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RESOURCES for Weekday Preschool Ministry Programs

Safety, Policy, and Administration

- **Childcare and the Church**
  This is the official document of the United Methodist Church that outlines the church’s responsibilities in initiating, encouraging, and participating in the highest quality of child care for children and families, not only in the local community but also nationwide.

- **Safe Sanctuaries**
  This UMC mandate is an overt expression of a congregation in making a congregation a safe place where children and youth may experience the abiding love of God and fellowship within the community of faith.
  [http://www.gbod.org/site/c.nhLRJ2PMKsG/b.5709637/k.7766/Annual_Congress_Contacts.htm](http://www.gbod.org/site/c.nhLRJ2PMKsG/b.5709637/k.7766/Annual_Congress_Contacts.htm)

- **Legal Manual of the UMC**
  This Manual is a byproduct of the General Council on Finance and Administration’s responsibility to protect the legal interests of the denomination. Its purpose is to provide basic information about legal issues common to organizations throughout The United Methodist Church.

- **Managing Ministry Risk in Preschools**
  UM Property and Casualty Trust [PACT], Insurance Protection for Ministry offers quick and efficient resources that support creating a safe space for everyone. These include Managing Risk in Daycare Centers, Safe Playgrounds, and Screening Workers.

- **The Visionary Director: A Handbook for Dreaming, Organizing, and Improvising in Your Center**
  Margie Carter and Deb Curtis
  The director’s leadership is the primary nutrient for growing a quality program. This on-line resource will contribute to the ability of directors to summon the resources and skills to be visionary leaders for their programs.
  [http://clas.uiuc.edu/fulltext/cl02291/cl02291.html#1](http://clas.uiuc.edu/fulltext/cl02291/cl02291.html#1)

- **Certification Guidelines for Weekday Preschool and Kindergarten Programs**
  Certification guidelines developed by the Preschool Directors Association of the North Georgia United Methodist Annual Conference
RESOURCES for Weekday Preschool Ministry Programs

Preschool Curriculum and Resources

- **Wonder-filled Weekdays**
  Developmentally appropriate, learning through activities while offering Biblical reference and prayers [Abingdon Press] – [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com)

- **Creative Curriculum Program**
  A research-based system that offers early childhood educators a comprehensive collection of resources to help them build high-quality programs – [www.teachingstrategies.com](http://www.teachingstrategies.com). Many UM preschools use this curriculum and incorporate faith development through resources like *Seasons of the Spirit* or *Toddlers and Twos* – [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com)

- **High Scope Curriculum**
  A research-based program based on teaching and learning through hands-on experiences. It includes curriculum for infants through k-5, and is flexible enough for multi-age grouping. Music, movement, and literacy are important components – [www.highscope.org](http://www.highscope.org)

- **Basics of Developmentally Appropriate Practice: An Introduction to Teachers of Children 3 to 6**
  Based on what the research says about development, learning, and effective practices, as well as what experience tells us about teaching intentionally, DAP articulates the principles that should guide our decision making. Chapters describe children from birth through age 8 in detail, with extensive examples of appropriate practice for infant/toddler, preschool, kindergarten, and primary levels. Written by Carol Copple and Sue Bredekamp – [www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

- **Development through the Lifespan [chart]**
  This chart outlines twelve different stages of development in several different areas.
RESOURCES for Weekday Preschool Ministry Programs

Faith Formation and Chapel Time

- **Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children’s Spiritual Lives** by Karen Marie Yust
  Drawn from a three-year study of children’s spirituality, as well as the best in theological tradition and literature, Real Kids, Real Faith provides insight and a variety of helpful tips for nurturing children’s spiritual and religious formation. In addition to its wealth of practical advice on how to engage children in authentic faith practice, Real Kids, Real Faith helps parents identify their own important role in a child’s deepening life of faith. This book forges a path for a child’s spiritual life and invites parents to share the journey.

- **Sacred Circle Time** by Leanne Ciampa Hadley, First Steps Spirituality Center
  - Stream *Sacred Circle Time* Webinar
  - Download *Sacred Circle Time* Webinar

Simple Activities

- **101 Great Games for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers: Active, Bible-Based Fun for Christian Education** by Jolene L. Roehlkepartain - [www.cokesbury.com](http://www.cokesbury.com)

- **Unplugged Play** by Bobbi Conner - [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)

Organizations and Agencies

- **United Methodist Association of Preschools-Florida** – information and support in the area of accreditation for preschool ministry [www.umapfl.com](http://www.umapfl.com)

- **Zero to Three** – National Center for Infants, Toddlers, and Families – provides free resources for parents and caregivers, and research in the area of child development

- **NAEYC** – National Association for the Education of Young Children – promotes excellence in early childhood education

- **GBOD** – General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church – provides resources, training, and support for leaders in children’s ministries – contact Melanie Gordon mgordon@gbod.org
RESOURCES for Weekday Preschool Ministry Programs

- Council for Professional Recognition – Child Development Associate [CDA] National Credentialing Program
**Director Self-Evaluation**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School Year</th>
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*Please rate yourself for each of the following questions using the scale below, and then make an appointment with the Pastor to discuss your evaluation.*

1. **never**
2. **rarely**
3. **some of the time**
4. **most of the time**
5. **always**
N/A **not applicable**

**Church/Preschool Relationships**

— I see the Preschool as a Christian ministry for Jesus Christ, and as a part of the Christian Education of the Church.

— I facilitate mutual and prayerful support of the Church and preschool, as well as activities in ministry to the community, such as __________________________________________________________________________

— I ensure that spiritual expression is a part of every meeting.

— I uplift the ministry of the preschool to the Church congregation, through newsletter articles, bulletin boards, media, and brochures, etc.

— I uplift the ministry of the Church to the parents and preschool staff.

— I am part of the Church Staff

— I am an active member of the Administrative Board and other relevant Church committees.

— I support the Pastor
Director Self-Evaluation

— I am in consultation with the Nominating Committee for the selection of Advisory Board Members

— I route information for decision-making through the appropriate Church committees after approval of the Advisory Board.

  — Overall policy through Administrative Board

  — Coordination with other church activities through the Council of Ministries

  — Budget and salary planning, as well as financial agreement for sharing preschool income through Finance

  — Approval of hiring preschool staff through Staff-Parish

  — Facility related issues and maintenance through Trustees

— I facilitate church members’ active participation in the life of the preschool through

— I encourage and facilitate staff’s attendance at professional and spiritual conferences

— I have a commitment to pursue continued training in the field of children’s programs and spiritual growth

— I help ensure that students are taught respect for God’s House and other people’s property

— I manifest a concern, respect, and love of children
**Growing People**

**Children**

— I help ensure a warm and loving atmosphere where children interact, laugh, etc.

— I know the children and what is happening for children in the program.

— Careful records are kept on each child to monitor social, emotional, physical, and cognitive progress and well-being.

— The curriculum is working well. I constantly monitor its effectiveness and work with staff to change it to meet individual needs and diverse personalities and situations.

— As is required by law I know the indicators of abuse and neglect and report all suspected cases. I train and support staff in the same.

— Information and suggestions regarding good nutrition are offered to parents.

**Parents**

— Parents have several opportunities to attend Orientation Programs at the beginning of each school year.

— Parents are made to feel free to spend a few moments at drop off and pick up times to talk with the director or with their child’s teacher. They are comfortable enough to ease the transition and share information.

— I am able to answer questions, address concerns and refer parents to other professional services as needed.
Director Self-Evaluation

— Parent education happens informally in day-to-day interactions and formally through center events, meetings, conferences, and workshops which the director plans, conducts, and/or advertises.

— Parents have opportunities to evaluate the program.

Staff

— I give the staff support, information, and guidance. I know how to be there for them as a person and yet maintain a professional relationship.

— The staff and I work well as a team. We know how to work out differences and when to laugh.

— In hiring, training, and working with staff, I build on each person’s strengths, allow for individual differences, and help each person grow beyond their weakness.

— I encourage staff to visit other programs, to attend conferences and workshops.

— Training is provided through regular staff meetings and frequent observations, and informal feedback.

— I know when to intercede and when to watch from the sidelines.

— Opportunities are given for staff to evaluate themselves, the director and the program.

Director

— I feel a sense of accomplishment in what I am doing and I accept the difficult challenges.

— I take time for myself, both to be alone and to be with my family and friends. The commitment I have made to my job is not all-consuming.
Director Self-Evaluation

— My meetings with other directors, both informally and through conferences and workshops, give me opportunities to vent my frustrations, renew my commitment, and adjust my perspective.

— I keep well informed on child care issues through professional reading and through participation in community, state, and national activities.

— I pray regularly for the church and school ministries.

Growing an Organization

— The Learning Center is in compliance with state and local laws for licensing.

— The daily flow of activities and responsibilities is effective and flexible—it seems to work well for us.

— UMAP an NAEYC standards are met.

— Emergency plans of action are clear to everyone.

— The facility is inspected both indoors and outdoors to make sure that it is a safe, comfortable, pleasing place for adults and children to spend their days together.

— Record-keeping systems are efficient and up to date on vital information regarding staff, children, families, finances, evaluations, etc.

— The program philosophy guides decision making. There is a sense of history, of continuity here. It is clear what we stand for.

— My responsibilities and the expectations of others are clear.

— I am comfortable with my ability to delegate meaningful tasks.
— When I need help, I do not hesitate to ask for it. I know where to go for help.

— I know where our program is going. We have a long-range plan.

— The plan is altered as conditions require.

— From year to year the organization operates on a fiscally sound basis.

— Enrollment patterns are continually monitored for the purpose of programming and budgeting.

— Staff and Parents are kept well-informed. It is seldom heard, “I never knew” or “Why didn’t you tell me?”

— Happenings within the community are monitored so that we will be well prepared to guide the program into the future.

— The program is well respected in the community. People turn to us as experts in issues relating to children and families.

— I know my role as an advocate for children’s issues and see myself as a leader in the community.

I feel that my weaknesses are:

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I feel that my strengths are:

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My professional goals for next year are:

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The goals for the school for next year are:

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**Director Self-Evaluation**

Reflection on the past year:

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_________________________  ___________________
Signature                   Date

Reviewed by_______________________________  Date_______

Results will be reviewed with Director on:

Date_______

Signatures of those present for Review:

_________________________  Date_______

_________________________  Date_______

_________________________  Date_______
Staff Self-Evaluation

Please rate yourself for each of the following questions using the scale below. Then make an appointment with the Director to discuss your evaluation.

1 never
2 rarely
3 some of the time
4 most of the time
5 always
N/A not applicable

Responsibilities to the Children:

— Use consistent, appropriate and positive discipline techniques according to our discipline policy

— Observe, record, and report significant individual and group behavior, progress and unusual incidents of students

— Provide opportunities for prayer and Christian education through play activities, songs, worship, bible stories and pictures that are age appropriate

— Provide opportunities consistently to develop a positive self-concept as a child of God and a person of value

— Provide opportunities to know the creative power of God as they experience and enjoy the world in which they live

— Treat each child with dignity and respect
Staff Self-Evaluation

— Encourage pro-social behavior and help children deal with anger, sadness, and frustration by comforting, identifying, reflecting feelings, and helping children use words to solve their problems.

— Prepare a warm and safe environment that is orderly, clean, and appealing and permits the child to grow and explore

— Interact with the children and encourage their involvement in activities

— Operate the classroom in compliance with all child care licensing standards paying particular attention to ensure that standards prohibiting corporal punishment are obeyed

— Decorate the classroom using children’s art work, posters and other appropriate early childhood materials

— Modify the environment, schedule, and activities to meet children’s special needs

RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE PARENTS:

— Establish good communication with parents through verbal contracts, written notes, and planned conferences.

— Provide opportunities for parents to participate in classroom activities, programs, projects, etc.

— Treat parents with respect and as partners in their child's educational experience.

— Protect the health and safety of each child as a parent would their own child.

— Talk positively about children's family, and provides opportunities for sharing about cultural holidays and heritage.

— Report eating and napping habits to parents as needed.
Staff Self-Evaluation

— Welcome the children in the morning to facilitate smooth separation from parent.

— Respect the privacy of parents by keeping confidential any private family matters which the parent or child divulges.

— Respect the parents’ right to decide what is right for the child [When this is in direct conflict with school policy, explain tactfully and refer matters to the director if there is still disagreement].

RESPONSIBILITIES TO ADMINISTRATION:

— Prepare weekly lesson plans based on a yearly curriculum.

— Inform administration of developments with children and parents.

— Attend teacher meetings and/or evening staff meetings, and special evening programs.

— Inform administration of a need for new equipment, repairs and supplies needed.

— Keep medical reports current.

— Attend classes, workshops, and training opportunities for personal and professional growth.

— Arrive at work on time and has consistent attendance.

— Explain the program in your area to visitors.

— Act in a professional manner at all times.
Staff Self-Evaluation

I feel that my weaknesses are:

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I feel that my strengths are:

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If I were the director for a day, I would:

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My goals for next year are:

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Suggestions for our school:

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Reflection on the past year:

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Signature __________________________ Date __________
An *Ecclesiastical Covenant* is defined as a solemn agreement between the members of a church to act together in harmony with the precepts of the gospel.

Development of a covenant for a weekday preschool ministry program and a United Methodist Church should be written jointly. The document should clearly express the common relationship and maintain the integrity of each of the two bodies. Negotiation of understandings and wording should happen in good faith keeping in mind the need for clarity.

**People of the Covenant**

- The Pastor
- Preschool Staff
- Office and Church Staff
- Board of Trustees
- Staff-Parish Relations Committee
- Finance Committee
- Sunday School Teachers who share the space

**Contents of the Covenant should include the following:**

- Common statement of the importance children and families as well as the need for ministry with them on behalf of the church and the weekday preschool ministry program
- Relationship connections between the preschool ministry and the congregation including staff and congregational responsibilities
- Avenues and terms of Communication
- Clarity on “In Kind” gifts from one to the other
- Clarity on a mutual financial commitment
- Clarity on sharing facilities, equipment, furnishings and supplies
- Process for making changes in the covenant
- Signatures of church and weekday preschool officials
- Set date of the initial covenant, and dates of additional changes
Board of Directors of a Weekday Preschool Ministry Program

Serving on the Board of Directors

The Advisory Board of the Weekday Preschool Ministry Program should be comprised of six to nine voting members, including a certified teacher, an attorney, an accountant, and parents/guardians of young children. These should include members and non-members of the church.

Ex-Officio members of the Advisory Board should include the Preschool Director, the Christian Education Director, the Pastor, the Church Business Administrator, the Church Finance Committee Chairperson, the Board of Trustees Chairperson, and a representative from the Staff/Parish Relations Committee.

Take a look at the makeup of the congregation. Churches are filled with people who, in their daily lives, practice the skills needed to establish a weekday ministry.

- Are there community leaders who know the needs of the surrounding area?
- Are there educators who are well-versed in developmentally appropriate practice in early childhood education?
- Are there parents who are looking for a program for their own children?
- Is there an accountant to help with financial information, tax issues, salaries and benefits?
- Is there an attorney who is knowledgeable in the area of liability?
- Are there others in the church who feel strongly about the need for a weekday ministry?

Of course all of these people are not present in every church, nor may they all need to participate in meetings of the board of directors. However, the areas of interest represented by these people will need to be continuous points for communication with the weekday preschool ministry program. The church staff should be represented through the director or other designated staff member at all board meetings.
Healthy Church/Preschool Relationships

Keeping the Lines of Communication Open

Please note that the word Preschool will be used throughout this document as an inclusive term for any weekday program in the church, i.e. morning preschool, full day child care, parents’ days out, after school care, etc.

PHILOSOPHY

- The Church and Preschool see the Preschool as a ministry, and as part of the Christian Education of the Church.

- The Church and Preschool have agreed to a Mission Statement or Written Agreement that defines child care as ministry. It includes purpose, philosophy, and whom the program serves, as well as the congregational role. This document has been approved by the Church’s Administrative Council.

- There should be regular meetings between preschool and program staff of the church to discuss the ways in which ministry can be shared. These gatherings should be a time of spiritual sharing, planning, and celebrating.

STRUCTURE

- The State Child Care Protection Policy is accepted, implemented, and publicized to both the congregation and parents. All church and preschool staff have been instructed and have signed the policy concerning Child Protection.

- Church counseling services (when available) and pastoral ministries are available to Preschool parents.

- The Pastor uplifts the ministry of the Preschool to the congregation.

- The Director uplifts the ministry of the Church to the parents and Preschool Staff.

- The Director and staff are recognized and treated as members of the Church Staff.

- The Director is an active reporting member of the Administrative Council.

- The Director and Pastor have a mutually supportive relationship.
Healthy Church/Preschool Relationships

- The Preschool has an Advisory Committee, the majority of whom are Church Members, and who are nominated and elected by the Annual Church Charge Conference. They include:
  - Representatives from Christian Education, Finance, Staff-Parish, and Trustees
  - Church member representing the congregation
  - Preschool parent from each age group, including church members, and non-members

- The Advisory Committee meets regularly with the Director and Pastor. Designated church staff members are invited as ex-officio members.

- Board members are a real link between the committees they represent and the Advisory Committee, so they are able to share information, as well as to advocate for the ministry.

GROWING HEALTHFULLY

- When things are going well, you are thinking of ways to make things better.

- When difficulties are encountered, the director, pastor, staff and church committees work together constructively and respectfully to resolve problems.

- The Preschool Director is proactive in giving reports to appropriate church committees.

- Preschool Staff and the Christian Education Department work together respectfully, recognizing that space and materials need to be shared and mutually cared for.

- Preschool and other ministries of the church work together cooperatively, to insure that all programs and ministries receive needed consideration of resources and space.

- Children are taught respect for God’s house and the property of others.
Guidance for Leaders:

A lock on the gate of the playground with only the preschool director or the chair of trustees holding the key, or a needed space for the nursery on Sunday that remains dark and locked because the weekday preschool director does not want the church to “mess with her space”. How do these scenarios exemplify Christian community?

There are several places that we can look to for our responsibility to our children. Jesus passionately spoke of the importance of refraining from being a “stumbling block” in the formation of our children. John Wesley encouraged ministers to visit children in their homes. The *UM Book of Discipline* and the *UM Book of Resolutions* address how we are to care for the children entrusted to us.

Given these examples, what is the answer to the long asked question of shared space between the weekday preschool ministry and the Christian education staff within the church? Healthy Communication – coming to the table. We can write policies, conduct meetings, and stake out territory, but if we are not communicating with one another all of those actions are moot and sometimes destructive.

Questions to consider:

How are we continually looking at ways to improve communication and relationship between preschool staff members and the church education staff?

What mechanisms do we have in place to bring people to the table to constructively work through issues regarding use of space? A covenant?

What policies do we have in place to allow ongoing communication concerning issues around space between the Preschool Director and church committees?

How do we communicate with one another so that there is more of a focus on community rather than individuality?

What budget process do we have in place to adequately maintain ongoing ministries given varying economic climates?

How do we set an example for children through our actions and decisions on shared space?
Dear Parents,

We feel that good communication between home and school is critical to providing the best nurture and education for your child. Please take a moment to fill out this questionnaire so that we may better serve your family.

What have you seen in your child’s classroom recently that you liked?

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Have you seen anything that you disliked? Please explain.

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How has your child’s teacher helped you most?

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Parent Evaluation

Is there anything you feel should be done by your child’s teacher or administrative staff that is not being done? Please explain why.

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Are your child’s most important needs being met satisfactorily? If not, please explain.

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What do you dream for your child?

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Please return to your child’s teacher. If you would like a conference with your child’s teacher or the administration, please contact us and set up a convenient time.
Scriptural Support for Learning Centers

These examples lay a foundation for integrating scripture into learning centers. Seek additional scripture that supports each of these areas, and create learning centers to accompany scripture.

- **Housekeeping Center**

  *Luke 15.8*
  “Or what woman having ten silver coins, if she loses one of them, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it?”

  *Jeremiah 29.5*
  “Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce.”

  *Luke 10.40*
  “But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.’”

- **Block Center**

  *1 Chronicles 22.19*
  “Now set your mind and heart to seek the Lord your God. Go and build the sanctuary of the Lord God so that the ark of the covenant of the Lord and the holy vessels of God may be brought into a house built for the name of the Lord.”

  *Ecclesiastes 3.3a*
  “a time to break down, and a time to build up”

- **Manipulative Center**

  *Matthew 7.13-14*
  “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”
Scriptural Support for Learning Centers

- **Music Center**

  Psalm 100.1-2
  “Make a joyful noise to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness; come into his presence with singing.”

  Psalm 49.4
  “I will incline my ear to a proverb; I will solve my riddle to the music of the harp.”

  Psalm 92.1-4
  “It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praises to your name, O Most High; to declare your steadfast love in the morning, and your faithfulness by night, to the music of the lute and the harp, to the melody of the lyre. For you, O Lord, have made me glad by your work; at the works of your hands I sing for joy.”

  Psalm 47.1
  “Clap your hands, all you peoples; shout to God with loud songs of joy.”

- **Science Center**

  1 Corinthians 4.1
  “Think of us in this way, as servants of Christ and stewards of God's mysteries.”

  Ecclesiastes 1.5-7
  “The sun rises and the sun goes down, and hurries to the place where it rises. The wind blows to the south, and goes round to the north; round and round goes the wind, and on its circuits the wind returns. All streams run to the sea, but the sea is not full; to the place where the streams flow, there they continue to flow.”

- **Art Center**

  Jeremiah 18.3-4
  “So I went down to the potter’s house, and there he was working at his wheel. The vessel he was making of clay was spoiled in the potter’s hand, and he reworked it into another vessel, as seemed good to him.”

  Ecclesiasticus 38.29 [Apocryphal]
  “So it is with is the potter sitting at his work and turning the wheel with his feet; he is always deeply concerned over his products, and he produces them in quantity.”
Scriptural Support for Learning Centers

- **Outdoor Center**

  *Matthew 13.1-9*
  "That same day Jesus went out of the house and sat beside the sea. Such great crowds gathered around him that he got into a boat and sat there, while the whole crowd stood on the beach. And he told them many things in parables, saying: ‘Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!’"

  *Genesis 1.29-31a*
  "God said, ‘See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food.’ And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good.’"
Safe Playgrounds

The church children and neighborhood were fortunate to have a generous donor who donated funds for the church to build a new playground. Volunteers from the men's group had spent several weekends installing the equipment. It had only been in use for a month when one Sunday, during children's hour, the kids were released for part of the class time to go outside and enjoy the refreshing spring weather.

In less than two minutes after turning them loose, a loud cry rang out. One of the children had fallen from the top level of the equipment and lay motionless on the ground. The emergency squad was called. Luckily, before they arrived, the boy was conscious and alert. To be safe, they took him to the hospital for observation and he was later released.

When church leaders began to ask questions, they realized that no one had really taken steps to follow basic guidelines for installing and maintaining the play equipment. In this case, no protective surface was considered and, therefore, had not been installed.

According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, each year more than 200,000 children go to U.S. hospital emergency rooms with injuries associated with playground equipment. Most injuries occur when a child falls from the equipment onto the ground. Use this simple checklist to help make sure your local community or school playground is a safe place to play.

In several states and jurisdictions, there are very specific laws relating to installation and maintenance of playgrounds. In some cases plans must be approved and the playground and equipment must be inspected by authorities before they may be used.

However, in most places, very few regulations exist, especially when it comes to private playgrounds (e.g. churches, homes, etc). As a result, many times the installation is not well-planned and the playground and equipment not adequately maintained. Therefore, churches should take extra steps to make sure that they are meeting acceptable standards when it comes to playgrounds and equipment.

While there are many areas to be considered, the following basic guidelines are recommended:

- Make sure surfaces around playground equipment have at least 12 inches of wood chips, mulch, sand, or pea gravel, or are mats made of safety-tested rubber or rubber-like materials.
- Check that protective surfacing extends at least 6 feet in all directions from play equipment. For swings, be sure surfacing extends, in back and front, twice the height of the suspending bar.
- Make sure play structures more than 30 inches high are spaced at least 9 feet apart.
- Check for dangerous hardware, like open “S” hooks or protruding bolt ends.
- Make sure spaces that could trap children, such as openings in guardrails or between ladder rungs, measure less than 3.5 inches or more than 9 inches.
- Check for sharp points or edges in equipment.
- Look out for tripping hazards, like exposed concrete footings, tree stumps, and rocks.
Make sure elevated surfaces, like platforms and ramps, have guardrails to prevent falls.

Check playgrounds regularly to see that equipment and surfacing are in good condition.

Carefully supervise children on playgrounds to make sure they’re safe.

**Inspections**

Churches, made up mostly of volunteers, find it more difficult to stay diligent with inspections. Therefore, it is critical that someone, as part of their job description, be charged with either doing the inspection or making sure it is completed. Document the inspection and place the form in a file.

**Access**

Church leadership will need to discuss their views on when and to whom the playground is accessible to. Is it for church children only? If so, can they play on it when there are no adults around to supervise? If it is open to the public, are their liability issues that need to be discussed with the church’s insurance agent? If it is to be off-limits to the public, is signage or a fence going to be needed?

**Communication**

Leadership, parents and even neighbors should understand the guidelines for the playground area. Get input and make a decision and stick to it. Address concerns and violations quickly and fairly.

While a playground may be viewed as a great way to reach out and be a part of the neighborhood and community, careful planning, assembly, inspection and use is vital to the ongoing success of such a project. For more extensive information or for a project of larger magnitude, a visit to the internet or the services of a contractor may be in order.

**Teaching Children About Playground Safety**

Safe playground equipment and adult supervision are extremely important, but that is only half of a successful playground safety program. Children need to know how to be safe and act responsibly on a playground.

Here are some general rules to teach the children:

- Never push or roughhouse on jungle gyms, slides, seesaws, swings, and other equipment, play responsibly:
- Do not wear bike helmets when playing on playground equipment, take off your helmet
- Use playground equipment that is age appropriate
- Use equipment properly. Slide feet first, don’t climb outside guardrails, no standing on swings, one child to a swing/seat, sit facing one another on a seesaw, etc.
- If you jump off equipment, make sure that you check to be sure there are no other children in your way. When you jump, land on both feet with knees slightly bent
- Leave bikes, backpacks, and bags away from the equipment and the area where you are playing so that no one trips over them and falls
- Playground equipment should never be used if it is wet because moisture causes the surface to be slippery
- During the summertime, playground equipment can become uncomfortably or dangerously hot, especially metal slides. Use good judgment - if the equipment feels hot to the touch, it is probably not safe or fun to play on
- Don’t wear clothes with drawstrings or other strings at the playground. Drawstrings, purses and necklaces could get caught on equipment and accidentally strangle a child
- Wear sunscreen when playing outside, even on cloudy days, so that you don’t get sunburned

There should always be an adult supervisor present when you are playing. If you see an unsafe act or condition, report the unsafe act or condition to the supervisor!

For additional information

Please refer to Sample Policy 15 in the PACT Safety Manual, or log on to http://www.cpsc.gov/cpscpub/pubs/327.html

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More and more children have working parents. As a result, the need for quality child daycare centers is on the rise. In response to these needs, many churches have established child daycare centers as part of their call to ministry. The centers become vital and necessary components of their service to the local community.

Whether a child daycare center is operated directly by a local church, a subcontractor of the church, or a separately incorporated entity using the church to provide space for its operation, it is in the interest of everyone involved to see to it that the center is operated properly. The health, safety, and welfare of the children must be ensured.

The Risks
Child daycare centers increase the risk of liability to local churches. Any time an entity invites members of the public onto its premises, it has increased responsibility for the protection of those invited. The responsibilities are even greater where children are involved.

Physical injuries to children attending child daycare centers could range from minor cuts and bruises to more serious injuries, such as broken bones and concussions. Falls, electric shock, food poisoning, or the spread of communicable diseases could be seen as attributable to a poorly supervised operation, an unsatisfactory environment or a combination of those factors.

Abuse, whether sexual or otherwise, is a problem. We continue to hear publicity about cases of child abuse by daycare workers, including charges that some of these workers were not adequately supervised or screened prior to hiring.

The Legal Requirements
Local churches contemplating child daycare, either directly or through a third-party contractor, should become aware of state and local laws and regulations. The centers may need to be licensed, certified, registered or approved according to individual state laws. City and county laws, ordinances and regulations may also apply. Competent legal counsel should be engaged to draw up the necessary documents ensuring that the child daycare center will operate in accordance with those laws and regulations.

Where local churches are contracting out the operation of child daycare centers, they should be certain that the operator has complied with the relevant laws and statutes. Written certification of their compliance should be required. The operators should maintain adequate insurance coverage to protect the local church and themselves in the event of claims arising out of the center’s operation, and supply evidence of this insurance to the church.

The contract between local churches and the child daycare center operator should clarify that the contractor is responsible for all hiring, supervision of staff, supervision of children, and other aspects of the child daycare center operation.

The local church should ask its legal counsel about the advisability of a hold harmless clause in the contract.

“The health, safety, and welfare of the children must be ensured.”
CHILDREN’S SAFETY CAN BE ENHANCED BY EVALUATING SEVERAL CONCERNS:

Health and Safety of the Children
Proper and careful attention to the health and safety of children attending child daycare centers will go far toward minimizing potential liability exposure for any physical or medical problems that may arise. To assist in this:

- Every child/applicant should be required to have a complete annual physical, including immunizations, eye and hearing tests before being accepted by the center.
- Staff members should include a trained nurse or at least have first-aid training. First-aid supplies should be available.
- A procedure for emergency medical care should be established and understood by staff and parents.

The center should maintain on file the parents’ work phone numbers, written authorization from parents for emergency medical care, copies of children’s medical records (noting any allergies) and the names and phone numbers of family physicians and dentists.

- The child daycare center should ensure that:
  - All daycare toys and furnishings are in proper repair.
  - The toys and equipment are age appropriate.
  - Toys, furniture, and equipment are stacked so that they will not become unstable and fall on children.

The child daycare center should be properly sanitized.

- Clean the toys and furnishings, and have the washroom facilities disinfected regularly.
- Have proper disposal facilities available and safe-handling procedures in place for soiled diapers.
- Have first-aid supplies readily available for emergency use.
- Have procedures in place to avoid disease transmittal from treating wounds.
- Take great care in proper and safe storing of cleaning supplies, insecticides, matches, power tools, and any other hazardous materials. Such materials should be stored in child resistant, locked enclosures, away from play area.
- Use extra care in proper and safe storage of supplies utilized by the children, such as paints, crayons and the like. Such items must be nontoxic.
- Select toys and other play materials with sufficient attention to safety factors, including the degree of supervision required when children are using the toys and play materials.
- Prepare nutritionally sound meals and snacks; make adequate provision for proper storage/refrigeration and for the maintenance of sanitary kitchen facilities, utensils, and food storage areas.

Security During Hours of Operation
- Access to the building and grounds where child daycare center activities take place should be restricted to authorized personnel. Great care should be taken to prevent children from wandering away from the activity areas.

- A Release Procedure should be established to provide for pickup of children by authorized persons only. Parents should be required to fill out forms and indicate who is authorized to pick up a child when a parent is unable to do so. The center should never allow children to be released to anyone except parents or guardians, or authorized persons, without prior written authorization. Most centers also establish strict rules regarding the time by which all children must be picked up.

Child Daycare Center Staff
Staff Selection. The first line of defense against potential legal liability from child daycare center operation is proper staff selection. Staff members (whether employees or volunteers) should be carefully screened prior to hiring. References, background, and prior employment history should be obtained, examined and verified prior to engaging a staff member. Pre-employment and annual physicals should be required. This ensures that the staff members are physically able to undertake the strenuous job of adequately supervising children and reduces the potential spread of a communicable disease.

Educational and Professional Requirements
Careful attention should be given to the educational and professional requirements for staff members. The professional staff of the child daycare center generally consists of a program director, teachers and assistant teachers. Many centers engage additional professional consultants who are available part time. This additional support may include access to physicians, nurses, social workers and psychologists. Churches using third-party daycare providers should satisfy themselves beyond any doubt that the professionals operating such centers are qualified.

Previous experience, professional qualifications and licensing history should be examined carefully. Knowledge of past violations of laws by a prospective daycare provider should be brought to the attention of all responsible parties. Assurances should be obtained that such violations will not take place in the
future. If the local church is not satisfied with the assurances given, another provider should definitely be sought.

Volunteers and Auxiliary Help
Many child daycare centers use unpaid volunteers and other auxiliary help. Application screening should be the same as for full-time professional staff.

Where the use of volunteers is appropriate they should be carefully trained and properly supervised.

Additional information on volunteer and employee background checks can be obtained in Ministry Protection Memo – Screening Volunteers and Paid Staff Workers with Children and Youth.

Staff Administration
Checklist for Administrators
- Evaluate screening and hiring practices, including volunteers.
- Review staff training procedures.
- Implement thorough staff supervision procedures.
- Evaluate supervision of activities at and away from the church-sponsored entity.
- Routinely document all personnel processes.
  - Hiring
  - Incidents
  - Probations
  - Dismissals
- Develop procedures with the help of local church and conference committees.
- Ensure that actual practice reflects written policies and procedures.

Checklist for Local Church, District, and Conference Groups
- Learn to identify potential problems in advance.
- Ask the District Superintendent to help develop procedures to: a) handle allegations; b) handle known incidents; and c) handle offenders.
- Prepare to work with parents and children in the event of an incident.

Use a Staff-Child Ratio
The use of a staff child ratio is important. The ratio of staff to child should be carefully controlled, especially when very young children are involved. In the past, The National Safety Council (NSC) recommended the staff child ratio and maximum group size outlined in the table below. As the NSC no longer does this, the following listing is therefore only a guide. Check with local authorities for current standards in your area. You may find that your state standards are stricter.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of Children</th>
<th>Minimum Ratio Professional Staff to Children</th>
<th>Maximum Number of Children in Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 – 2 years</td>
<td>1 : 4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 – 2 ½ years</td>
<td>1 : 6</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ½ - 3 years</td>
<td>1 : 8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 – 4 years</td>
<td>1 : 13</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 – 5 years</td>
<td>1 : 17</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 – 6 years</td>
<td>1 : 17</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 years / over</td>
<td>1 : 18</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Building and room inspections should be undertaken at regular intervals** to check on the condition of ceilings, walls, floors, floor coverings, lighting, and general housekeeping. Any stairs in the center areas should have anti-slip treads and child-high handrails. Electrical wiring, switches, and outlets should be covered with safety caps when not in use.

**Gates should be installed on stairwells and on windows that are accessible to children.** Exterior grounds, walkways, and stairs should be free from recognized trip and fall hazards.

**Outside playgrounds should be provided with fences.** These fences should not be climbable.

**Playground equipment and toys should be kept in good condition** and free from projections and sharp edges.

Transferring Children
Where daycare centers are involved in transporting children, churches should monitor vehicle and driver condition and performance.

Specific written permission for children to travel on field trips should be obtained from parents or guardians. Information about each trip should be provided in order to give parents or guardians a full understanding of the trip.

Proper attention should be paid to state requirements for child safety seats when transporting children.

Drivers should be properly licensed, qualified and trained in rules of child behavior and in emergency procedures.

The operators should maintain adequate insurance coverage to protect the local church and themselves in the event of claims arising out of the center’s operation.

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July 21, 2010

MINISTRY PROTECTION MEMO

SCREENING CHILDREN AND YOUTH WORKERS

The widespread tragedies of the abuses of children, youth, and vulnerable adults by church employees and volunteers have received massive media coverage over the past decade. These tragedies are not confined within any single denomination or church organization. We can cite known examples involving perpetrators who work in schools, camps, and churches. For us, in the United Methodist Church, we must ask not, “If it happens in our church . . .?” but, “When it happens in our church, what will we do?” Because child abuse happens every minute of every day, the most important questions for church leaders to answer is, “How must we work to prevent abuse of children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our ministries?”

CHURCHES ARE VULNERABLE

Church schools are vulnerable to potential sexual abuse and other forms of child abuse. Most church sponsored programs rely on a strong and large group of volunteers for leadership. Often, only minimal screening of volunteers occurs. Some of the programs have used teenagers as lead teachers with little, if any, training. Many staff members have not been carefully screened by checking reference and having a completed criminal background check.

There is an assumption in the minds of many that church, school, and youth ministry volunteers are only motivated by faith and a desire to serve others; therefore, these folks couldn’t possibly act to harm anyone in their care. Minimal volunteer screening and selection processes along with minimal supervision practices have resulted in violations of the trust given by families to pastors, church, school teachers, coaches, and other church leaders. The consequences are devastating.

In the church, or church related ministries, the super enthusiastic welcome that is given to virtually anyone willing to work with children or youth can make for easy access to potential victims for predators.

There can be no doubt about the importance of children and youth in the community of faith. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus is quoted, saying, “Let the children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.” John Wesley worked continuously at the inclusion of children.
and for their blessing by establishing schools and making medical care available for them. As a church, we recognize the importance of educating and caring for children and youth. Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, UMYF meeting, youth choirs, and many other experiences are providing Christian Education and nurture regularly in our communities of faith. Whenever abuse occurs, as a consequence of failed selection procedures or lax supervision practices, we have kept one or many children from growing in faith and discipleship.

Church leaders must use the utmost care in screening the volunteers and employees who will be working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults in our ministries. Recommended best practices include conducting a criminal background check on each applicant/worker, check references and experience of each applicant/worker, and interview each applicant/worker. The best practices for selection also include using written applications for positions that will involve engagement with children, youth, and vulnerable adults. Utilizing these best practices in the selection process is valuable for a variety of reasons. The applications, reference checks, background screening, and interviews give the church multiple opportunities to discover the applicant’s skills and gifts for ministry as well as providing opportunities to discover previous incidents or experiences that would disqualify the applicant from placement within your ministries.

**OUR RESOLUTION**

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in 1996, adopted a resolution to reduce the risk of abuse of children and youth in the church. That commitment by our communities of faith stands today. *SAFE SANCTUARIES: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth*, by Rev. Joy T. Melton, was developed to assist annual conferences, local churches, and all ministries of the United Methodist Church in developing policies and procedures that will fulfill the purpose of this resolution and enhance our ministries with children, youth, and those who work with them.

The screening and selection of new hires, volunteers, and all staff members is a vital element in your plan for protecting those your ministries will serve. Some insurance companies implement coverage exclusions and will use such exclusions to deny a claim if the best practice, such as conducting a criminal background check, has not been carried out. Therefore, it is vitally important that your church review its general liability and umbrella polices to be sure they do not include such exclusions. Insurance provided by PACT includes coverages for such claims.

**PACT Resources for You**

PACT has partnered with Trak-1 Technology to develop an economical multi-state criminal background check product that is available for your church’s use and for use by all the ministries you sponsor. In
addition, you may take advantage of the online SAFE SANCTUARIES training for individuals available at Trak-1 Technology. For more information, please contact Rev. Joy T. Melton at PACT (phone 770-512-8383) or Chad Stair at Trak-1 Technology (Chad.Stair@trak-1.com).

**SCREENING CHECKLISTS**

Since screening of staff and volunteers is the key beginning point as you develop your Safe Sanctuaries policies, here are some items to review.

**CHECKLISTS FOR ADMINISTRATORS**

1. Evaluate current screening/hiring practices for paid and volunteer workers
2. Review all training procedures
3. Adopt and implement in-depth staff supervision practices
4. Document all staff and volunteer personnel practices including hiring, probations, dismissals, incidents
5. Assure that day-to-day practice reflects the written practices/policies.

**CHECKLISTS FOR LOCAL CHURCH AND ANNUAL CONFERENCE GROUPS**

1. Identify areas of potential problems in advance such as camp procedures and mission trip procedures
2. Develop procedures for response to allegations, incidents, and to known offenders
3. Prepare leaders to work with parents, children, and congregation in the event of an incident.

*SAFE SANCTUARIES: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth, (2008 edition)* contains sample forms for Applications, Reference Checks, Interviews, Incident Reports, Local Church Checklists, and Local Church Policies. You may order it through [www.UpperRoom.org](http://www.UpperRoom.org). You may use these checklists and forms to guide your congregation as it develops and updates its Safe Sanctuaries plans and enhances the ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults.
The PACT Service Center is open Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. eastern time. You may contact the Service Center at 1-800-975-5442.

For additional information please contact
Rev. Joy T. Melton, J.D.
Chief Resource Officer
UMC PACT
Suite 900
400 Perimeter Center Terrace
Atlanta, GA 30346
Email: joymelton@bellsouth.net
Phone: 770-512-8383

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Creation and the Animal Kingdom

- *Three Pandas Planting* by Megan Halsey
- *What Do You Do With a Tail Like This?* by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page

Naptime

- *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown

Biblical Foundations

- *On Noah’s Ark* by Jan Brett
- *Runaway Bunny* by Margaret Wise Brown
- *Let’s Make a Joyful Noise: Celebrating Psalm 100* by Karma Wilson
- *Psalm 21* illustrated by Tim Ladwig
- *Morning Has Broken* by Eleanor Farjeon

Life’s Lessons

- *Cookies: Bite-Size Life Lessons* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal
- *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst

Parent and Child… and Grandparent

- *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney
- *Mama Do You Love Me* by Barbara M. Joosse
- *Papa Do You Love Me* by Barbara M. Joosse
- *Are You My Mother?* by Dr. Seuss

A more extensive list can be found at https://ministrywithchildren.wordpress.com/childrens-books/