

Safe Sanctuaries and United Methodist Congregations

adapted from <https://www.ngumc.org/safesanctuaries>

The General Conference mandate of 1996 requires all United Methodist congregations regardless of size to implement policies and procedures to make sure no harm comes to those under the age of 18 or vulnerable adults while they are in our care and ministry. Every General Conference since 1996 has reaffirmed this commitment.

We promise at every baptism:

With God's help we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal. United Methodist Hymnal, p.44

A congregation's Safe Sanctuaries Policy is one step in fulfilling this promise.

What should churches do to keep participants safe from abuse and workers safe from false allegations of abuse?

We have read and studied [Safe Sanctuaries](#), written by Rev. Joy Thornburg Melton, to guide us through the process. We have recruited a team of church leaders, including Nursery, Children's and Youth staff, age level coordinators, chairpersons from Trustees and Finance committees, educators, attorneys and police persons to write policy and procedures for St John UMC.

As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, St John will:

1. Screen paid and volunteer workers.
2. Implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events.
3. Train paid and volunteer workers regarding policies and procedures.
4. Report suspected incidents of child abuse according to Georgia state law; respond appropriately to both victim and the accused as well as to media inquiries if an incident occurs.

Reporting Abuse

In Georgia, all volunteers and staff members in ministry with children and youth are mandated reporters of child abuse, as are all clergy. Those "having reasonable cause to believe that a child has been abused shall report or cause reports of that abuse to be made ..."

To report child abuse please contact the Department of Family and Children's Services. Call 1-855-GACHILD.

If you believe a child, youth, or vulnerable adult to be in imminent danger call 911.

[Click here to read about Georgia's Child Abuse Reporting Statute](#)

PeopleFacts Powered by Trak-1: Background Checks

The North Georgia Conference has a contractual relationship with PeopleFacts Powered by Trak-1, a national company that provides online training for Safe Sanctuaries and background checks for

staff and volunteers. All records will be housed with PeopleFacts and they will send reminders when re-checks are to be done.

There is online training available that has been created to fill the unique information pertinent to Georgia law and has been provided by Joy Melton, author of all the *Safe Sanctuaries* resources.