



Whitestone Mennonite Church

Safe Sanctuary Abuse and Neglect Prevention Policy

Purpose:

As Christians, we are called to live according to the gospel of Jesus Christ. The New Testament makes clear that as Christians we continue in a covenant relationship with God and the entire community of faith. We must live just and generous lives, following the great commandments set forth by Jesus Christ. Our Christian faith calls us to protect our children and youth. Jesus clearly taught that children are to be included and provided for within the community of faith. Jesus said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it" (Luke 18:16-17). Jesus also said, "And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me" (Matthew 18:5).

Today the church may be the only place where some children find the unconditional love, care, and acceptance they so desperately need to grow, to thrive, and to become faithful people. As Christians, we must take our responsibilities to our children very seriously, always attending to their spiritual growth and nurture. We fail in our responsibilities if we neglect to take adequate precautions against abuse in our churches. It is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk of abuse by following a thorough and practical policy of prevention. If abuse or neglect happens, we know from research that when a person believes the child and cares for the child, it reduces long-term and short-term effects of abuse.

Whitestone Mennonite Church is to be a holy place of sanctuary for the children of God, where all can come together for worship, study, and service with the assurance that they are safe and secure in the community of faith. As a part of the mission and purpose of Whitestone, guidelines need to be established for appropriate behavior for all persons who have dedicated themselves to working with children and youth. Our church should be viewed as a safe haven for all who enter. Whitestone Mennonite Church will not tolerate any form of sexual, physical, verbal, or emotional abuse. This applies to both on and off-campus situations.

Definitions:

Minor	A person under the age of 18.
Physical Abuse	Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to another. This includes any non-accidental physical injury.
Emotional Abuse	Abuse in which a person repeatedly endangers another with spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends the message of worthlessness and being not only unloved but undeserving of love and care.
Sexual Abuse	Any contact or interaction with a minor in which the minor is being used for the sexual stimulation of the perpetrator, the minor, or another person. It includes sexual contact between a person of lesser power and a more powerful person (i.e. adult to minor, older youth to younger). Examples include but are not limited to: fondling, request for sexual favors, intercourse, incest, and the exposure to pornography.
Neglect	Abuse through a deficit in meeting a minor's basic needs, including the failure to provide adequate health care, supervision, clothing, nutrition, or housing, as well as their physical, emotional, social, educational, and safety needs.

POLICY FOR THE PREVENTION OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

All forms of abuse and neglect as stated above are forbidden. This policy applies to everyone who worships at Whitestone Mennonite Church.

Any person who knows of any form of abuse or neglect within Whitestone Mennonite Church or its programs should immediately report it to the state authorities as well as to the Congregational Chair and/or a Pastor.

All individuals desiring to work with minors at Whitestone shall agree to a one-time legal background check. Another background check may be requested by the Overseer of Discipleship at a later date if a volunteer leaves Whitestone for a time and then returns, or if there are any concerns about the integrity of the individual. Any individual convicted of a sexual offense shall not be involved in activities for minors, formal or informal. They will not be allowed any unsupervised contact with minors.

All individuals who work with minors at Whitestone will be provided with education regarding the issues of abuse and exploitation of minors. All individuals who work with minors shall be required to complete a yearly orientation and sign a covenant agreement. This training will be before the beginning of the Sunday School year.

Any persons who have been convicted of a felony, including, but not limited to, assault, sexual abuse, rape, incest, indecency with a child, possession or promotion of child pornography, or abandonment or endangerment of a child, shall not be eligible to work with minors. Persons who have been accused of such incidents shall not be permitted to work with minors until an investigation has been completed. The pastors and elders will establish guidelines by which convicted offenders may worship in our congregation.

Before being allowed to routinely work with minors, volunteers must have regularly attended Whitestone Mennonite Church for six (6) months, and must obtain approval from the program director. Exceptions will be taken into consideration by the Overseer of Discipleship on a case-by-case basis.

Documents and forms to be utilized in the administration of this policy are the following:

- Guidelines for Working with Minors
- Safe Touch Guidelines
- Young Children and Bathroom Use
- Guidelines for Volunteers who Work with Children Birth - Grade 5/6
- WOW/Sunday School Registration and Consent Form
- WOW/Sunday School Discipline Policy
- Mentoring the “Safe Sanctuary” Way
- Youth Leader and Mentor Guidelines
- Plan for Handling Complaints
- Incident Report Form
- Integration of Someone who has Sexually Offended

- Participation Covenant

This policy approved by Whitestone Leadership Team on August 17, 2017.

Guidelines for Working with Minors

Two Adult Rule	As much as practically possible, two or more adults shall be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event, or ministry involving minors. This includes, but is not limited to, the nursery, WOW, Sunday School, Bible Study, Bible Memory, Bible School, and JYF and MYF activities.
Safe Touch Guidelines	Safe touch guidelines shall be followed by all staff and volunteers working with minors. (See attached sheet.) (Teachers of preschool children, also see attached sheets on bathroom use and volunteer description.)
Age Requirements	If a volunteer is under the age of 18, but not younger than 10 years, they shall work under adult supervision. No one under age 23 will be allowed to volunteer with the high school youth. Exceptions will be allowed for those in training for youth ministry who are at least 20 years old. Other exceptions will be taken into consideration by the Overseer of Discipleship on a case-by-case basis.
Advanced Notice to Parents	Parents of minors will be advised of any off-campus activities. Advance notice for a particular activity will be required when transporting a minor by vehicle.
Overnight Youth Activities	Approved chaperones will strive to keep youth in a safe environment at all times. They will monitor situations to preserve the youths' integrity and safety and will inform parents/guardians regarding the itinerary and activities of the trip, and will secure permission for the youth to participate. Adult chaperones may stay in a room with mixed or same gender groups of youth, dependent upon lodging accommodations. Lodging for mixed gender groups will always have at least two chaperones present during overnight stays. A ratio of at least 3 youths to 1 adult is recommended for all lodging situations. Absolutely no one adult with one youth will be allowed.
Mentor/Mentee	A covenant between the teen's legal guardian(s) and the mentor shall be signed stating the agreement to comply with the terms of this policy during all of their activities.
Nursery Volunteers	All nursery volunteers shall sign the covenant agreement to comply with the terms of this policy.

Youth Leaders

JYF and MYF leaders will sign a covenant stating the agreement to comply with the terms of this policy.

Windows

Windows are installed in most doors where activities and/or meetings take place. These windows will remain uncovered. Unless approved for specific purposes otherwise, doors without windows are to be left open at all times.

**Appropriate
Interpersonal
Boundaries**

Adult leaders of children and youth shall set good examples of appropriate ways to relate to each other for our children and youth including, but not limited to, respectful and nurturing behaviors that do not interfere with another's privacy, and attention to appropriate dress, language, and demonstrations of affection and encouragement. Safe touch with a child or youth always involves giving the child or youth a choice, and is initiated by the child, not the adult.

Remember, the Safe Sanctuary policy is not trying to sabotage or shut down any effective ministry. The goal is to keep relationships healthy, encourage appropriate boundary management, protect church workers from accusations, and protect the children and youth from possible misconduct and abuse.

Safe Touch Guidelines

Know your students and their families. The better you know both, the better you can gauge and ask, when appropriate, what their expectations are.

If a questionable situation comes up regarding touch, discuss it with the parents or guardians as soon as possible.

Let children initiate. If they initiate touch, it will be touch with which they are comfortable. If their boundaries seem inappropriate to you, it is fine to use less touch than they offer and gently set limits. Talking to parents or guardians may be appropriate here.

If a hug is offered, use a side hug in a public, interruptible space, such as in the open door following class.

Be sure that safe touch is offered but not insisted upon. Children should be allowed to say no to any touch they do not want. Empowering them to do so will be a protective skill we want them to have throughout life.

Occasionally restraint may be required to keep someone from hurting themselves or others. This can be appropriate. Use physical restraint only when necessary to prevent harm, and bring parents or guardians into the process as soon as possible.

If you are unsure of what is appropriate with a child, ask. You can discuss it with parents or guardians, or you may consult an elder or a pastor.

Do not use corporal punishment even in times of restraining a child. If discipline is needed and you are unsure of what nonviolent limit-setting techniques would work, consult an elder or a pastor.

If you see touch between children or youth that is inappropriate, intervene. Inform caregivers, especially when it appears that one participant was not consenting.

Pray for each of the youth or children in your charge that they may be loved and nurtured in healthy relationships and that God will guide you in being one of those healthy relationships. When you meet with the children or youth of this church, imagine that you are meeting with Jesus and treat them accordingly.

Young Children and Bathroom Use

Church nursery workers and preschool Sunday School teachers need to be educated about appropriate touch and boundaries with young children and educated on protocol for bathroom use. In a like manner, parents of young children need to be educated on what they can do to encourage a safe environment. Here are a few guidelines to consider:

- Develop procedures for bathroom use. Teachers, nursery workers, and helpers, determine the safest way of helping children use the bathroom. Ideas: tell another teacher/assistant where you are, leave door to bathroom partly open while in use, ask child if they can take care of everything by themselves; ask child to tell you when they are done with clothing pulled up, make sure hands are washed thoroughly, never touch a child in private areas, if there is an accident, get a parent.
- Communicate with parents. Talk to each parent about "bathroom protocol." Ask them for suggestions on how they want trips to the bathroom handled. Tell them children in your classroom need to take care of their own bathroom needs. Show them locations of bathrooms in the church.
- Request that parents dress their children in clothing that the children can handle themselves. Elastic waist pants and skirts can be easily pulled up and down by very young children. If the clothing is complicated (bows, ties, buttons), it may increase the chances of an accident (takes too long to undo the clothing) and it increases the amount of touch and assistance an adult must provide.
- If a child becomes agitated at using the bathroom alone or with you near, go and get the parents. Tell parents this is what you will do.
- If a child has disabilities or special needs, the bathroom protocol may be different, so talk with the parents on what they suggest.
- Know the indicators of child abuse and be prepared to report it to authorities. At times, these indicators are discovered as a child uses the bathroom.

Guidelines for Volunteers who Work with Children Birth - Grade 5/6

Report to Nursery Coordinator, Primary Sunday School Planning Team, WOW Director, Bible Memory Coordinator, Bible School Coordinator

Duties of volunteers:

- Provide physical, emotional, and intellectual support and instruction to each child in your care, as appropriate for the circumstances.
- Provide appropriate guidance to each child in your care.
- Develop a relationship of trust and continuity with the children in your care, which will enhance each child's development of positive self image.
- Provide support and assistance to parents when they arrive with their child.

Performance expectations of volunteers:

- Be punctual. Notify the coordinator in advance if you must be late.
- Be reliable in your attendance. Notify the coordinator in advance if you must be absent.
- Attend periodic training and education events provided by the church.
- Be polite, friendly, and courteous to others, both children and adults.
- Do not engage in physical punishment of any child.
- Cooperate with other staff/volunteers and with parents.
- Abide by and apply the policies of Whitestone Mennonite Church at all times.

Whitestone Mennonite Church
WOW/Sunday School
Registration and Consent Form
Phone 620-327-4123

Page 1 of 2

Child's name _____ Birthdate _____

Age _____ Current grade in school _____

Complete address _____

Home phone _____

Father's name _____ Cell _____

Mother's name _____ Cell _____

Email address _____

Emergency contact person different from Mom or Dad (in Hesston or within 10 miles of Hesston):

_____ Relationship to child _____

Emergency contact cell phone _____ Home phone _____

List any allergies your child has (bee stings, food, etc.) with instructions for care in case of a reaction:

Check below any health condition that this child has ever experienced or is currently being treated for, including pertinent details:

asthma epilepsy/seizures heart trouble diabetes physical disability

List and explain any other health issues that your child has experienced or is currently experiencing:

I give my permission for my child's photo/video/quotes to be taken and used for church related publicity.

_____ Yes _____ No

If a field trip is planned which is not on church property, communication via note, email, text, or phone call will occur prior to the event.

WOW/Sunday School pledge:

We are beloved children of God.
We respect each other and ourselves.
We help each other to learn.
We care for our church building.

Behavior Expectations for WOW/Sunday School:

- Listen to adults. Adults will also listen to you.
- Follow directions.
- Treat everyone with respect. We are all made in God's image.
- We walk in the building.
- Please stay with your group.
- If you need to use the bathroom, please ask an adult for permission.
- Stay in the areas of the church building where you're supposed to be.

Student signature or printed name _____

Date _____

For the parent(s)/legal guardian(s)

I/We, the undersigned, have legal custody of the student named above, a minor, and have given our consent for him/her to participate in WOW (Whitestone on Wednesdays) and/or Sunday School, ministries of Whitestone Mennonite Church. I/We understand that there are inherent risks and possibility of bodily and/or emotional injury in any activity or event. I/We hereby release Whitestone Mennonite Church, its pastors, employees, and volunteer workers from any and all liability for any injury, loss, or damage to person or property that may occur during the course of my/our child's involvement. If he/she is injured and requires the attention of medical personnel, I/we consent to any reasonable treatment as deemed necessary by medical personnel. I/We acknowledge that I/we will be ultimately responsible for the cost of any medical care if it is not covered by my/our health insurance.

Parent signature _____

Parent printed name _____ Date _____

Discipline Policy
WOW/Sunday School
Whitestone Mennonite Church

All people are made in the image of God. All people deserve to be treated with respect and dignity.

1. The first time a child disrupts class, talk quietly with the child and remind him/her of the classroom expectations.
2. If the child disrupts class again, talk individually with him/her (maybe in the hall).
3. If the child continues to disrupt class, call or text a member of the WOW/Primary Sunday School planning team.
4. The planning team member will escort the child from the classroom, and the child will be given some time to think about acceptable alternative behavior/choices.
5. If the child is willing to cooperate, the child will return to the classroom. If not, the child's parents will be notified.
6. If the child's parent is notified, the parent will be expected to sit with the child for the rest of the WOW/Sunday School time that day or to pick up the child from WOW/Sunday School at that time.
7. The child will be welcome at WOW/Sunday School the next week again.
8. If the disruptive behavior continues from week to week, the child, teacher, parent(s), and a planning team member will meet to create a plan of action to correct the problem.

August 1, 2017

Mentoring the "Safe Sanctuary" Way

Congregational mentoring programs are designed to nurture a spiritual friendship - one youth to one adult. How does the mentoring relationship fit with some of the procedures that Safe Sanctuary policy suggests? The "rule" that two adults be present at every event where there is youth or children's ministry may frustrate mentors as they plan times with their mentee. Also in question may be conversations/counseling within the mentor/mentee relationship conducted in isolation. At first glance, it may seem that the mentoring ministry of a congregation is not appropriate, because often the mentor pair is alone yet we would all agree that healthy relationships, spiritual conversations, and trust are a big part of youth ministry and about nurturing faith between youth and adults.

Here are some ideas that will reduce the risk of both accusations and abuse:

- Host Mentor/Mentee gatherings in groups. All mentor pairs are invited to a time at the church or some other public setting where they will engage together in group activities. While there, they could break into pairs and discuss, pray, etc.
- Keep parents in the loop when you are with your mentee. Make sure the parents are informed about pickup and drop off time, where you will be going, and how you will get there. If you are running late on the way home, you or the youth should phone. *Don't go by the phrase "better to ask forgiveness than permission" with regards to informing parents.*
- Be at public places with your mentee. Avoid places where you are isolated. Overnighters with just the two of you are off limits. Public places would be concerts, sporting events, shopping, parks in daylight.
- If your mentee comes to your home, another adult should be present - a spouse, friend. Keep your conversations and activities in full view of other family members; do not sequester yourself in a family room and close the door.
- Mentors, just like youth pastors and youth leaders, should undergo training on appropriate language, boundaries, and touch issues. Those educated on these issues understand the risk factors and will make better decisions about what is appropriate.
- Consider your own motivation for being a mentor. Make sure you have their best interests in mind and design your time together for healthy interaction.

Youth Leader and Mentor Guidelines

- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall not be in a private place or in any room alone with a youth. Be in interruptible places.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall not visit with youth at a home alone.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors should avoid being alone in a vehicle with a youth when possible. Possible strategies when this is not possible include: meet at a public place, call or text parents with anticipated arrival/departure times, keep parents informed of meeting time and travel arrangements, ask parents for permission before traveling with youth, etc.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall not share any sexual content, such as in magazines, movies, music, video games, etc. with youth.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall never discuss their own or another's sexual life.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall not tolerate jokes, teasing, or roughhousing based on sexual orientation.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall never provide youth with alcohol, tobacco products, or drugs.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall not partake of alcohol, tobacco products, or drugs in the presence of youth.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall not comment on development, bathing suit, body, or attractiveness to others.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall encourage appropriate clothing at all times and settings.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall be punctual beginning an activity and ending it. Youth Leaders shall be in the youth room before any JYF/MYF arrive.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall limit touching to handshakes, pats on the back, and the occasional requested hug, which shall be limited to side hugs. Touching on the bottom is never appropriate. Be careful with roughhousing, wrestling, etc.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall give youth appropriate personal space when spending time with them.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall respect bathroom/showering privacy of youth on retreats, etc.
- Youth Leaders and Mentors shall follow Whitestone's Safe Sanctuary policy and report abuse to the proper authorities immediately, using the "Incident Report Form" and following the guideline: "A Guide to Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect in Kansas" from the Kansas Children's Service League, found on the Kansas Department for Children and Families website.

Social media

- Be careful with communication with youth on social media.
- Include parents when texting/emailing youth.
- Do not use private messaging or snapchat with a youth.

Plan for Handling Complaints

If there is any suspicion of abuse or neglect, or if a minor discloses abuse to you, believe the minor and make a report immediately to Department of Children and Families. Do this by calling the Kansas Protection Report Center (KPRC) at 1-800-922-5330 or emailing DCF.KSPRC@ks.gov. or calling the police (911). Cooperate with professionals who conduct the investigation.

Immediately after contacting the authorities, notify any member of the Whitestone Pastoral Team and/or Congregational Chair and fill out the "Incident Report Form." Leadership will refer to and follow MCUSA policy and guidelines.

Every written report shall contain, if known, the name and address of the minor and the minor's parents/guardians, the minor's age, the nature and extent of the minor's injury (including any evidence of previous injuries), and any other information which the writer of the report believes might be helpful in establishing the cause of the injuries and the identity of the person(s) responsible for the injuries. Every report shall be signed by the writer of the report.

The highest reasonable degree of confidentiality will be maintained while facts are being gathered. Keep in mind that leaked information can hamper the investigative process and create more trauma for the minor involved. Leadership will share information with the congregation when appropriate, after the DCF has come to investigate.

The church shall fully cooperate with the DCF and Law Enforcement personnel, and the church will consult with legal counsel.

The pastoral team, an elder, or a person appointed by the elders will take leadership in promptly attending to the victim and his or her family's safety and needs, and shall find an outside agency, like a child advocacy center to work with. Every attempt will be made to keep the victim's needs at the center of any process, and to keep the victim and offender separated during the investigation.

The pastoral team, an elder, or a person appointed by the elders will take leadership in offering care to the alleged offender and family. The accused individual(s) shall immediately be relieved of all duties that would place them in direct contact with minors until the investigation has been completed. The accused individual shall be asked to stop attending worship, WOW, Sunday School, and other church functions that involve minors in the interest of providing a safe space for the alleged victim until the investigation and any subsequent actions are completed.

If the allegations of abuse are found to be unsubstantiated by the investigative body, by the DCF and/or law enforcement, the person(s) may be reinstated to his/her previous role(s). The Pastoral Team will enter into a restoration process with the individuals involved in an effort to bring healing and restoration to all. In addition, the Elders shall be fully informed and shall be authorized to make a determination regarding the future role in the congregation of the person formerly charged.

Steps will be made promptly to plan for a response to the media if the circumstances suggest that media will become involved. Contact with the media should be made through only one contact person, as designated between the lead pastor and Congregational Chair. This is imperative so that the church can emphasize its position on abuse, express concern for the victim, and explain the specific steps the church is taking to address the present occurrence to reduce the risk of future incidences, and provide a safe environment for others.

The congregation shall be advised of the investigation as appropriate and will be informed of any aspects of the situation which do not require confidentiality, so that the congregation will be informed from within the church rather than from the news media or other outside sources.

To aid in healing within the Whitestone community, informational meetings may be held, with time for questions and answers. In addition, small group gatherings with pastors present may be offered to allow people to voice how they are affected.

If you observe something regarding the care of our children and youth at Whitestone that concerns you, please tell a pastor or elder, even if it seems relatively minor. Since you will be establishing relationships with the children or youth at Whitestone, it is possible that a young member will come to you to talk about abuse that is happening to him/her outside of the church. Use this policy as a guide for handling this type of situation. Consultation with the pastor may be your first step.

Each situation will be handled individually, and this policy shall serve as a guideline for any action that may or may not be taken.

Whitestone Mennonite Church Incident Report Form

Date Incident Occurred: _____ Time _____

Date Incident Reported to Church: _____ Time _____ To DCF _____ Time _____

To Law Enforcement: _____ Time _____ Location of Incident: _____

Incident Reported by: _____

Other Witness(es): _____

Type of Abuse (See Safe Sanctuary Policy for definitions.)

Verbal Physical Sexual Emotional Neglect

Name of person abused: _____ Age: _____ Date of birth: _____

Address of person abused: _____

Parent or legal guardian of minor: _____

Address of parent or legal guardian: _____

Nature and extent of injury: _____

Evidence of previous injuries: _____

Do or did injuries require medical attention: _____

Name of person(s) accused: _____

Describe situation in detail (use additional paper if necessary): _____

Signature

Date

Integration of someone who has sexually offended

An accountability group of at least 3 persons shall be formed to support and work with an individual who has sexually offended and is participating in the life of the congregation. This group shall include a pastor, an elder, and a professional or someone with experience working with sexual offenders. This accountability group shall work with the individual to develop a protection plan that will be shared with the congregation.

This document from Dove's Nest may be consulted when developing the protection plan: "Protection and Inclusion: Guide for Churches on Safely Including Persons Who Have Committed Sexual Offenses" (found at dovesnest.net)

Parents of minors will be notified if there is a registered sex offender who is a regular participant in congregational activities. New families must be notified within two months of beginning to attend church.

Participation Covenant

The congregation of Whitestone Mennonite Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth and adults who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The Safe Sanctuary Policy demonstrates our congregation's absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all persons worshipping here. We want our church to be a safe and holy place for all who gather here. We want all people to experience the love of God through healthy relationships and interactions with each other.

Therefore, as a participant in the Christian community of faith, I hereby pledge to conduct the ministry of the Gospel in a way that assures the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth, as well as all the workers with children and youth, and to that end I specifically herein covenant and agree:

- I am a representative of God and the church, and as such I am to be an agent of healing and redemption. I am aware that sexual exploitation or abuse of all persons and especially children and youth is an abuse of trust, an abuse of power, and an abuse of the authority of my position of service. I accept my unique responsibility to maintain appropriate boundaries within these relationships.
- I will abide by all church policies, including the Safe Sanctuary Policy, regarding working in ministries with children and youth.
- I will participate in yearly training and education events provided by the church as they relate to my volunteer role.
- I will promptly report abuse or inappropriate behavior according to the Safe Sanctuary Policy.
- I will disclose if I have ever been or am ever convicted of child abuse.
- I understand and agree that pursuant to the terms of the Safe Sanctuary Policy, a background check will be requested. I further understand and agree that a copy of this disclosure and any personal information contained herein or obtained as a result of a background check will be confidential and stored online in a secure and restricted location. Such information will be disclosed only under the terms of the Safe Sanctuary Policy.

I have read this Participation Covenant and been trained on the Safe Sanctuary Policy, and by signing this covenant, agree to observe and abide by the policies contained herein.

Printed name

Signature

Date

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