

Safe Sanctuary Policy

Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church

Revised: September, 2013

BIBLICAL MANDATE:

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement: Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes [a] child welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5).

Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God. Jesus also said, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones, it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea." (Matthew 18:6).

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 state that children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse. (§ 162C).

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse, (ritual abuse refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be), occur in churches, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural, and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma. Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

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 children and adults grow safe and strong. [From *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church-2000*, pp. 180-181. Copyright © 2000 by The United Methodist Publishing House. Used by permission.]

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church adopts this policy for the prevention of abuse in our church.

GOAL: Our goal is to protect children and vulnerable adults from sexual abuse, child molestation or any type of inappropriate sexual behavior by employees or volunteers of the church and to protect employees and volunteers from false accusations.

DEFINITIONS:

- **CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE:** The National Resource Center on Child Sexual Abuse defines child sexual abuse as "any sexual activity with a child or vulnerable adult, whether in the home by a caretaker, in a day-care situation, in any organized ministry, whether at the main facility (church) or away, or in any other setting, including on the street by a person unknown to the child. The abuser may be an adult, an adolescent, or another child."
- **CHILD ABUSE** is always devastating. It is criminal behavior that involves children or vulnerable adults in sexual behavior. Child sexual abuse can involve fondling; penetration of the oral, genital, and anal areas; intercourse which is considered rape when it involves children or vulnerable adults. Other forms of abuse include verbal comments, any exposure to pornographic materials, inappropriate internet activity, obscene phone calls, exhibitionism, or allowing children to witness sexual activity.
- **ADULT:** Any individual who is over the age of 18 years and has graduated from high school.
- **MINOR:** A minor is any individual age 18 years or younger and has not graduated from high school
- **VULNERABLE ADULT:** Any person over 18 years of age with physical, mental and/or developmental disabilities.

- **EMPLOYEE** – anyone who is paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, whether or not they work directly with children or youth.
- **VOLUNTEER** – anyone who is not paid by the church on a full-time or part-time basis, and is serving in any position involving the supervision or custody of minors. Examples: Nursery, childcare, grade school, middle school, high school, and college workers, drivers, teachers, or chaperones.
- **MINOR EMPLOYEE OR VOLUNTEER** – In addition to the above requirements a minor who is an employee or volunteer must also submit a separate certification from his or her parent or guardian that the parent or guardian “knows no reason why the minor should not be allowed to work directly or indirectly with other minors.” Minors should NEVER be allowed to supervise children without constant adult supervision.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

The policy and procedures set forth below will apply to all people who give supervision or have custody of minors or who have opportunity to have contact with minors in church facilities or church sponsored activities whether clergy, paid staff, or volunteer. This policy will address four (4) areas that are critical for the protection of the children, our employees and our church: selection process, protection policy, reporting procedures, and responses to allegations.

BACKGROUND CHECKS:

A background check must be performed for all in our church who work with, teach, counsel or chaperon children or vulnerable adults at any church, district or conference function. All adults without background checks may serve in a non-contact function under supervision of those approved. The name of each person in our church with a clear background check will be placed on church letterhead, signed by the Safe Sanctuary team and kept on confidential file in a locked file cabinet in the church office. Access to these records will be limited to the Minister of Discipleship, support staff of Children and Youth Ministries, the Senior Pastor and, if needed for interview purposes, the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC).

The minimum check is of the National Sex Offender Database, available at www.nsopr.gov. Driver’s license checks should be made of adults transporting children and youth on behalf of the Conference; this excludes parents driving their own children and youth to and from meetings or events. Staff and volunteers may be asked not to drive or volunteer with children’s and youth events if undesirable results appear on these checks. These checks may be performed at www.screennow.com, through their affiliation with Church Mutual.

Criminal records checks will be limited to any criminal activity involving the following: (1) a minor; (2) child molestation, (3) any type of sexual offense; (4) any type of pornographic or obscene material; (5) any type of physical violence; and (6) suspected child abuse (7) any other offense that might jeopardize the safety of a minor.

BACKGROUND CHECK RENEWAL IS EVERY TWO YEARS with Safe Sanctuary training yearly.

SIX MONTH HOSPITALITY POLICY:

In addition to the above requirements, a volunteer must be a member of Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church, or regular attendee, for at least six (6) months. A volunteer who does not meet these membership requirements may serve only upon approval of Minister of Discipleship and the Sunday School Superintendent. Regular attendance is defined as participation in worship, other programs and/or activities. This also applies to employees and seasonal visitors.

QUALIFICATIONS:

No adult who has been previously convicted of child abuse, neglect, endangerment or sexual misconduct will be deemed acceptable for the care, custody, or supervision of minors at Dove of the Desert UMC or its activities. These individuals may volunteer in the church in a capacity or area that does not involve care, custody or supervision of minors.

Adults who have had an order of protection issued against them would not necessarily be excluded from being volunteers, but their situation would necessitate a personal confidential interview with the Minister of Discipleship and a member of the SPRC.

If any individual is found unsuitable to work with minors, Senior Minister and/or Minister of Discipleship and a representative from SPRC will contact the individual and give him/her the opportunity to withdraw from volunteering with children and youth. This is to uphold the confidentiality of the situation.

Volunteers going on special trips, such as overnight trips with minors or vulnerable adults may be asked for additional information.

SAFE SANCTUARY TRAINING Must be performed yearly and include:

- Copy of your Safe Sanctuary covenant statement
- Policies to be implemented
- Steps to report
- Details of state law

COMMONLY ACCEPTED PRINCIPLES:

Adults have more power than children and youth.

Clergy have more power than people with whom they have a pastoral relationship.

The mutuality of friendship cannot exist when there is a disparity of power.

PROTECTION POLICY:

- **TWO ADULT RULE:** It is preferable that at least two adults be present for all activities involving minors and vulnerable adults. When two adults are not available, full visual access to the meeting area should be maintained and a designated adult will periodically check on the situation. A designated adult will also be aware of a minor's whereabouts if they leave the activity area. Even when two adults are available, it is advisable to have periodic checks by a designated adult.
- **RULE OF THREE:** A child or youth should not be alone with another unrelated adult or child or youth at any time for any reason. Everything should be done in groups of at least three: at least two adults and a young person, or two young people and an adult. The ideal to strive for is that at least two unrelated adults be with children or youth at all times.
- **THERE WILL BE NO MINOR LEFT UNATTENDED OR ALONE.**
- **ALL PERSONS MUST BE AT LEAST FIVE YEARS OLDER:** While recognizing the important role of youth volunteers in children/youth ministries, all activities involving minors will be supervised by at least one adult. Adults and Youth will be at least five years older than the group they are supervising.
- **SIX MONTH HOSPITALITY RULE:** Any volunteers working with minors or vulnerable adults must be a member or attend regularly for at least six months. (SEE POLICY ABOVE)
- **RATIOS OF ADULT/CHILD**
 - 1:5 for elementary age
 - 1: 5-7 sixth through eighth grades
 - 1: 6-8 ninth through twelfth grades
- **OPEN DOOR POLICY:** Parents, Guardians, volunteers or church staff may visit and observe programs and classes for minors at any time, provided they follow the appropriate sign-in and sign-out procedure.
- **RECORD RETENTION:** All Children/Youth activities should have a written record of the names of participants and supervisors. These Records shall be kept for One Year in a locked file in the church office.
- **VIEW WINDOWS/OPEN DOORS:** Preschoolers, children and students will be placed in rooms with view windows (in doors or walls), half doors or open doors for all teaching/learning activities. A "floater" or hall monitor may also be used to make frequent room and restroom checks.
- **OVERNIGHT ACTIVITIES – (following all Safe Sanctuary policies and)**
 - Hotel Setting:** No adults in the bed with a minor or vulnerable adult. Adults sleep in separate rooms with frequent room/hall/bathroom monitoring or check-ins. If possible, choose hotels with rooms opening to inside hallway. Youth will be assigned 2 - 4 in a room depending on accommodations. Adults will be assigned to rooms in between two youth rooms. **Bunkroom Setting:** At least 2 same gender adults may sleep in a large room with multiple bunk beds or sleeping bags on the floor.
 - Sleeping areas and rooms are not areas for socializing. Visiting and fellowship will only be in assigned common public areas.

Off-site trips information exchange: Parents must receive contact info to include: start/stop times and location of event, program content and lodging information and covenant rules expected of their child on trip. Staff/volunteer/bus/car driver must receive from parent: all contact info, parent/guardian permission/liability form signed with health/emergency info included on a Consent Form.

CONSENT FORMS: Consent Forms/Emergency Medical Forms may be completed for a one-year period and should be renewed annually. All consent forms will be considered valid until renewed.

TRANSPORTATION:

- Parent Drivers will have completed volunteer profile and have a completed background check before being approved as a driver.
- Everyone should wear seat belts
- If a charter bus is rented ask the coach company if a background check is done on their drivers. If not our suggestion is to look for another charter bus company.
- If a rental vehicle is to be used it is recommended that Church Mutual be contacted to generate a copy of the Insurance Rider, which is part of church insurance coverage.
- **YOUTH ARE NOT ALLOWED TO DRIVE FROM THE CHURCH TO OFF-SITE LOCATION WITH OTHER YOUTH IN THEIR CAR.** Either plan to meet at location or transport with adult drivers.
- When transporting youth it will not be unusual for the vehicles to carry youth of both genders.
- It is encouraged that there be at least 2 adults and 2 youth when driving personal vehicles.

REPORTING SUSPECTED SEXUAL MISCONDUCT OR NEGLECT

Arizona State law encourages voluntary reporting of child abuse in faith-based ministry settings. In keeping with Christian beliefs that children should not be abused and neglected, Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church will practice and advocate voluntary compliance with the Arizona State law suggesting reporting of suspected abuse/neglect of children and vulnerable adults.

PROCEDURE:

1. Allegations of suspected abuse/neglect will be reported to the Senior Minister and/or the Minister of Discipleship, who shall then have the obligation to report suspected abuse/neglect to the SPRC and the appropriate legal authorities. In Arizona, report suspected abuse 24 hours a day at 1-888-SOS-CHILD
2. A written abuse report is required to be placed to the authorities within 24 hours.
3. Notification must also be given to the District Superintendent.
4. If the Pastor is accused of abuse the Staff Parish Relations Chair can directly report the incident to the District Superintendent.
5. The church will request that the District Superintendent be the contact with the Conference Communications Director, who will then contact the Crisis Response Team.

*Nothing in the accomplishment of this policy is intended to call upon a pastor to violate the confidentiality of confession or clergy counseling relationship. Being mindful of the complex nature of Child Abuse, reporting, training, and consultation will be available to clergy and laypersons to prepare them for a faithful response.

FAITH RESPONSE TO AN ALLEGATION OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT:

1. A quick, compassionate and unified response to alleged incident of child abuse is expected.
2. All allegations will be taken seriously, with grace shown to ALL parties.
3. The Church staff will not deny, minimize, or blame any individuals involved in the allegations. The church will minister to all involved and cooperate with authorities.
4. Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church will keep a Christian perspective on how the church portrays the incident to the community and let the law decide the opinions of truth. We will show respect to both parties and as a community of faith vow to keep these matters private and provide the respect and privacy that the accused and accuser both so rightly deserve.
5. The Conference Communications Director will have the primary responsibility for communicating with the media. With respect to all parties involved clergy, staff and those who attend Dove of the Desert UMC are encouraged not to make any statements to the press or on social media sites. If approached by members of the press the appropriate response is to refer all inquiries to the Conference Communications Director.



ADDENDUMS

I. Sign-In and Sign-Out Procedures

Children ages newborn to four years: For Sunday School or any other children's activity, parent(s)/guardian(s) responsible will sign-in their child and indicate the preauthorized person(s) to whom the child may be signed out. At the conclusion of Sunday School or other activity, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be required to provide signature, time and identification to retrieve child (children).

Children ages five through Grade 6: For Sunday School or any other children's activity, parent(s)/guardian(s) responsible will have a signed registration form for the classroom. At the completion of the class or activity the parent(s)/guardian(s) will go to the designated classroom to retrieve the child (children).

Youth Grade 7 through Grade 12: For Sunday School or any other youth activity are to sign-in and sign-out at the designated entry center. If required to travel to another building on campus or at a retreat setting, the youth are required to go in groups of two or preferably three or more.

Adults wishing to take advantage of the Open Door Policy must sign-in and sign-out at the Education Office Desk with the Sunday School Superintendent.

II. Trip Policy

Policy objectives:

The mission of Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church is about increasing love for God and neighbor. To accomplish this mission, Dove of the Desert plans and sponsors various ministry initiatives and invests staff/volunteer time and church resources to help implement some of God's work around us.

Some of these initiatives take us out of the local setting into other parts of the world. This policy is intended to differentiate between those trips that are considered to be part of the planned focused ministry initiatives of Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church and other trips.

The policy will provide guidelines to help our church be faithful stewards of staff / volunteer time and church resources and will specify governance for approval, fundraising, and safety / liability considerations for the various trip categories in order to inform and protect both individuals and Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church.

Definition of types of trips:

1. Mission Trips: A group of people who spend the majority of the time (averaging 5 hours per the number of full days for a multi-day trip or 60% of the time for a single, partial day local trip) at the destination preparing to spread or spreading the Christian faith through medical, spiritual, social, and/or construction work (e.g. at least 20 hours for 4 full on-site days). These trips are intended for both faith development and demonstrating Christian witness through mission. In addition, these trips will be sponsored/overseen by church staff and/or church committees with Church Council representation with the knowledge and authorization of the responsible governing church organizations.

2. Educational / Spiritual Growth Trips: A group of people who spend the majority of the time (averaging 5 hours per the number of full days for a multi-day trip or 60% of the time for a single partial day local area trip) at the destination preparing to or actually sharing information, giving / receiving knowledge or instruction in either the Christian faith or in being better able to be a disciple in an approved role (e.g., at least 20 hours for 4 on-site days). These trips are intended for faith development and/or for equipping us to be able to better serve in an authorized local church staff or volunteer role. In addition, these trips will be sponsored / overseen by church staff and/or church committees with Church Council representation with the knowledge and authorization of the responsible governing church organizations.

3. Fellowship Trips: A group of people who share common interests, goals, experiences, or views, and who organize and manage a trip outside the criteria specified for Mission and /or Educational / Spiritual Growth trip definitions.

- In cases where the trip has multiple objectives (where at least 15 hours of the trip is focused on mission and/or spiritual growth at the destination and another part of the trip is focused on extended fellowship),

separate approval from the Church Council will be required to authorize and to work together to define any further requirements and authorization to categorize a trip as a church sponsored trip.

- For the case that any exceptions are being requested to this policy, separate Church Council approval will be required to authorize and to collaborate on any definition for further requirements and authorization to categorize a trip as a church sponsored trip.

All church sponsored trip initiatives will need to follow a set of guidelines:

- ***Sponsorship and oversight:*** Church sponsored trips are to be sponsored by an authorized group with the church and overseen by church staff and/or church committee representative with Church Council approval.
- ***Fundraising (if required):*** People associated with trips sponsored by the church will follow the fundraising policy of the church. A schedule of fundraising efforts needs to be submitted to the Finance Committee for approval.
- ***Liability and safety:*** Liability waivers should be prepared and signed by people traveling on the trip (or their legal guardians). Safe Sanctuary guidelines will be followed.
- ***Destinations:*** Prior to recruiting participants or any publicity, Church sponsored trip destinations will need the approval of the Church Council if outside of the Desert Southwest Conference.
- ***Listing of participants & Emergency Information:*** A complete list of all participants/sponsors/chaperons, along with a copy of their completed emergency information shall be kept in a safe place in the church office. This information will be appropriately destroyed once the trip is over and all have returned safely home.
- ***Out of Area Emergency Procedure:*** There shall be one person designated and a back-up person to be the “at home” emergency contact for any group leaving the area. The designated person and the back-up person shall have a full list of participants and their emergency contact information. The Lead Person on the trip will have an envelope with a complete listing of participants, copies of emergency information and a page giving the “at home” emergency contact information.

Other trips not sponsored by the church will need to follow a set of guidelines:

Other trips (such as Social / Fellowship trips and excursions) are encouraged by the Church for development of relationships within the Church family but are not generally sponsored, overseen, or managed by the Church. These trips and/or excursions shall fall outside of the normal, regular and routine activities of Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church, and Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church cannot be held responsible for any part in the planning, logistics, financing, liability, and overall perceived success of the trip. It is, therefore, understood that such trips and/or excursions are the responsibility of the individuals coordinating and organizing such trips and/or excursions. It is understood and acknowledged that there are potential risks and liabilities which could result from any injury, either personal or property, as a result of such trip or excursion. In order to insure that the church does not become a named defendant in any such injury matter, it is understood and agreed that the name “Dove” shall not be used as part of the activity.

Individuals (or family of individuals) attending a fellowship trip are expected to fund the trip themselves. Any fundraising requests to supplement individual funding will need to follow the standard Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church fundraising guidelines (should they apply).

Each individual or group within the church that intends to organize, advertise, and/or direct such social or fellowship trips at any time during the year where any such organization is done on church property or advertisement is done with church resources shall sign a confirmation that they have read this policy statement and agree to all of its terms **prior** to the commencement of the social or fellowship trip. If a social or fellowship trip as discussed herein results in a claim for property loss or personal injury against the church, the organizers of the social / fellowship trip shall indemnify and hold harmless Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church.

The Church Council meets on the third Thursday of each month. The destinations for any church sponsored trips will need to be approved before any fundraising is done. The Finance Committee meets on the second Tuesday of each month. The approval of fundraisers will have to be presented at the meeting and approved one month in advance of the given project.

Any trips may be advertised in the bulletin when there is room, and when requested by a church member or active constituent. The Office Administrator and Pastors have the final decision as to what may be placed and when it can

be placed in the bulletin. Advertisement is also available by posters, fliers on the bulletin board, PowerPoint, website, and newsletter.

III. Behavior and Dress Codes

Children and Youth look for good examples of Godly leadership. Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church covenants to the following:

1. Adults and youth volunteers will seek to actively listen to children and youth rather than tell them what to think.
2. Adult demonstration of affection: Adults and youth volunteers will be mindful of personal space for minors and vulnerable adults. It is encouraged that when an adult or youth volunteer initiates a hug that it be a “side” hug with arms around the other person’s shoulders.
3. While adults may choose to share personal experiences when appropriate, no one is obligated to divulge any aspect of their personal life.
4. Adults and youth volunteers will not speak or act in such a way that embarrasses or demean those to whom we minister. Adults and youth volunteers are encouraged to remember that vulgar language has no place at church functions.
5. Dress Code Rule of Thumb - shirts cover chests, shorts and skirts completely cover bottoms. No underwear showing. Shoes need to be safe for the event planned. Swimsuits must provide full coverage for both male and female alike. If needed, consider wearing a t-shirt over the swimsuit. It is suggested that females wear a one-piece swimsuit.

IV. Respect for Time

While encouraging reasonable event and after-event fellowship, we will be mindful of personal time by honoring the following:

1. Youth Ministry activities will end prior to 11:00 PM
2. We will keep home life sacred by ending phone calls, emails, texts and internet chats with youth by 10:00 PM (Adults are reminded of Safe Sanctuary practices when contacting children and youth.)

V. Counselors in Training (CITs)

1. Counselors in Training must be 18 years old and have graduated from high school.
2. CITs meet the definition of “adult” and are subject to all the guidelines for Safe Sanctuary Policies.
3. CITs often do not meet the Five Years Older Guideline when working with youth, and as such they are not the primary authority when volunteering with youth. They are support persons, who are to model the highest levels of Christian behavior and ethics in all aspects of their interactions with the youth.

VI. General Information about Digital Communications, including Social Networks

All communication sent digitally (email, social networking sites, notes or posts, etc.) is NOT CONFIDENTIAL and may be shared or reposted to others. Interactions in the virtual world need to be transparent, as a window in the door provides transparency in the physical world. In the virtual world healthy boundaries and safe church practices must be adhered to as they are in the physical world.

In the virtual world, “friend” can mean anyone with whom you are willing to communicate through that medium. In the physical world, friend can mean much more in terms of intimacy, self disclosure, mutuality and expectations for relationship.

Laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse/neglect/exploitation of children, youth, elders and vulnerable adults apply in the virtual world as they do in the physical world.

Guidelines for Social Networking Sites-Relationships

- Adults and youth volunteers who minister to children and youth are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile. Individual personal profiles are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Adults should not submit “friend” requests to minors or youth. Youth may not be able to decline such requests due to the disparity of power between youth and adults.
- Adults who want to connect via a social networking with youth to whom they minister are strongly encouraged to set up a closed group account that youth may join. Youth requesting to “friend” an adult can then be invited to join this group rather than be accepted as a friend on an adult’s personal profile

account. The purpose of these two separate accounts/profiles is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with youth and real family, friends and colleagues.

- Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the Senior Minister and/or the Minister of Discipleship. If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site. In Arizona, report suspected abuse 24 hours a day at 1-888-SOS-CHILD
- Clergy and church staff are strongly encouraged to set very stringent privacy settings on any social networking profile to shield both adult and youth members from viewing content that may be inappropriate.
- Individual personal profiles of clergy and church staff are to be used to interact with real friends, family and peers. Clergy should not submit “friend” requests to parishioners and others to whom they minister. The disparity of power may not give the other person the ability to decline such request.
- Clergy and church staff who want to connect via a social networking website with parishioners are strongly encouraged to set up a group account that all parishioners may join. The purpose of having a personal profile and parish group is to create a line of privacy and maintain healthy boundaries with parishioners and real family, friends and colleagues.
- When a pastor or staff person’s ministry at Dove of the Desert UMC ends that pastor or staff person should remove parishioners as “friends” or contacts in all forms of digital communications.

Groups on Social Networking Sites:

- Closed groups, but not “hidden” groups, should be used for youth groups
- Groups should have at least two unrelated adult administrators as well as at least two youth administrators.
- Invitations to youth to join the group should be made by youth administrators, unless a youth previously asked an adult administrator to invite him/her to join the group.
- Behavioral covenants should be created to govern what content is appropriate and inappropriate for an online youth group.
- Any material on any site (whether affiliated with the church or not) that raises suspicion that a child has been or will be abused/neglected/exploited should be immediately reported to the Senior Pastor and/or the Minister of Discipleship. If the material is on a church affiliated site, that material should be documented for church records and then removed from the site. In Arizona, report suspected abuse 24 hours a day at 1-888-SOS-CHILD
- Inappropriate material should immediately be removed from the site after the appropriate notification to the church office or pastors.
- Any content that details inappropriate behavior (outside of the bounds of the established behavioral covenant) during a church sponsored event or activity should be addressed by adult youth leaders and parents.
- Social networking groups for youth should be open to parents of current members.
- Parents should be informed that the content of youth pages or groups that are not sponsored by the church are NOT within the purview of adult youth leaders.
- Adult leaders of youth groups and former youth members who, due to departure, removal from position, or are no longer eligible because they “aged-out” of a program should be immediately removed from digital communication with youth groups via social networking sites, list serves, etc.

Our Behavior Covenant Regarding Digital Communications:

Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church acknowledges that materials posted on Church Sponsored sites (and/or group pages) are NOT CONFIDENTIAL.

- Content deemed inappropriate will be removed from the site or group page.
- Once an 18 year old graduates from high school that person is considered an adult and should be encouraged to follow the guidelines for an adult. This may mean transitioning away from youth group social networks and unfriending minors. Unfriending should be done with grace and a full explanation about moving into young adult circles of relationships.
- Great care and caution should be used in tagging a photo. Last names of minors are not to be tagged. Adults and youth volunteers should never tag a minor child's photo. Great care and caution should be used in posting photos of minors.
- Photos or content that depicts bullying, prejudice of any type, vulgar language or behavior, or political content that does not support a Biblical perspective shall not be deemed appropriate for any church-related social media or digital communication.

Recommendations for Video Chats, Blogs or Video Blogs

- Adults should refrain from video chats with minors
- Participants in a video chat or blog should consider what will be shown in the video such as their surroundings, their clothing/state of dress, etc.
- All clergy and adults engaged in ministry with minors should consider the content and nature of any post that will be read by or visible to youth. Your voice is often considered the voice of the church.

Recommendations for Publishing/Posting Content Online

- Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church must inform participants when they are being videoed because church buildings are not considered public space.
- Please know that when our worship services or activities are videoed and that video is distributed on the web or via other broadcast media we MUST post signs that indicate the service will be broadcast.
- Dove of the Desert United Methodist Church asks for a signed Media Release form from adults and guardians of minor children who will or may participate in activities that may be photographed or videoed for distribution.
- Photos that are published on church sponsored sites will not include name or contact information for minor children or youth.

Recommendations for Use of Email or Texting (Includes Twitter or other similar form of communication)

- Email/texts can be an appropriate and effective means of communicating basic factual information such as the time of an event, agenda for a meeting, text of a document, etc.
- Email/texts are not an appropriate communication method for matters that are pastorally or legally sensitive, emotionally charged or require extensive conversation.
- If an email/text message is longer than a couple of sentences, then the matter might more properly be addressed via live conversation.
- Humor and sarcasm can be easily misinterpreted in an email/text. Please be respectful and courteous.
- All email users should take a moment to consider the ramifications of their message before clicking on the "send" or "reply to all" button.
- When sending emails to large groups it is encouraged that people use the "undisclosed recipient" in the "to" line and list all other email addresses in the bcc line.