiting the facilities **only if they are not in immediate danger** due to a fire emergency and will then exit the facility.

Facility floor plan drawings will be posted in designated rooms / areas throughout the church that show details of each exit doorway in relation to that room or particular area.

## **2. Severe Weather / Tornado Warning Emergency**

In the event of severe weather / tornado warnings during church operating business hours or activities, all persons in the facility will be notified and instructed to evacuate to the designated Safe Zones in the basement rooms / basement areas of the facility.

The Safe Zones are located as follows:

Multi-purpose Room and McDonalds Room- (Nursery and Pre-K children only)

Basement Main Corridor

Sunday school Classroom 109

Chapel Room 112

## **3. Nursery, Children, and Youth Classroom Evacuation**

In the event of any emergency evacuation, the parents or guardians of all infants, children and youth shall be immediately notified of the emergency and will follow the procedures to collect their child and proceed to the nearest exit or Safe Zone depending on the emergency as stated in items 1. or 2.

Facility floor plan drawings will be posted in designated rooms / areas throughout the church that show details of each exit doorway and the most feasible route to the nearest Safe Zone in relation to that room or particular area.

All paid staff and volunteers shall continue to adhere to the Salem UMC Safe Sanctuary Requirements and Supervision Policies during any emergency evacuation occurrence.

Practice Drills for the Emergency Preparedness Plan will be performed periodically.

THIS IS AN AMENDED VERSION OF THE  
TENNESSEE CONFERENCE MEDIA CRISIS RESPONSE PLAN.

For a complete copy please see the office copy of the  
Salem UMC Safe Sanctuary Plan

located in the bookshelf of the church office.

A media crisis in the Tennessee Conference is an event or emergency associated in some way with the Church but beyond its control, which can be expected to become public. It presents potential for damage to individuals, or the image of the Church, and hinders the ability to be in ministry.

Media Crises come in several packages:

1. Personnel crisis (clergy, church staff or lay member's misconduct, death, illness or injury)
2. Threatened criminal or legal action
3. Violent acts or demonstrations
4. Corporate crisis (lawsuits against the conference, an agency or institution)
5. Positive crisis (donations exceed what can be handled, etc.)

The purpose of a Crisis Response Plan :

1. Provide compassion for victims and the accused
2. Meet needs of the media

The Tennessee Conference has identified an Immediate Crisis Response Team (ICRT) and a Media Crisis Management Team (MCMT) to deal with a Crisis event.

THIS DOCUMENT DEALS ONLY WITH THE CONGREGATION OF SALEM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH.

The intention of this document is to assist the local congregation in responding appropriately should they be approached by the media during a crisis event. Keep in mind that the local congregation may not be aware of all the facts and may hinder the ICRT and MCMT by repeating rumor or speculation. This could delay or complicate reaching a successful resolution. By adhering to the following suggestions the local congregation can assist the ICRT and the MCMT by communicating only the facts and not rumors or speculation.

Should you be approached by the media:

- Do not answer questions – Refer all questions to the pastor or other appropriate person.
- Don't be hostile
- Don't give your personal opinion
- Don't speak "off the record"
- Don't use the term "no comment"

"Let me refer you to our pastor (or other appropriate person)\_\_\_\_\_.  
He/She can best help you with that information. His/Her phone number is\_\_\_\_\_."

In casual conversation or questions about the crisis:

- Don't speculate, repeat unconfirmed information or express personal opinions
- Don't feel like you have to comment or answer questions.

