

Susquehanna Conference - Safe Sanctuaries Policy for Faith United Methodist Church Montoursville, PA 17754

FUMC desires to be a safe place for all children and adults who attend any activity or ministry. Each year children are victimized by individuals they know and trust. The church is not immune to the potential for such abuse or neglect of children, either by its members or by those in leadership positions. Incidents of child abuse or neglect cut across ever racial, social, economic, and religious boundary. This *Child, Youth, and Worker Protection Policy* reflects our commitment to protect children from harm. The policy applies to all volunteer and compensated workers of FUMC.

FUMC will not tolerate child abuse or neglect. Your cooperation in this policy not only reflects your concern about children's safety in this society, but also your willingness to take steps toward halting child abuse and its detrimental effects.

For the safety and protection of our children and workers, all people who participate in church-sponsored activities with children will be required to comply with this policy.

DEFINITIONS

In this policy the following definitions will apply:

- 1) **Safe Sanctuaries:** In 1996, the General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted the resolution, Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church. This resolution, reaffirmed at every General Conference since then, became the impetus for annual conferences and congregations to develop and implement abuse risk reduction policies. The General Board of Discipleship has identified Safe Sanctuaries as reducing the risk of abuse in the church for children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
- 2) **Child Abuse:** Defined under Pennsylvania's Child Protective Services Law 23 PA.C.S.A §6303(b)(1) to mean any of the following:
 - i. Any recent act or failure to act by a perpetrator which causes non-accidental serious physical injury to a child under 18 years of age.
 - ii. An act or failure to act by a perpetrator, which causes non-accidental serious mental injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
 - iii. Any recent act, failure to act or series of acts or failures to act by a perpetrator, which creates an imminent risk of serious physical injury to or sexual abuse or sexual exploitation of a child under 18 years of age.
 - iv. Serious physical neglect by a perpetrator constituting prolonged or repeated lack of supervision or the failure to provide essentials of life, including adequate medical care, which endangers a child's life or development or impairs the child's functioning.

Section 6303(b)(2) No child shall be deemed to be physically or mentally abused based on injuries that result solely from environmental factors that are beyond the control of the parent or person responsible for the child's welfare, such as inadequate housing, furnishings, income, clothing and medical care."ⁱ

Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law 23 Pa.C.S.A. §6303(b)(3) also provides that, “If, upon investigation, the county agency determines that a child has not been provided needed medical or surgical care because of seriously held religious beliefs of the child’s parents, guardian, or person responsible for the child’s welfare, which beliefs are consistent with those of a bona fide religion, the child shall not be deemed to be physically or mentally abused. The county agency shall closely monitor the child and shall seek court-ordered medical intervention when the lack of medical or surgical care threatens the child’s life or long-term health.”

In *Safe Sanctuaries, Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth*, 2008, Discipleship Resources, Nashville, TN, Joy Thornburg Melton defines and describes five types of abuse:

- i. Physical Abuse is “abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a child. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon (knife, belt, strap, etc.), burning, shaking, kicking, choking, fracturing bones, and any of a wide variety of non-accidental injuries to a child’s body. (Melton 2008, pages 29-30)
- ii. Emotional Abuse is “abuse in which a person exposes a child to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message to the child of worthlessness, badness, and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care. Children exposed to emotional abuse may have experienced being locked in a closet, being deprived of any sign of parental affection, being constantly told they are bad or stupid, or being allowed or forced to abuse alcohol or drugs. Emotional abuse is often very difficult to prove and devastating to the victim.” (Melton, 2008, page 30)
- iii. Neglect is “abuse in which a person endangers a child’s health, safety, or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the child’s self-worth.” (Melton, 2008, page 30) If a parent cannot provide adequate care for a child due to poverty, infirmity, or other disability, their negligence is not legally categorized as abuse, although the neglected person still needs to be cared for.
- iv. Sexual Abuse is “abuse in which sexual contact between a child and an adult (or another older and more powerful youth) occurs. The child is never truly capable of consenting to or resisting such contact and/or such sexual acts. Often, the child is physically and psychologically dependent upon the perpetrator of the abuse. Examples of sexual abuse may include fondling, intercourse, incest, and the exploitation of and exposure to child pornography or prostitution.” (Melton, 2008, page 30)
- v. Ritual Abuse is “abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations of a child are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for the child’s welfare. The abuser may appeal to some higher authority or power to justify the abuse. The abuse may include cruel treatment of animals or repeated threats of harm to the child, other persons, and animals. Reports of ritual abuse are often extremely horrifying and may seem too grim to be true. Children making such reports must not be ignored.” (Melton, 2008, page 30)

3) This policy applies to anyone who is under the age of 18.

- a. **Children:** Birth-5th Grade
- b. **Students:** 6th-12th Grade

- 4) **Special Needs Person:** Any adult or child requiring direct adult supervision as a result of mental or physical limitations.
- 5) **Adult:** Any person age 18 and over.
- 6) **Children's Activities:** Any activity or program in which children are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers.
- 7) **Staff Person:** A person engaged in ministry to children, youth, or vulnerable adults through the Conference or Local Church who: has been screened and trained in *Safe Sanctuaries Policies*; performs tasks specified in a mutually agreed upon job description; and, is accountable to a supervisor for work habits and products.
- 8) **Ministry Team Member:** Any person who supervises a children's activity. This person has regular and direct contact with children, must be an adult and is counted in the 2-adult rule.
- 9) **Volunteer:** Any adult, who assists in conducting children's/youth activities under the supervision of a staff person and/or Ministry Team Member, has regular and direct contact with children and is counted in the 2-adult rule.
- 10) **Helper:** Anyone who aids in ministry and is not counted in the 2-adult rule including youth ages 14 - 18.
- 11) **Staff person in charge of activity:** The church employee responsible for the conduct of this activity. In the case of non-local church programs operating on church property, the duties of the "staff person in charge of the activity" shall be carried out by the non-local church lead staff or volunteer.
- 12) **Mandated Reporter:** An individual paid or unpaid, who, on the bases of the individual's role as an integral part of a regularly scheduled program, activity or service, accepts responsibility for a child. A clergyperson, priest, rabbi, minister, Christian Science practitioner, religious healer or spiritual leader of any regularly established church or other religious organization.

SCREENING FOR VOLUNTEER AND COMPENSATED WORKERS

The following procedures reflect our commitment to provide protective care for all children and caregivers who participate in church-sponsored activities.

1. Volunteer workers must be regular attendees of FUMC for at least six months, or can provide verifiable regular attendance from a previous church by at least 1 member of the senior leadership and one other congregant.
2. All volunteer and compensated workers must complete the following procedures before participating in any church-sponsored children's activities.
 - A. All volunteer and compensated workers must complete a *FUMC Children and Youth Worker Application* form. References will be checked and they must provide information necessary to complete a PA Child Abuse clearance form and a PA criminal history check. If they have lived in PA for less than ten years, an FBI check is required. If they have lived in PA for longer than 10 years, they must submit a notarized affidavit of residency.
 - These clearances must all be renewed every five years.
 - Procedures for obtaining these clearances can be found on our Conference website at <http://www.susumc.org/index.php/about-us/safe-sanctuaries> (Procedures for Volunteer Clearances).
 - Also available in the Church Office
 - B. All volunteers and compensated works should receive Safe Sanctuaries Training. This training must be reviewed every three years.
 - C. An interview will be conducted by the staff person/Ministry Leader who oversees the specific ministry.
 - D. All persons working with children must attend orientation/training activities appropriate to the level of the volunteer or compensated worker.
3. Applicants must sign a written acknowledgement stating they have received and reviewed a copy of the *FUMC Child, Youth, and Worker Protection Policy*.
4. All compensated workers shall be screened by a background check for the purpose of obtaining information regarding criminal history or abuse findings.
5. Individuals who have been convicted of child abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect or ritual) or whose name appears on Megan's List, may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children, youth or vulnerable adults.

Those who have been convicted of either sexual or physical abuse can be forgiven for, and cleansed of their sin. However, sin does have consequences and while such persons may serve in certain other areas of ministry at FUMC, they will be prohibited from serving in the children's and special needs ministries.

6. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant's confidential personnel file. All forms shall be kept in a locked file on church premise. Detailed notes on a designated form shall be for all reference checks, which shall also be included in the personnel file. All applications and related forms must be completed.
7. Non-local church programs shall maintain their own personnel files. The local church reserves the right to obtain an explanation of the non-local church's record-keeping process and, upon written request of the Lead Pastor, to be given copies of documents applicable to programs conducted at the local church.
8. The staff person in charge of the children's activity(ies) is responsible for reviewing this policy with each applicant during an interview prior to service.

GENERAL POLICIES FOR SUPERVISION OF CAREGIVERS

Children's Ministries (Birth – Fifth Grade)

1. Appropriate training is required for all staff/leaders/helpers etc.
2. Caregivers shall not engage in any form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.
3. Two non-related Adult Rule – Minimum supervisory standards will include the “Two non-related Adult Rule” The Two non-related Adult Rule requires that adults be 18 years of age or older. No matter the size of the group, two non-related adults (defined as two adults not residing in the same household) shall be present with participants at all times. These adults shall have completed the ministry screening process. One of the two adults may be a “roamer” who moves in and out of the rooms
4. All activities should occur in open view. Each room or space where activities involving children, youth or vulnerable adults occur shall have visibility from an interior hallway or a connecting room by means of a window, a door with an uncovered window, or an open door.
5. Bathroom Needs. When possible, children will be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs, but should a child require assistance, the outer bathroom door will remain open while a volunteer or staff person assists the child, with an additional volunteer being present. For younger children, assistance will be provided. For elementary-age children, assistance should be limited to unfastening and fastening clothing. If more assistance is needed, parental permission should be received in advance. When accompanying a child to take care of his/her own bathroom needs, the volunteer or staff person will check the bathroom and stalls prior to the child entering the bathroom. Again, the outer bathroom door should be left open. A volunteer (who has not completed the screening process) should **never** provide assistance with bathroom needs. It is encouraged that with youth that there be a buddy system created to help ensure safety.
6. Children younger than 5th grade shall be released to parents or guardians at the classroom doors. Persons other than the child's parents or guardians must be authorized to pick up the child.
7. A positive approach to discipline shall be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits will be established to help the children function appropriately.

8. The Pastor/Director of Children's Ministries must approve any activities held off site. Parent/guardian permission shall be obtained & there shall be a minimum of two adult caregivers present.
9. Organized events on or off site (FUMC) shall be staffed with a minimum ratio of 1:10, adult caregiver to child. Overnight events that are attended by children of both genders must be chaperoned by adult caregivers of both genders.
10. **No child will be left unsupervised** while attending the local church children's activity.
11. Five-Years-Older Rule – Every adult responsible for supervision shall be at least 18 years of age and at least five years older than the oldest child or youth event participant.
12. Accurate participation records shall be maintained for all children's activities. At a minimum, these records should list the date and hours of the activity, its location, the names of the children participating (including whether any were dismissed early and the times of such dismissals), and the names of the adults involved directly in the activity and other supervisors on site that day.

Student Ministries (Sixth Grade – Twelfth Grade)

1. Caregivers shall not engage in any form of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect.
2. Two non-related Adult Rule – Minimum supervisory standards will include the “Two non-related Adult Rule” The Two non-related Adult Rule requires that adults be 18 years of age or older. No matter the size of the group, two non-related adults (defined as two adults not residing in the same household) shall be present with participants at all times. These adults shall have completed the ministry screening process. One of the two adults may be a “roamer” who moves in and out of the rooms.
3. Five-Years-Older Rule – Every adult responsible for supervision shall be at least 18 years of age and at least five years older than the oldest child or youth event participant.
4. Organized events on or off site (FUMC) shall be staffed with a minimum ratio of 1:10, adult caregiver to child.
5. Overnight events that are attended by youth of both genders must be chaperoned by adult caregivers of both genders.
6. A positive approach to discipline shall be practiced. Clear, consistent, age-appropriate limits shall be established.
7. It is recognized that certain counseling and ministerial situations may preclude the presence of two adult caregivers and that the general guidelines for supervision of caregivers should not restrict situations where individual counsel and guidance is necessary. In this case the door must be left open or the window of the door shall remain uncovered or conducted in a public area in plain view of others.
8. For camps, retreats, or similar activities, two adult caregivers shall work as a team when it is not possible to have two adults in the same sleeping room. The team approach shall be encouraged and coordinated by the supervisory staff person.
9. The supervisory staff person shall be aware of and responsible for such activities.

REPORTING SUSPECTED ABUSE OR NEGLECT

A quick, compassionate, and unified response to an alleged or actual incident of abuse is necessary and expected. All allegations are to be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse in a ministry event, the entire staff of that event, paid and/or volunteer, shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies.

A mandated reporter must make a report of suspected child abuse if they have reasonable cause to suspect that a child is a victim of child abuse under any of the following circumstances.

- i.** The mandated reporter comes into contact with the child in the course of employment, occupation and practice of a profession or through a regularly scheduled program, activity or service.
- ii.** The mandated reporter is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child, or is affiliated with an agency, institution, organization, school, regularly established church or religious organization or other entity that is directly responsible for the care, supervision, guidance or training of the child.
- iii.** A person makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that an identifiable child is the victim of child abuse.
- iv.** An individual 14 years of age or older makes a specific disclosure to the mandated reporter that the individual has committed child abuse.

The goal of an immediate response to alleged or known incidents of abuse will be to ensure the safety of the victim and any additional potential victims. In all cases of alleged or actual abuse, professional support is obtained by informing the Police, ChildLine and Abuse Registry, or other appropriate authorities. The parents/legal guardians of the victim will be notified unless they have been named as the alleged perpetrator of the abuse. Pastoral support is sought by informing the Conference Director of Communications, District Superintendent or Pastor, as appropriate.

If the allegation or incident concerns events or persons outside any relationship to a conference and/or local church related event, it is the responsibility of the person who heard the abuse to make the initial contact with ChildLine. The procedures outlined in this section will provide guidance for responses and reporting.

Example: Child, youth, or vulnerable adult telling a camp counselor about abuse by a relative during the prior year. If this report were made to the counselor in the course of his/her duties as a camp counselor, then it is the responsibility of the camp counselor to make the call to ChildLine. The camp counselor may talk with the Camp Dean or Site Director before making the call, asking for support. After making the report to ChildLine, a written report (CY 47 Form) needs to be sent to ChildLine within 48 hours of making the report.

An incident report should be filed with the Site Director as a part of the reporting process.

If the allegation is against or involves a conference staff person, pastor, helper or volunteer, or if it occurred in the course of a conference ministry event, the staff person in charge of the event, the Conference Director of Communications, the Director of Connectional Ministries, and the Dean of the Cabinet shall be contacted immediately to handle communications. Procedures for responding to and reporting the abuse are contained herein.

The Director of Communications of the Susquehanna Conference or his/her designee is the only person/authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements shall be directed to the Director of Communications. Staff persons and volunteers are to be trained in how to handle media requests by referring them to the Director of Communications.

RESPONSE OF FUMC

Care for the alleged victim's safety. Once a child, youth, or vulnerable adult has disclosed alleged abuse, the one to whom the disclosure has been made should reassure the alleged victim of a concern for his or her safety and well-being. They will then make the call to ChildLine. The alleged victim (and any other potential victims if the abuse has allegedly taken place onsite) should be calmly moved to another safe place onsite in view of at least two other non-related adults. Someone safe and familiar should stay with the victim at all times.

Persons who are accused of abuse, if on site, will be immediately and discreetly removed from the ministry setting (both the alleged abuser and the victim to separate locations or areas) until the situation is resolved. This is to protect all persons involved, including the accused. The person to whom the disclosure was made should inform the victim in an age appropriate way that a report will be made to appropriate legal authorities.

Should the victim be in need of immediate medical attention, a call should be made for medical transport by ambulance. The parents/legal guardians of any victim under the age of 18 should be notified. It may not be appropriate to contact the parents/legal guardians if they are the alleged perpetrators of the abuse, in which event the person designated as the reporter should be contacted and should handle contacting the parents/legal guardians when appropriate.

Report the allegations of abuse. The mandated reporter will obtain the information needed for the filing of reports, including, but not limited to, the victim's name and age, the name of the alleged perpetrator, the alleged facts of the abuse, and physical home addresses for the victim and the perpetrator. It is important to let the victim verbalize the allegations in his or her own words, being careful to limit questions asked of children or youth under the age of 18, or to vulnerable adults. If the victim is under age 18, a report should be made immediately to ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313. If the victim is older than 18 years of age or older, a report should be made to local law enforcement directly. It is the responsibility of the mandated reporter to handle these matters in a professional and caring manner. Once the call is made the mandated reporter needs to immediately notify the Site Director who will notify the Director of Camp & Retreat Ministry who will notify the Conference Director of Communication, Conference Legal Counsel, Conference Insurance Director of Connectional Ministries, and the Dean of the Cabinet.

Maintain confidentiality. Allegations are to be discussed only on a need-to-know basis. The person(s) to whom the allegations were disclosed should immediately contact ChildLine giving the details to that person. Other adults onsite should be alerted to stay with the alleged victim and other potential victims. Once the allegations have been reported, the person to whom the allegations were made should not discuss the matter with other persons except law enforcement or designated state investigators. To do so could cause irreparable harm to the victims, their families, and the community.

Handling calls and questions from the media. If a member of the media – newspaper, TV station, Radio station, Magazine – calls or approaches a staff or volunteer in person and asks about the situation, that person should get their name and phone number and respectfully tell them that the Director of Communications will get back to them with the answer as soon as possible. The following “hold response” can be used:

No staff person should answer any questions. The staff person should be polite, but firm. A staff person should **never** simply tell a reporter, “*No Comment*,” as this response raises concern that the incident (alleged or known) is not being dealt with or taken seriously by the church. Nothing is assured to be “off the record” when talking to the media. A staff person/volunteer should realize that any statement made to the media can be used publicly, even if the reporter says it is “off the record.”

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FUMC PASTORAL STAFF

In accordance with the Church's position that child abuse and neglect shall not be tolerated, the pastoral staff shall do the following:

1. Take all allegations of child abuse and/or neglect seriously.
2. Document all efforts while handling the incident.
3. Do not attempt an in-depth investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.
4. Report the incident immediately to the church insurance company and attorney.
5. Do not try to handle this without professional outside assistance.
6. Notify the parents or guardians.
7. Do not confront the accused until the safety of the child or special needs person is secured.
8. Do not prejudge the situation, but take the allegations seriously and reach out to the victim and the victim's family. Showing care and support will help to prevent further hurt. Extend whatever pastoral resources are needed. Remember that the care and safety of the victim is the first priority.
9. Treat the accused with dignity and support. If the accused is a caregiver, that person should be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished.
10. Use the text of a prepared public statement to answer the press and to convey news to the congregation. Be careful to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.

Cyber Safety

The internet, apps, social media & portable devices allow people to stay in contact with each other more easily than at any other time in the history of civilization. Excellent ministry can take place using modern technology, but as with all forms of ministry, there are inherent risks involved with the use of electronic communications.

Assume anything and everything in cyberspace is public information. Here are some recommendations.

Never post easily identifiable information online.

1. If you communicate by e-mail, do not use “broadcast” e-mails. Use the “Bcc” option (blind carbon copy) so that each recipient sees only his or her address when a message is received.
2. Be cautious when transmitting easily identifiable information like event dates, times, locations, or participants.
3. Limit what is communicated in electronic prayer requests. When placing a child, youth, or vulnerable adult on an electronic prayer list, consider using only first names. If someone must know the last name or the mailing address of the individual, have her or him call the office or a designated contact person.

Limit individual communications with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

1. Conduct any communications in a professional manner. (Even though you may be a sounding board for a person having a bad day, the reverse is not true.)
2. Save all communications you have with children, youth, and vulnerable adults (i.e. instant messages (IMs), chat room conversations, e-mails, etc.). An electronic "paper trail" can be important
3. If you are uneasy about any topic addressed in an e-mail or an e-mail in general, send a blind carbon copy to a parent/guardian (if appropriate) or another trusted adult. Honor privacy, but not secrecy.
4. If abuse is divulged electronically, follow standard reporting procedures.

Safety Measures for sharing photos electronically

1. Consider obtaining copyrights for any photo posted directly on a ministry website or shared electronically. Keep in mind that copyright laws are not necessarily universal and can get rather complicated.
2. When posting photos, refrain from using names and never use last names or identifiable information.
3. Check photos for vulnerable/compromising situations and to make sure they uphold your mission. Check to make sure nametags are not distinguishable.
4. Obtain additional permission to use photos elsewhere (i.e. a journal or website, local paper, etc.)

Safety Measure for using social networking sites.

Social networking sites such as MySpace, Facebook, 7Villages, Xanga, Friendster, Plaxo, Twitter, Instagram, SnapChat and others are popular with many people:

1. Set privacy settings to limit who can see your profile
2. Restrict who can be your friend. It is prudent to use judgment in accepting requests from youth.
3. Use higher level security features even if you have a restricted profile (such as requiring your approval of all comments posted to your site.)
4. Do not post anything to your social networking site that you would not want attached to your resume or printed in the church newsletter or bulletin. (The same goes for blogs.)
5. Remove or do not post inappropriate comments, photos, etc.
6. Encourage youth to follow these same guidelines.

Refrain from giving out passwords to conference ministry accounts

FUMC Child, Youth, and Worker Protection Policy

Commonly Asked Questions

Is a criminal background check really necessary?

Sadly, the culture in which we live dictates that we must take drastic preventive measures to protect the children and youth whose care we've been entrusted with. Furthermore, there are litigation issues: A church that hasn't performed background checks faces the risk of catastrophic financial penalties in the event that an allegation of abuse within the church leads to a conviction or out-of-court settlement.

Who needs to submit an *FUMC Children's and Youth Workers Application* and a *Permission to Obtain a Background Check* form?

Any church employee or volunteer who will have direct regular contact with any child or youth (less than 18 years of age), either on or off the church campus, during any church-related ministries must complete a background check

Once I complete and sign these forms, to whom do I give them?

Give your completed forms to the specific Ministry Leader overseeing the area of ministry that is being applied for.

I'm concerned about confidentiality and privacy issues. Who will see my application and more importantly, who will see the results of my background check?

Only those listed above, along with our church's administrative support staff, will see your application the results of your criminal background check. All information will be kept in a secured filing cabinet in the church office.

I am not presently involved in any church volunteer work that involves young people. Should I submit an application and give permission for a background check?

As our church continues to grow, so do our children and youth discipleship ministries. Because the addition of programs to minister to these young people is ongoing, the demand for volunteers is always on the increase. Even though you may not be currently involved in such a ministry, it's a good idea to go ahead and submit your forms now. In the event that you do volunteer work at some point in the future, we'll already have your forms and background check on file.

What is a "US Criminal Record Indicator" database search?

The US Criminal Record Indicator is the most comprehensive and current search available in the United States. The US Criminal Record Indicator database search examines the Department of Public Safety, Department of Corrections, Administrative Office of the Courts, Bureau of Criminal Apprehension, and/or the Department of Criminal Justice files and records, and other applicable government agencies where available. Currently this search includes information from 39 states plus multiple online county records.

Why do I have to list my Social Security Number (SSN)?

A couple of reasons. The first is that your SSN is the primary key for all databases affiliated with a background check. The second reason is that your SSN is used to verify the following crucial information:

- whether the SSN is validly issued
- to whom SSN belongs
- in which year and state the SSN was issued
- the current and other known or previous addresses to that SSN.

The SSN Verification process can reveal that the number belongs to another individual, has more than one name associated with it (i.e., produces other aliases) including maiden and divorced names, is associated with fraud, is not a validly issued SSN, belongs to a deceased person, produces additional addresses not stated by the application/request form, or if that individual has other SSN's.

Anyone can give a false identification by using another person's Social Security number. This search ensures that the individual is who they say they are. The Social Security search is provided in the Basic Search along with the National Criminal Indicator search.

What criteria from the background check will determine whether or not someone is approved for volunteer work? Who makes that decision?

The background check will cite felony and misdemeanor convictions listed in the National Criminal Database Search. The most obvious reason that someone is denied the opportunity to do volunteer work in our church is any prior conviction pertaining to an offense against a child. It's quite unlikely, though, that a person with such a conviction would even submit an application. Misdemeanor convictions, and even some felony convictions, would have little or no negative impact in determining a person's worthiness as a church volunteer. To put it another way, the only determining factor in evaluating someone's criminal record is the likelihood of him or her posing a threat to our young people.

In the event a felony conviction turns up on the report, the Leadership Team of FUMC and ultimately the Lead Pastor will decide whether or not to approve the volunteer for work with children or youth.

Some final thoughts...

Please know that the intent of the background check is to protect the young people in our church... period. Its purpose is *not* to cause you personal embarrassment by dredging up past mistakes or wrong choices.

Regrettably, it's impossible to implement a viable screening plan without a bit of scrutiny into some personal background information.

Throughout the entire process of developing the *Child, Youth, and Worker Protection Policy* for our church, a tremendous amount of concern and sensitivity has been shown in regard to matters of confidentiality. Much effort has been put into implementing screening procedures that limit the number of people who have visible access to private information. Please know that as the screening process evolves over the next several years, your Senior Pastor and Staff Persons will remain committed to the task of administering screening procedures with utmost regard to your privacy.

ⁱ Pennsylvania Child Protective Services Law 23 Pa.C.S.A.6303. Note that this section of state law also provides that, "If, upon investigation, the county agency determines that a child has not been provided needed medical or surgical care because of seriously held religious beliefs of the child's parents, guardian or person responsible for the child's welfare, which beliefs are consistent with those of a bonafide religion, the child shall not be deemed to be physically or mentally abused. The county agency shall closely monitor the child and shall seek court-ordered medical intervention when the lack of medical or surgical care threatens the child's life or long-term health."