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First United Methodist Church of Houston and Affiliates

**Safe Sanctuary and Sexual Ethics
Policies and Procedures**

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I. POLICIES AND PROCEDUES FOR STAFF AND VOLUNTEER WORKERS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

A. PURPOSE OF POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

First United Methodist Church of Houston and its affiliates (hereafter referred to as the “Church”) are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the Church. (The term “Church” encompasses First United Methodist Church of Houston and all its subsidiaries and activities, including Quillian Center and Neighbors In Action). The following procedures reflect our congregation’s commitment to preserving this Church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

The Church hereby establishes these policies and procedures for the prevention of child abuse and/or neglect within children’s and youth programs and activities sponsored and/or supervised by the Church.

The purpose of these procedures is to protect the children and youth who participate in the activities of this Church, especially from the risk of abuse and neglect and to protect the persons who work with children and youth in this Church from the risk of accusation of abuse and neglect and to protect the Church’s integrity both internally and within the community.

1. Applicability of Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures

These procedures shall apply to all activities involving children/youth, which are sponsored and/or supervised by the Church. All workers assigned to such activities by the Church shall comply with and conduct themselves according to this procedure and any related policies and procedures. Any worker failing to comply with or conduct themselves according to these procedures shall be subject to disciplinary action, which may include dismissal from employment and/or work with any child/youth. Any such worker shall also be subject to the church reporting inappropriate conduct to law enforcement, as appropriate.

2. Safe Sanctuary** Definitions Abuse and/or Neglect: See Appendix A for legal requirements.**

Children/Youth: As used in this manual, children/youth shall include all minors from birth through their eighteenth birthday who are engaged in a program or activity sponsored and/or supervised by the Church.

** Safe Sanctuary is an overt expression in making congregations safe places where children, youth, and elders may experience the abiding love of God and fellowship within the community of faith. See Texas Annual Conference United Methodist Church at <https://www.txcumc.org/safesanctuary>.

Safe Sanctuary Worker: As used in this instrument, a Safe Sanctuary Worker refers to a worker who has completed the requirements set forth herein.

Worker: As used in this manual, Worker shall include any person, regardless of age, who performs full-time, part-time work in the Church and has contact with children/youth. This includes paid and/or volunteer work.

3. Authority to Implement and Maintain Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures
These procedures will be implemented and maintained under supervision of the Senior Pastor of the Church and in coordination with the Board of Trustees. Amendments to these procedures may be made from time to time, as necessary, by the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees and other committees deemed responsible by the Senior Pastor will be informed of all amendments and/or revisions.

B. REQUIREMENTS AND STANDARDS

1. Selection and Qualification of Children/Youth Workers

a. Submission of Application

Each person desiring to work with children/youth will be required to complete an application. The application will be completed and returned to the designated Director/Supervisor. All applicants will undergo a background check. At the discretion of the Senior Pastor, interim background checks and substance abuse checks may be done at any time.

b. Screening of Applicants and Workers

Each person completing an application for child/youth work shall be required to undergo a criminal background check and a social security number verification prior to beginning volunteer assignment or employment. These checks will be performed by the Director of Operations or the HR Coordinator and will be retained with the Applicant's signed application in a secure, confidential file.

The responsible Director/Supervisor shall personally interview each applicant and discuss with those persons the information in these policies and procedures.

At the discretion of the appropriate Director/Supervisor references may be requested on any Applicant. A written copy of the reference response and Volunteer Profile is to be kept in the Director's/Supervisor's office in a confidential manner.

Members and volunteers of First United Methodist Church of Houston and Missions (does not apply to Quillian Center or Neighbors in Action

Workers) cannot become a Safe Sanctuary Worker until they have been a member of First United Methodist Church of Houston for a minimum of six (6) months or the appropriate Director or Senior Pastor has secured in writing a statement from the Pastor of the church in which the volunteer was formerly a member that he or she left in good standing, with no concerns or accusations, and had completed the appropriate training at that former church.

c. *Qualifications of Workers*

Any person who has not met all of the background check requirements and/or training requirements may not work with children/youth.

A person desiring to work with children/youth is required to attend a Safe Sanctuary training seminar and sign a Participation Covenant that they will abide by the Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures. All training requirements, including sexual ethics training, will be completed prior to beginning an assignment with children/youth. Any person who has completed all of the application, screening and training requirements will be referred to as "Safe Sanctuary Worker."

Any person who is a survivor of child abuse must meet with the appropriate Director/Supervisor prior to working with the children/youth. The Director/Supervisor, with clergy consultation as needed, shall determine, from the screening procedure and interview, if the Worker may work with the children/youth and any restrictions to that work.

Adult supervision will be required at all times for all Workers under 18.

d. *Prohibited Workers*

Persons having a criminal history of any of the following types of offenses shall not be allowed to serve in any ministry with children and youth as articulated below:

- (a) Persons who have been convicted of, placed on community supervision or probation, deferred adjudication, received pre-trial diversion, pled guilty, pled true, pled nolo contendere, or otherwise found guilty or delinquent of any offense involving child abuse of any kind (whether physical, emotional, sexual, or neglectful) including but not limited to aggravated sexual assault of a child, attempted aggravated sexual assault of a child, sexual assault of a child, attempted sexual assault of a child, indecency with a child, attempted indecency with a child, injury to a child, attempted injury to a child, assault, attempted assault, indecent exposure;

- (b) Persons who have been convicted of, placed on community supervision or probation, deferred adjudication, received pre-trial diversion, pled guilty, pled true, pled nolo contendere, or otherwise found guilty or delinquent of any violent offense including but not limited to murder, aggravated robbery, aggravated sexual assault, sexual assault, assault family violence, assault;
- (c) Persons who have been convicted of, placed on community supervision or probation, deferred adjudication, received pre-trial diversion, pled guilty, pled true, pled nolo contendere, or otherwise found guilty or delinquent of any offense involving impairment and driving including but not limited to vehicular homicide, vehicular assault, or driving while intoxicated within the last five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to act as a driver.
- (d) Persons who have been convicted of, placed on community supervision or probation, deferred adjudication, received pre-trial diversion, pled guilty, pled true, pled nolo contendere, or otherwise found guilty or delinquent of any offense involving drugs within the last five (5) years immediately prior to application shall not be allowed to participate in the event.

2. Rules of Behavior

a. *Team Approach*

Workers, with the exception of the “Parental Permission” exception set forth in Section (c) below, must observe the “Two Adult (non-related)” rule (2 workers per classroom, 2 workers within line of sight). Whenever reasonable, a minimum of two adult (non-related) workers shall be present during any children/youth activity.

Workers shall also follow the three years older rule which requires at least a three-year difference between the ages of the Leaders and the children/youth. The three year differences in ages shall apply between the Leader and the oldest age of the children/youth. Persons being closer in age to the children/youth may be acceptable Assistant Leaders.

In all instances where two adults (non-related) are not present, an “open door” policy will be observed. Any one-to-one mentoring or consulting by a Worker shall be conducted in sight of another Worker. Understanding that there is safety in numbers, one Worker can be in contact with multiple youth (6th-12th grade) so long as he or she is in the line of sight of other Workers.

b. *Restroom Procedures for Elementary Children*

It is recognized by the Church that there are substantially more female Workers than male Workers. Because of the large number of female Workers versus male Workers, it will be necessary for female Workers to take male and female children to the restroom. A male Worker is never allowed to take a female to the restroom. Workers are encouraged to accompany younger children to the restroom, keeping in mind the two adult rule (non-related) and team approach. Only adult Workers may accompany a child to the restroom and, then, only after notifying another Safe Sanctuary Worker. At the teacher's discretion, children in 3rd-5th grade may go to the restroom with a buddy of the same sex.

c. *Host Families*

Host Family is defined as a family that has agreed to host a Church event at their home or at a location away from the Church. Any host family must complete the background check information and be provided a copy of these policies and procedures. A signed agreement from the Host Family stating they have read and will follow these Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures is required. The appropriate Church employee shall distribute and secure the information. No family will be allowed to be a Host Family unless every adult in the family meets the criteria for Workers in these policies and procedures.

d. *Parental Permission*

Workers are to obtain written parental permission prior to spending time with children/youth alone. Verbal parental permission to spend time with children/youth is not allowed. Such Workers should also notify their group leader prior to such a situation: example, mentoring a youth at Starbucks, or picking a child up needs written approval.

Activities involving transportation provided by the church, parents of participating children/youth or Workers, or activities off the church property will require a signed parent permission form to be returned to the group leader prior to the activity. A new signed permission form will be required yearly.

e. *Overnight or Off Church Property Activities*

All overnight or off property activities require the prior permission of the appropriate Director/Supervisor and written permission of the parents.

f. Supervision

All children's/youth activities will include adequate adult supervision from no less than 15 minutes prior to scheduled start until all children/youth are in custody of their parents (or as prior arranged by their parents with a parent permission form). Program Staff and Administrators of the Church, as appropriate, will supervise ongoing programs and may make unannounced visits into classrooms or other program sites.

g. Corporal Punishment

Corporal punishment of any kind is prohibited.

h. Reporting

Any inappropriate conduct or relationship between anyone and a member of any children's/youth group must be reported to the appropriate Director/Supervisor and Senior Pastor immediately and addressed according to the Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures Manual.

C. WORKER TRAINING

All Workers will be required to complete a Safe Sanctuary training seminar. Staff will receive training annually. Volunteers will receive annual training from the age level Directors/Supervisors. Upon being selected for a volunteer or employment position, staff/volunteers will be required to complete Safe Sanctuary training prior to beginning their assignment / employment.

All Workers shall receive annual training on any changes to these policies and procedures and any new information as needed for compliance with the safe sanctuary policies of the Texas Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church. Directors/Supervisors are responsible for the attendance at this training of all Workers in their ministry area.

The training seminar will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- (a) Texas' legal definition of child abuse from the Texas Family Code;
- (b) Written information describing Texas' laws regarding the reporting of suspected child abuse; and
- (c) Identifying child abuse.

All workers will be given a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures Manual, Sexual Ethics Policies and Procedures and be trained in all policies and procedures as related to their ministry area.

Upon completion, each worker will sign a Participation Covenant Statement that they will abide by the Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures Manual, Sexual Ethics Policies and Procedures and that they have received and read the information described above. Workers who have completed all the application, screening and training requirements will be designated "Safe Sanctuary Worker."

D. RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND/OR NEGLECT OF CHILDREN/YOUTH

1. Reporting

When an adult leader of an event or activity suspects that abuse or any suspected violation of the Texas Penal Code is taking or has taken place, the Worker shall:

1. Call 911 if the situation is an emergency.
2. Timely report the suspected abuse to the appropriate local law enforcement agency.
3. Timely report the suspected abuse to the Department of Family and Protective Services (800-252-5400) and report the abuse. This hotline is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.
4. Contact the administrator or event leader immediately, and cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by law enforcement officials or child protective services.
5. Address any needs the child or youth may have, medical or otherwise.
6. Report to the parent(s) and/or legal guardians(s), if appropriate.
7. Notify the Senior Pastor.
8. Carefully document the facts, including but not limited to:
 - a. The name of the adult leader observing or receiving the disclosure of abuse, including the date, time and place and any action taken by this person.
 - b. The alleged survivor's name, age, and date of birth.
 - c. Any statement made by the alleged survivor.
 - d. Name of the respondent, the date, time and place of any conversation or any statement made by the respondent.
 - e. Any action taken, i.e. suspension of the respondent.
 - f. Date and time of call to the appropriate agency, name of worker spoken to, content of that conversation and case number assigned.
 - g. Date and time of call to law enforcement agency, name of officer spoken to and content of that conversation.
 - h. Date and time of any other contacts made regarding this incident.

The person suspected of abuse (respondent) shall, for the safety and well-being of the children or youth, be removed with dignity from further contact with the children and youth until an appropriate investigation has taken place. The matter shall remain confidential. If the adult event leader is the respondent, then the report should be made to that person's supervisor.

Following the report of an incident, the adult event leader, or supervisor in charge shall document the report, and then speak with the alleged survivor, being careful to use open-ended questions.

It shall be the goal to provide supportive care to both the survivor and the respondent and to restore such persons to wholeness. Supportive care can include the procedures of the criminal justice system, provisions of the current Book of Discipline, appropriate counseling referrals and continued pastoral visitation.

Confirmed reports of proven incidents of abuse shall be retained in a confidential file for future screening purposes.

This procedure prohibits retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports allegations of sexual abuse or neglect or assists in investigating charges. Anyone found to have participated in retaliatory actions will be subject to disciplinary action which may include termination as a volunteer or employee of First United Methodist Church of Houston.

II. OTHER PROCEDURES

A. EARLY CHILDHOOD PROTECTION PROCEDURES

These procedures cover the activities in the Early Childhood areas of the Church.

1. Drop Off and Pick Up

All parents or guardians leaving children in the Early Childhood areas shall follow these procedures to assure proper claiming of children. Upon arriving to the Early Childhood areas, each parent/guardian shall check in their child on the computer check in system, which will print an identifying claim tag and a matching child's security label. The tag shall be placed on the back of the child's clothing and the parent/guardian will take the claim tag to use for later picking up the child. Upon pick-up, the parent/guardian will present the claim tag to the Front Desk Staff who will then allow the parent/guardian into the Early Childhood area. Only one parent will be allowed in the classroom at one time. The parent/guardian will go to their child's classroom, and present the claim tag. The EC teacher will verify the claim tag, by matching security codes. The teacher will also give the child's personal items to the parent/guardian. As the

parent/guardian and child exit the Early Childhood area, the Front Desk Staff will take both adult claim tag and child security label, as proof of sign out. No one under the age of 16 will be allowed to pick up any child from the early childhood center at any given time.

2. Personal Items

The parent/guardian should label all personal items for the child, including diaper bags, blankets, clothing, and pacifiers with the child's first and last name. Permanent, waterproof labels are preferred.

It is recommended that no personal toys or valuable items be left at the Early Childhood areas. The Early Childhood areas do not assume responsibility for any personal items left in the Early Childhood areas.

3. Restrictions

Only trained, assigned Early Childhood teachers/volunteers will be allowed in the Early Childhood areas. No other individuals are allowed in the Early Childhood Center without an identified need and the approval of the Early Childhood Director or Early Childhood Coordinator.

No teacher/volunteer may remove a child from the Early Childhood areas.

No one may claim a child from the Early Childhood areas without a claim tag. If the claim tag is lost, only a Director/Pastor may approve release of a child. A picture ID may be required to match the check –in on the computer check in system.

4. Staffing

The Early Childhood areas will follow the team approach. All Early Childhood teachers/volunteers shall be subject to the requirements of the Safe Sanctuary Procedures.

5. Restroom Procedures

It is recognized by the Church that there are substantially more female teachers than male teachers. Because of the large number of female teachers versus male teachers, it will be necessary for female teachers to take male and female children to the restroom. A male teacher shall never be allowed to take a female to the restroom. Only adult teachers may accompany a child to the restroom and, then, only after notifying the area supervisor or other teacher. When a child is going to be left in the Early Childhood areas for only a short time, parents/guardians should be encouraged to take the child to the restroom prior to check-in.

B. TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURES

The following procedures are for providing transportation for children/youth to and from activities sponsored and/or supervised by the Church. These procedures relate to transportation provided by the Church, parents of participating children/youth, and children/youth Workers to church activities off the Church property.

1. Vehicle Requirements

These vehicle requirements pertain to all vehicles owned or used by the Church, including those leased by the Church or provided by parents of participating children/youth, those provided by child/youth Workers and any external commercial vehicle provided for transportation of the children/youth.

All vehicles shall be in good running order and possess a current registration plate, a safety inspection sticker and passenger restraints. All vehicles will have insurance coverage as required by Texas state law. All vehicles will be multi-passenger. No motorcycles, scooters, or mopeds will be allowed. No vehicle will be allowed to carry more than the passenger capacity as specified by the vehicle manufacturer.

2. Qualifications of Drivers

All drivers will be Workers or parents (as qualified by these procedures), parents of participating children/youth or licensed commercial drivers. All drivers will be pre-approved by the appropriate director.

All drivers will have a current valid state driver's license with the classification for the vehicle driven. The age of the driver must be at least 25 and not older than 75. Any exceptions must first be cleared by the CFO/Director or Finance. All drivers who are Workers will be subject to periodic checks of their motor vehicle record. All drivers may be required to provide a copy of a driver's license and insurance policy.

3. General Rules

The use of alcohol, tobacco and any substance that affects driving ability is strictly prohibited. This includes prescription drugs. Unless otherwise approved by the appropriate Church employee and the parents so informed, all transportation subject to these procedures will begin and terminate at the Church property. All drivers will obey all traffic laws, absolutely no speeding or reckless driving is allowed. Failure to do so shall disqualify them from driving for Church related activities. Signed Parent Permission Forms will be obtained from each child/youth prior to being allowed in the vehicle. If the child/youth does not have a completed permission form he/she will not be permitted in the transportation arranged by the Church. The permission forms are to be collected and checked by the group leader prior to leaving the Church property. Upon

return to the Church, the forms will be provided to the appropriate Director/Supervisor.

No driver is to transport any child/youth alone. If possible, the team approach, is to be used, and driver must be the same sex of child unless two people on staff are together. If that is not possible, written permission of the parent and notification of the group leader is required.

Drivers who will transport passengers under the age of 18 must be qualified under the Safe Sanctuary Program. While the vehicle is in motion, driver's use of cell phones, other personal electronic devices and eating are prohibited. Drivers may not drive longer than four (4) continuous hours without a break. Whenever possible, passengers are to load/unload through side passenger doors and on curb side only.

C. PROCEDURES FOR CHILDREN/YOUTH OVERNIGHT ACTIVITIES

These procedures cover children/youth activities, which require an overnight stay and are sponsored and/or supervised by the Church.

1. Applicability

These procedures cover any activity sponsored and/or supervised by the Church, which require an overnight stay. This includes, but is not limited to, camping, lock-ins, hotels/motels, and overnight stay in a personal dwelling.

2. Approvals

A signed Parent Permission form will be required of each child/youth prior to the activity. These will be collected and approved by the group leader prior to the activity. Following the activity, the forms will be given to the appropriate Director/Supervisor. Any overnight activity requires the prior approval of the appropriate Director/Supervisor. Any overnight activity requires that both the host family and the guest family sign permission forms and agree with any rules required on all such activities as well as the team approach

3. Rules of Conduct

All persons are to abide by the procedures of the Safe Sanctuary Policies and Procedures, including the team approach for supervision. None of the children/youth will be allowed away from the designated overnight area without prior permission of the group leader and the parents' signed permission. No child/youth is to be left alone in a room except the restroom. No couple of the opposite sex is to be left unsupervised. Separate sleeping areas will be provided for members of the opposite sex. In hotels/motels and personal dwellings a minimum of three youth to each room with four being preferred. Properly trained workers or approved parents will provide adequate and appropriate

supervision. When staying in a hotel, adults shall sleep in separate rooms from children/youth; or if necessary for children/youth to share a room with an adult, adults shall sleep in separate beds from children/youth so long as any one adult shall not be alone with any one child/youth.

First United Methodist Church of Houston and Affiliates
**Safe Sanctuary and Sexual Ethics Policies and
Procedures**

First United Methodist Church of Houston affirms *The 2004 Book of Resolutions*, Sexual Abuse within the Ministerial Relationship and Sexual Harassment within the Church, which states that sexual abuse within the ministerial relationship and sexual harassment within the church are incompatible with biblical teachings of hospitality, justice and healing. In accordance with *The 2012 Book of Discipline*, 161F, declares all human beings have equal worth in the eyes of God. As the promise of Galatians 3:26-29 states, “you are all God’s children”; therefore, we as United Methodists support equity among all persons without regard to ethnicity, situation, or gender. In our congregations and settings for ministry, we seek to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female, which is free from misconduct of a sexual nature and encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ.

Sexual misconduct within the ministerial relationship involves a betrayal of trust. It is a continuum of sexual or gender-directed behaviors by either a lay or clergy person within a ministerial relationship (paid or unpaid). It can include child abuse, adult sexual abuse, harassment, rape or sexual assault, sexualized verbal comments or visuals, unwelcome touching and advances, use of sexualized materials including pornography, stalking, sexual abuse of youth or those without capacity to consent, or misuse of the pastoral or ministerial position using sexualized conduct to take advantage of the vulnerability of another. It included criminal behaviors in some nations, states and communities.

Sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse and misconduct of a sexual nature within the life of the Church interfere with its moral mission. First United Methodist Church of Houston prohibits and will not tolerate these behaviors, which are sinful, demeaning, abusive and wrong. First United Methodist Church of Houston commits itself to fair and expedient investigation of any complaint of sexual and gender harassment, sexual abuse or misconduct of a sexual nature within the church and to take action deemed appropriate and in compliance with the latest *Book of Discipline*. Further, First United Methodist Church of Houston bears affirmative responsibility to create an environment of hospitality for all persons, male or female, which is free of these sins and encourages respect, equality and kinship in Christ.

Some instances of harassment can be resolved informally by conversation between the parties or facilitated mediation. In all other instances, the conduct must be reported immediately to the chair or another member or the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee (PPRC) and the Senior Pastor in charge. If the conduct involves the Senior Pastor or another clergy person, it must be reported to the pastor’s supervisor, the District Superintendent, or the Bishop.

I. Purpose

First United Methodist Church of Houston and its affiliates (hereafter referred to as the “Church”) is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all individuals who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the Church. (The term “Church” encompasses First United Methodist Church of Houston and all its subsidiaries and activities, including Quillian Center and Neighbors In Action). The following procedures reflect our congregation’s commitment to preserving this Church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others. Definitions (Book of Discipline, 2012)

II. Definitions

Definition of **sexual abuse** is a form of sexual misconduct and occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (lay or clergy, pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader, or other position of leadership) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, coworker, or volunteer (1996 Book of Resolutions, p. 130). It can include coerced or forced sexual contact (including those unable to give informed consent), sexual interaction or contact with children or youth, and sexual exhibitionism or display of sexual visuals or pornography.

Definition of **sexual harassment** is any unwanted sexual or gender-directed behavior within a pastoral, employment, ministerial (including volunteers), mentor, or colleague relationship that is so severe or pervasive that it alters the conditions of employment or volunteer work or unreasonably interferes with the employee or volunteer’s performance by creating a hostile environment that can include unwanted sexual jokes, repeated advances, touching, displays, or comments that insult, degrade, or sexually exploit women, men, elders, children or youth.

Sexualized behavior is behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content. Examples include, but are not limited to, displaying sexually suggestive visual materials; use of pornography in church programs on or with church property, making sexual comments or innuendo about one’s own or another person’s body; touching another person’s body; touching another person’s body/hair/clothing; touching or rubbing oneself in the presence of another person; kissing; and sexual intercourse. Sexualized behavior can be a form of sexual misconduct when this behavior is unwanted by the recipient or witness, is a violation of society’s or the Church’s law, breaks the sacred trust in the ministerial role, or violates the vows taken at membership or ordination.

The continuum of behaviors called sexual misconduct within the ministerial relationship represents an exploitation of power and not merely “inappropriate sexual or gender-directed conduct.” Sexual misconduct in any form is unacceptable in church and ministry settings whether it is clergy-to-lay, lay-to-clergy, clergy-to-

clergy, lay-to-lay, staff- to-staff, staff-to-volunteer, volunteer-to-volunteer, or volunteer-to-staff. Anyone who works or volunteers under the authority or auspices of the Church must be held to the highest standards of behavior, free of sexual misconduct in any form.

III. Reporting

When anyone believes that they have been the victim of sexual misconduct involving a member or employee of First United Methodist Church of Houston, he or she should report the allegation to the respective Director and/or Senior Pastor immediately. In addition, any person who has reason to believe that sexual misconduct by a member or employee of First United Methodist Church of Houston has occurred should promptly report the facts supporting their belief to the appropriate Director and/or Senior Pastor.

IV. Response

The person accused of misconduct shall be notified that there will be an immediate investigation of the allegations.

All Clergy and Staff who are aware of the problem will:

1. Keep the matter confidential and only discuss it with those who have a need to know.
2. Treat each allegation seriously with respect for the privacy of all involved persons
3. Cooperate fully with all investigating personnel.

V. Investigation and Action

An initial investigation will be conducted by the Senior Pastor and the Chairman of the PPRC. They will make certain that all efforts at handling the investigation are documented in writing, including dates and times.

If after the initial investigation there is believed to be justification to proceed further the:

1. PPRC in cooperation with the Senior Pastor will assemble a response team that will investigate the allegation and develop specific recommendations that are appropriate for each case. Investigations involving any clergy shall follow the guidelines from the latest publication of The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church.
2. The allegations will be resolved within the shortest period of time necessary to conduct a thorough investigation.
3. The confidences and sensitivities of all persons involved in the incident will be respected.

VI. Non-Retaliation

This procedure prohibits retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports allegations of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct or assists in investigating charges. Anyone found to have participated in retaliatory actions will be subject to disciplinary action which may include termination as a volunteer or employee of First United Methodist Church of Houston.