Addendum to the Sample Church Safe Sanctuary Policy

Church Participation by a Registered Sex Offender

The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church declare: “We recognize that family violence and abuse in all forms – verbal, psychological, physical, sexual – is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the Church to provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the victim. While we deplore the actions of the abuser, we affirm that person to be in need of God’s redeeming love.”

Sample Church and all churches are faced with a dilemma in our attempt to be faithful to both of the last two sentences above. Assuring the safety of the children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our care, our facilities and our programs is a sacred duty. We must weigh that duty in the balance with what often seems the conflicting value of participation in the life of the church by a convicted abuser. Being part of a worshiping community is not the only way for a person to experience God's redeeming love, but it is an important one.

A convicted and/or registered sex offender who wishes to be part of our church community should expect to have conditions placed on his or her participation. In order to be faithful to the Social Principles’ commitment both to safety from abuse and ministry with abusers, Sample Church requires a covenant be agreed to and signed by the offender, the clergy, and the chairperson of the church council. While confidentiality of victims should be respected, the covenant should not be secret. Monitoring of the covenant should be taken seriously as a permanent responsibility.

The covenant shall include the following:

* The offender shall actively participate in a professional counseling throughout the duration of your involvement with the Church. We value the holistic well-being of individuals and recognize that counseling is one way to care for a person.
* Church leaders may contact the offender’s probation/parole officer and others assigned to work with the offender.
* Church leaders may tell others in the congregation about the offender’s conviction if necessary.
* The offender shall have adult “covenant shepherd” to accompany the offender at all times while on church property or attending church activities that are off of the church property. The “covenant shepherd” is important to reduce the opportunity for false allegations and to ensure the safety of the children and youth. A “covenant shepherd” is an adult of the same gender who is an approved and trained volunteer of the church.
* Upon arrival at church, the offender shall report to the Church Office where you will sign-in and wait for your “covenant shepherd” to accompany you to your destination. Once your worship experience or business is complete, you shall return to the Church Office to sign out before leaving the church property. The “covenant shepherd” accompanying you will initial both the signing in and out. If the church office is locked and your “covenant shepherd” is not available to meet you, you are to immediately leave the church property.
* Specific areas of the church facility that are “off limits” and/or specific areas of the church facility where the offender is allowed (for example, the offender is allowed in the sanctuary, narthex/lobby behind the sanctuary, hallway outside the chapel, Fellowship Hall, one-person restroom. The following areas are “off limits”: any area that is specifically being used for a ministry with children and/or youth, restroom limitations.
* The offender is welcome to participate in worship on Sunday morning and in adult faith formation opportunities as long as he or she is accompanied by his or her covenant shepherd. The offender may not have any leadership in or on behalf of the church for at least one year of active church participation. After that time, the offender, clergy, and church council chairperson may meet to agree on additional ways that the offender may participate in the life of the church (never related to children, youth, or vulnerable adults).
* Any church sponsored activity help off-site from the church property shall be approved by the clergy and church council chairperson prior to participation and be accompanied an adult “covenant shepherd”.
* The offender may not, at any time, have any role whatsoever as a leader, volunteer, or member, that would include contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
* Terms of this covenant will be reviewed with your probation/parole officer, sex offender treatment provider and any other person involved in your after-care or treatment prior to your involvement with the church.
* In the event that the offender fails to comply with any part of the plan, then his/her participation in the congregation will no longer be accepted and his/her probation/parole officer will be notified.

This covenant must be clearly put in writing for the offender, signed by the offender, the clergy, and the chairperson of church council. In addition, it must be provided to the probation/parole officer of the convicted offender. This covenant must be monitored on a regular basis, which means an in-person, documented meeting with the Church Council Chair, Clergy, Covenant Shepherds, and Offender on a monthly basis or as determined by the Church Council Chair and Clergy for the well-being of the children, youth, vulnerable adults, the congregation, and the offender.

An example covenant is included on the next page.

EXAMPLE COVENANT

Sample United Methodist Church

Covenant with Registered Sex Offender

A convicted and/or registered child sex offender who wishes to be part of our church community should expect to have conditions placed on his or her participation. In order to be faithful to the Social Principles’ commitment both to safety from abuse and ministry with abusers, Waterford Central United Methodist Church requires a covenant be agreed to and signed by the offender, the clergy, and the chairperson of the church council. While confidentiality of victims should be respected, the covenant should not be secret. Monitoring of the covenant should be taken seriously as a permanent responsibility.

The covenant shall include the following:

* *The offender* shall actively participate in a professional counseling throughout the duration of your involvement with the Church
* Church leaders may contact *the offender’s* probation/parole officer and others assigned to work with *the offender*.
* Church leaders may tell others in the congregation about *the offender’s* conviction if necessary.
* *The offender* shall have adult “covenant shepherd” to accompany the offender at all times while on church property or attending church activities that are off of the church property. The “covenant shepherd” is important to reduce the opportunity for false allegations and to ensure the safety of the children and youth.
* Upon arrival at church, *the offender* shall report to the Church Office where you will sign-in and wait for your “covenant shepherd” to accompany you to your destination. Once your worship experience or business is complete, you shall return to the Church Office to sign out before leaving the church property. The “covenant shepherd” accompanying you will initial both the signing in and out. If the church office is locked and your “covenant shepherd” is not available to meet you, you are to immediately leave the church property.
* *The offender* is allowed in the sanctuary, narthex/lobby behind the sanctuary, hallway outside the chapel, Fellowship Hall, accessible restroom next to the main kitchen. The following areas are “off limits”:, any area that is specifically being used for a ministry with children and/or youth, restroom limitations.
* The *offender* is welcome to participate in worship on Sunday morning and in adult faith formation opportunities as long as he or she is accompanied by his or her covenant shepherd. The *offender* may not have any leadership in or on behalf of the church for at least one year of active church participation. After that time, the offender, clergy, and church council chairperson may meet to agree on additional ways that the offender may participate in the life of the church (never related to children, youth, or vulnerable adults).
* Any church sponsored activity help off-site from the church property shall be approved by the clergy and church council chairperson prior to participation and be accompanied an adult “covenant shepherd”.
* *The offender* may not, at any time, have any role whatsoever as a leader, volunteer, or member, that would include contact with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
* Terms of this covenant will be reviewed with *the offender’s* probation/parole officer, sex offender treatment provider and any other person involved in *his/her* after-care or treatment prior to *his/her* involvement with the church.
* In the event that *the offender* fails to comply with any part of the plan, then his/her participation in the congregation will no longer be accepted and his/her probation/parole officer will be notified.

This covenant must be signed by the offender, the clergy, and the chairperson of church council. In addition, it must be provided to the probation/parole officer of the convicted offender. This covenant must be monitored on a regular basis, which means an in-person, documented meeting with the Church Council Chair, Clergy, Covenant Shepherds, and Offender on a monthly basis or as determined by the Church Council Chair and Clergy for the well-being of the children, youth, vulnerable adults, the congregation, and the offender.

Signatures:

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*The offender* Date

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*Clergy* Date

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*Clergy* Date

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*Chair of Church Council* Date