

SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY

FOR

CROSSROADS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Perry, Georgia

God calls Crossroads United Methodist Church to create a community of faith where children and adults learn and grow in a safe environment. In response to this challenge, Crossroads United Methodist Church has adopted the following procedures in accordance with the Safe Sanctuaries program.

Revised: - May 2013

**SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY
CROSSROADS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**CROSSROADS UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1600 Main Street
Perry, Georgia
478-987-3721**

Quick Reference Telephone Numbers

To report CHILD NEGLECT Georgia Department of Family and Children Services Or after hours call 911	478-988-7600
To report CHILD ABUSE	911
To report all OTHER CRIMES occurring on church grounds City of Perry Police Department Or after hours call 911	478-988-2800
To Advise the Pastor of the alleged incident Rev. Jason Dillard	478-550-3089 (cell)

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I. INTRODUCTION

People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them “Let the children come to me; do not stop them, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly, I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God, as a little child will never enter it.” And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16)

How can a child come to know Jesus if that child fears the adult standing between that child and Jesus? How can a child learn of God’s love if a person who claims to love that child seeks to satisfy his own sexual lusts in the name of love? Crossroads’ purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy and Procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual well being of all our children. Child abuse and neglect is a serious crime that occurs on and off church grounds as well as during church-sponsored activities. Even worse, a child who has been abused in a setting perceived as Christian will, upon reaching adulthood, struggle with his or her very salvation. Contrary to popular belief, Christians do commit these crimes. We will fight against the imposition of any such spiritual stronghold. We will not foster an environment that is open for such abuses. Our duty is to err on the side of guarding and protecting children. Their protection is the primary goal of this policy. Having decided ahead of time that we will err on the side of safety and protection of any child, we are imposing written restrictions and barriers to deter child abuse and neglect inasmuch as those situations can reasonably be foreseen. In those situations where risk is unforeseen and, therefore, not addressed by written policy, the adult or deciding person in that situation has the authority, legal and moral duty, and steadfast support of the leadership to err on the side of protecting the child.

Our policy and procedures are consistent with and further the resolution of the General Conference of the United Methodist Church in April 1996. Their adopted resolution includes the following statements.

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church states “...Children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse.”

The General Conference resolution also affirmed that every local church shall have in place a policy for protecting children.

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse . . . occur in churches, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where

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children and adults grow safe and strong.” (From *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church* - 1996, pp. 384-386)

II. POLICY STATEMENT

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers and we will be responsible in overseeing our programs and events and in training our staff, so that they are able and equipped to minister to children in Jesus’ name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience and we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator. In Covenant with all United Methodist congregations, Crossroads United Methodist Church adopts this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our Church vowing to 1) safeguard the children/youth of our Church from abuse and/or endangerment; 2) respond to all alleged, reported and suspected incidents of abuse in a fair and compassionate manner; 3) protect adults (paid and volunteer) from potential false allegations of abuse; and 4) limit the extent of our Church’s legal risk and liability. The Church Leadership Team will appoint a Safe Sanctuary committee to review the total policy at least once every two years. The Pastors and staff will prepare a report of compliance to the Church Conference yearly.

III. PROCEDURES TO SUPPORT THE SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

We adopt these **minimum** standards for our ministries with children and youth.

A. Screening and recruiting

1. All workers with children and youth will have completed an application listing standard contact information, their gifts for that ministry, and three unrelated references.
2. A minimum of two persons, including one of the following four positions, the pastor, Director of Children’s Ministry, Youth Director and/or MMO Director -- will interview workers before workers begin teaching. References will be contacted.
3. All workers (not including MMO staff) will demonstrate an active relationship with this church of at least 6 months before being allowed to supervise children.
4. All new workers will be asked to complete a request for Criminal Background Check (Form C).
5. All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant’s confidential personnel file. All forms shall be kept in a locked file.

B. Supervision

1. “The Two Adult Rule”. Whenever possible, there will be two (2) unrelated adults in each classroom. For all Church sponsored activities, the **minimum** requirement

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will be to follow “The Three Person Rule” as provided for in SECTION VI SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH.

2. No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 5 years older than the oldest student.
3. At least one of the two volunteers must be at least 18 years of age.
4. Each room will have a window or the door will be left open at all times.
5. Training shall occur at least once a year and teachers shall be trained to recognize the signs of abuse. All volunteers are required to attend training every year as a refresher.

C. Reporting

1. Upon receiving information of abuse, report immediately to the Senior Pastor in accordance with the procedures as outlined in this policy, SECTION VIII RESPONSE BY CHURCH WORKERS TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT. The Senior Pastor is required to report the allegations to Law Enforcement or DFCS within 24 hours and to District Superintendent.
2. If the abuse happened on church property by church volunteers or staff, they shall immediately be removed from contact with children until the incident reported has been resolved. This should be handled in a discreet manner and they shall not be banned from other church ministries that involve adults only.
3. The pastor will report to the District Superintendent who will contact the Conference Crisis Communications Team (CCCT). The CCCT will then be in consultation with the pastor.

D. Responding

1. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously, nothing will be covered up.
2. The Communications Director of the South Georgia Annual Conference or his/her designee is the only person/s authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the pastor.
3. Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident as indicated.

IV. DEFINITIONS

This purpose of this policy should be construed in such a manner as to liberally apply to alleged incidents of any and all acts or omissions as listed in the Official Code of Georgia, Title 19-7-5, relating to *child abuse* and *sexual abuse*, and Title 16-12-100, relating to pornography, obscenity and exploitation of minors, Title 16-6-4 relating to child molestation specifically and Article 6 relating to sex crimes generally, and the Georgia Department of Human Resources guidelines as related to *child neglect*. These terms are specifically defined in the Code and by regulation and are incorporated by reference herein. However, to enhance understanding of the terms, the definitions below

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may serve as generalized guidelines regarding the lay meaning of these acts or failure to act.

A. Child: For purposes of this Policy, the term “child” includes a person under the age of 18 or an adult with a mental capacity of a person under the age of 18.

- **Youth:** For purposes of this Policy, the term “youth” includes a person in grades 6-12, ending on the first day of the school year following their senior year of High School.

B. Child Abuse: Non-accidental physical injury or death inflicted upon a child by a caretaker or parent. This may also include child endangerment such as the intentional placement of a child in danger or at unreasonable risk.

C. Sexual Abuse: The using or persuading of a minor to participate in any act involving sexual intercourse, masturbation, defecation or urination, bestiality, exploitation, exhibition, penetration of or physical contact with clothed or unclothed genitals, pubic area, buttocks or female breasts for the apparent purpose of sexual stimulation or gratification.

Reporting Child Abuse: Anyone who has reason to believe a child has been or will be abused or who receives information alleging abuse should immediately report his or her concern to the Senior Pastor. If the abuse occurred on church grounds or during church sponsored activities, the responsible church staff member should be advised. The staff member will inform the Pastor and the Pastor or staff member may initiate the report to law enforcement on behalf of the person reporting or alleging the abuse.

D. Child neglect: A pattern or repeated failure to provide for the basic physical needs or appropriate supervision for a minor. This may also include failure to seek needed medical attention on behalf of a child. Things that may indicate child neglect: child is often left home alone, in the neighborhood for long periods without supervision, frequently hungry, dressed inadequately for the weather, absent from school frequently, bruised or exhibits unexplained marks, withdrawn or overly aggressive, not receiving medical attention.

Reporting Child Neglect: Anyone may anonymously report suspected child neglect to the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services. Issues of child neglect should be discussed with the church staff member responsible for the concerned child and/or Pastor as he or she may provide valuable assistance in reporting and/or resolving the issue.

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V. SELECTION AND SCREENING OF CHURCH STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

An essential component of preventing abuse by Authority Figures, Assistants and Church Staff is careful screening. Therefore, we believe that all Authority Figures, Assistants and all Church Staff must be properly screened. It will be the responsibility of the Pastor Parrish Relations Committee and the Senior Pastor to ensure compliance.

Each Church staff person and volunteer who regularly or occasionally (full-time or part-time) works with the Church's children and youth programs will be screened and trained in the Safe Sanctuary program. The procedure for selection and screening are as follows:

- A. Each person being considered to work with children/youth in any Church program, must fill out an Application Form. (See Form A)
- B. Before placing the applicant in a position of responsibility, the staff person responsible for the ministry will review the written application and interview the applicant.
- C. Interviews will follow the interview guidelines (see Appendix B). The Application Form (Form A) and the interview will be kept confidential and only disclosed to those persons requiring this information in order to make a decision as to whether the applicant should be accepted as a volunteer.
- D. A Volunteer Reference form (see Form B) will be sent/given to the three references provided on the application form. The forms are to be returned to the Church office by the persons providing the reference, not by the applicant. When all references are returned, they will be reviewed and kept with the volunteer's application. Additional references may be contacted by telephone, in person, or by other means.
- E. Each paid staff member and adult volunteer applying to work with children and/or youth shall authorize the Church to conduct a background check (see Form C). Volunteer roles include but are not limited to the following: all church leaders serving on ministry teams or administrative committees, ushers and greeters, those training or assisting children and/or youth acolytes, and those participating in home visitation representing the Church. Background checks include, but are not limited to:
 1. Criminal histories
 2. Motor vehicle record
 3. Registered sexual offenders
- F. The Background checks will be initiated by the Director of Children's Ministry, Youth Director or other ministry or administrative leaders and will be seen only by the Church Law Enforcement Point of Contact/Certifying Officer. All concerns will be reported to the Pastor, and if staff is involved, with the Chair of the Pastor Parrish Relations Committee (PPRC). They in turn will decide how the situation will be handled. In the case of a concern with child abuse, the individual will be counseled by the Pastor and the

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Church Law Enforcement Point of Contact/Certifying Officer as to the boundaries of their participation in the ministries, activities and programs of the church. A shepherding program will be developed to insure that this person has no unsupervised contact with children or youth while on Church property or at Church sponsored events.

- G. Before beginning work with either children or youth, each paid staff member or volunteer will sign a statement that they have read, understand, and agree to abide by the Church's Safe Sanctuary policies. (Form H)
- H. Where it has been determined that an applicant should not work with children/youth, the Church will handle such a decision in a timely and confidential manner, which is sensitive to that person.
- I. The Safe Sanctuary Committee will facilitate yearly training for all paid and volunteer staff around the issues of abuse, child safety and the Church's Safe Sanctuary policy. Training will be as specified in Section IX of this policy.
- J. The pastor, Youth Director and Director of Children's Ministry will update applications every five years.

VI. SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH

A. Supervision of Classroom Activities

1. Fifth Grade. At least one adult member of the Church will be present for all classroom activities involving children. In addition, a designated person will periodically check each classroom and will monitor the hallways/bathrooms.
2. Grades 7-12. At least one adult member of the Church will be present for all classroom activities involving youth. In addition, a designated person will periodically check each classroom and will monitor the hallways/bathrooms.
3. Open Door Policy. Parents, volunteers or staff of the Church may visit and observe all programs and classrooms at any time through coordination with the Director of Children's Ministry, Youth Director or MMO Director.
4. Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure. Adults responsible for nursery age children will sign their child **in and out** of the nursery, Sunday School and/or other children's activities on the forms provided (Form D).
5. Special Child Care. When childcare is provided for group meetings in the Church, it may be necessary to use individuals less than 18 years of age in a supervisory role. These individuals will have been approved and be at least 5 years older than the oldest member of the group for which they have responsibility.

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B. Facility requirements

1. Window-in-Door Policy

a. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that children are visible at all times from a location outside of the room in which a church related activity is taking place.

b. General Requirements

Each room that can accommodate a children's activity will have a door with a window in it or a half-door.

c. Counseling Session Requirements

At any counseling session with children, youth, or adults with diminished capacity, at least one of the participants (counseled and counselor) must remain visible from outside the room throughout the entire session.

C. Supervision of Non-Classroom Activities

1. With the exception of the circumstances identified under the rules for Supervision of Specific Activities and Transportation, at least two adults will be present for all non-classroom activities involving children and/or youth. Any meetings held in an individual's home must be supervised by at least two adults who are not related.
2. Each child/youth attending an event away from the Church will be required to have a signed Parental Authorization for Participation in Crossroads United Methodist Church Children/Youth Activities form (Form F). If the child/youth does not have a permission form on file upon arrival for an event, phone consent may be obtained from the parent/guardian.
3. The adult in charge of each trip/retreat must carry completed copies of the following forms: (Check Forms)
 - a. Parental Authorization for Participation in Crossroads United Methodist Church Children/Youth Activities form (Form F)
 - b. Driver Compliance Form (Form G) for each adult driving to/from the event

D. Supervision of Specific Activities and Transportation

- c. Youth Drivers: Under special circumstances individuals under 21 years of age may drive themselves to an event away from the Church. In addition, they may drive those who rode with them to the Church. They must have a signed Parental Authorization for Participation in Crossroads United Methodist Church Children/Youth Activities form (Form F)

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1. Small Group Activity: In the instance of one-on-one or small group activity with children/youth, a Church staff person or volunteer may meet individually with a child/youth or small group. The gathering must occur in a public place.
2. Transportation: The following criteria must be met:
 - a. Driver must be known to the designated leader of the event.
 - b. Driver must be at least 21 years old.
 - c. Driver must have a valid driver's license and insurance for the type of vehicle being operated.
 - d. Driver must be accompanied by at least two children or youth except for the initial pick-up and final drop off.
 - e. Driver must have completed and signed the Driver Compliance Form (Form G).
 - f. Driver must not have a record of reckless driving or DUI/DWI for the last 5 years.
 - g. Drivers shall authorize the Church to perform a Background Check (Form C) and will complete Safe Sanctuary Training.

E. Advance Notice to Parents Requirements

1. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to ensure that parents have adequate notice of when children and youth may be participating in an activity where they will leave their children under the responsibility of another adult.

2. Requirements

A basic rule for ministry with children and youth is to always give the parents advance notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which children will be participating. Advance notice means communicating schedules to the church office, the Director of Children's Ministry, or the Youth Director by publication deadline of the bulletin/newsletter, website, and/or e-mail. Responsible adult leaders are encouraged to make all reasonable efforts to contact each individual participant of emergency schedule changes.

In situations such as Confirmation Mentoring, where it is known a child will be alone with an adult, parent(s) must give written permission for their child's participation.

F. Trip and Retreat Supervision

1. A Parental Authorization for Participation in Crossroads United Methodist Church Children/Youth Activities form (Form F) will be required for all overnight events. There must be at least two adults, preferably unrelated, present for all trips, retreats and other overnight events involving children and/or youth. There must be at least one adult of each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events, at least

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one of the adults present must be of the same gender as the children/youth.

2. At co-ed events, reasonable effort will be made so that each gender sleeps in separate areas. In the event that this requirement cannot be met, the parent/guardian will be made aware of the situation ahead of time and situation will be noted on the Parental Authorization for Participation in Crossroads United Methodist Church Children/Youth Activities form (Form F) before it is signed by the parent/guardian.

In the event that two adults per room is not possible, special measures will be taken to assure the children/youth's safety and supervision, such as adult hall monitors, tapping doors and periodic room checks by two adults (one male and one female*). Parent/guardian will be made aware of the situation ahead of time, and situation will be noted on Parental Authorization for Participation in Crossroads United Methodist Church Children/Youth Activities form (Form F) before it is signed by the parent/guardian.

*We recommend a rotation of chaperones unless accompanied by a spouse.

G. Restroom Procedures

1. Purpose

The purpose of this section is to protect children and the adults who work with them during the use of the restrooms. The Church recognizes that use of the restroom is the most vulnerable situation and that this time is when children are at most risk of potential abuse and adults who work with children are most at risk of being falsely accused of abuse.

2. Organized Church Activities

During organized church events the responsible adults are encouraged to ensure that preschool aged children do not attend the restroom unaccompanied.

Parents and guardians are encouraged to have children use the restroom with parental supervision prior to the start of the activity. Violations (i.e. unsupervised children) will be brought to the attention and discussed with the parent(s).

3. During Church Services

Parents and guardians are encouraged to have elementary aged children remain in the worship room during the service, unless accompanied by an adult. Violations (i.e. unsupervised children) will be brought to the attention and discussed with the parent(s).

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4. Other Times

In order to provide a secure restroom environment, parents, guardians and responsible adults should encourage a child not to use the restroom unaccompanied. Parents should inform their child not to accompany a stranger to a restroom.

VII. RESPONSE BY CHURCH WORKERS TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Each member of the Church has a moral obligation to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to our attention regardless of where that abuse takes place. Mandated reporters are required by state law to report incidents of suspected abuse within 24 hours of receiving information of the abuse. If abuse occurs, the Church will provide a supportive atmosphere, offering both objectivity and sympathy as we seek to create a climate in which healing can take place.

A. If abuse is alleged:

1. **Immediately** report the incident to the Senior Pastor. See Page 2 for phone numbers.
2. The Senior Pastor will report the allegations to Law Enforcement or DFCS within 24 hours and to District Superintendent.

B. If neglect is alleged:

1. Notify the Senior Pastor
2. The Senior Pastor will report the incident as soon as is practical to the Department of Family and Children Services

If the abuse or neglect happened on church property by church volunteers or staff, they shall immediately be removed from contact with children until the incident reported has been resolved. This should be handled in a discreet manner and they shall not be banned from other church ministries that involve adults only.

The Media Director of the Georgia Conference, or his/her designee, is the only person/s authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Pastor.

If the allegation is against a staff person or pastor, the District Superintendent will be contacted immediately.

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Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident as indicated.

DO NOT

Do not delay. Report the incident even if the pastor is not immediately available.

Do not contact the parents/guardian. The incident should be reported even if the parents do not want it reported. If the parents are absent, the parents will be called in to comfort the victim when and if an investigator or the Pastor authorizes the call.

Do not investigate. Do not question the victim or seek any additional information from the victim or any other witnesses who may have been involved. Persons untrained in these matters questioning the alleged victim or alleged offender frequently results in confusion, undisclosed information and systematic re-victimization of the victim. The validity of an accusation must not be determined in-house.

Do not make any judgment statements or prediction statements to the victim. This means refrain from saying things such as: “What in the world were you doing there?!” or “You didn’t know he liked you?” or “You are going to get him in so much trouble” or “Your mom will die when she hears about this” or “So, if all that happened why aren’t you crying?”

Do not contact the Pastor if the Pastor is in any way alleged to be involved in the incident. If the Pastor is alleged to be the perpetrator, the District Superintendent should be contacted.

DO

Do offer to sit and wait with the victim. The victim shall not be left alone under any circumstances and anyone sitting with the victim must be within sight and sound of another adult.

Do encourage the victim to tell all of the truth if the victim asks if he or she should tell this or that. (Victims will frequently leave out parts they are embarrassed about thinking those facts are not relevant to the crime anyway.)

Do let the victim know you care about him or her.

VIII. EDUCATION OF PERSONS WHO WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

- A. The Safe Sanctuary Committee will facilitate yearly training for all paid and volunteer staff around the issues of abuse, child safety and the Church’s Safe Sanctuary policy. Training will be as specified in this policy and as deemed necessary to insure compliance and increase understanding and appreciation for the importance of providing a “Safe

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Sanctuary”. Attendance at this training will be mandatory for all persons who will have contact with children or youth in the Church’s ministry. The training will include:

1. The definition and recognition of child abuse and child neglect.
2. Crossroads’ policy and procedures on child abuse and the reasons for having them.
3. The appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders of child/youth events.
4. Child abuse and neglect reporting responsibilities and procedures.
5. The definition of appropriate interpersonal boundaries (ways of touching students, appropriate language, etc.)
6. All forms used by the church for application, background checks, reporting, and teacher files.

The training will be conducted by persons trained to facilitate the Safe Sanctuary training. The task force on Safe Sanctuary will develop ways of educating the congregation on abuse, its effects, and the Crossroads United Methodist Church’s policies on screening and reporting abuse. This may include displays, programs, presentations, pamphlets, flyers, and films.

IX. Exceptions Policy

A. Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to outline the conditions and process which govern exceptions to the policies and procedures of the Safe Sanctuary program.

B. Eligibility

1. Exceptions may be requested only for single-time, limited duration events.
2. Ongoing programs may not request exceptions through this process, but should instead appeal to the Review and Revision Requirements found in Section XI.
3. Exceptions are valid only for a single occurrence of a given event. In case of recurring events, (e.g., annual youth trips) a new exception must be applied for.

C. Exceptions Process

1. Requests for exceptions must be submitted in writing to the Safe Sanctuary Coordinator and contain but not be limited to the following information:
 - a. Requestor
 - b. Work area or ministry
 - c. Name, duration, location and purpose of event
 - d. Name of adults attending (for verification of approved volunteer status)

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- e. Expected number of children participating
- f. Reason requesting exception
- g. Outline of steps that will be taken to ensure safety of children and adult participants
- h. Other information requested by the Safe Sanctuaries committee

X. Review and Revision Requirements

A. Purpose

The purpose of this requirement is to ensure that the Safe Sanctuary Program remains up to date with the current life of the church.

B. Time Line

The Safe Sanctuary Program will be reviewed at a minimum of annually beginning from the acceptance of the program by the Safe Sanctuary Committee.

XI. SAFE SANCTUARY COMMITTEE

A. Duties and Responsibilities:

- 1. Ensure compliance with the policy
- 2. Be available to answer questions about the policy
- 3. Grant any exceptions to the policy, in appropriate circumstances
- 4. Review and renew the policy annually or as needed
- 5. Program monitoring
- 6. Review of scenarios
- 7. Assist with investigations when called upon
- 8. Meet at least twice per calendar year
- 9. Report directly to the Leadership Team
- 10. Other duties, as needed

B. Membership:

- 1. Pastor
- 2. Pastor-Parish Relations Committee Member (PPRC)
- 3. Trustees Member
- 4. Director of Children's Ministry
- 5. Youth Director
- 6. Parents Representative
- 7. Law Enforcement Point of Contact/Certifying Officer

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FORMS

	<u>Form Letter</u>
1. Application Form	A
2. Volunteer Reference Form	B
3. Background Check	C
4. Sign-in/Sign-out Forms	D
5. Report of Suspected Incident of Child/Youth Abuse	E
6. Parental Authorization for Participation in Crossroads Children/Youth Activities	F
7. Driver Compliance Form	G
8. Responsible/Acceptable Use statement	H