

September 2004

Safe Sanctuaries Month

In Holston Conference

The Connectional Ministries staff wants to help you keep your church a safe sanctuary for children and youth. Discover how to reduce the risk of child and youth abuse by attending one of the following FREE training sessions.

Saturday, August 21 9:45 a.m. - Noon	First UMC Pulaski, VA In conjunction with the Wytheville District Leadership Day
Saturday, September 18 9:00 a.m. - Noon	Wesley Memorial UMC - Johnson City, TN
Sunday, September 19 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Holston View UMC - Weber City, VA
Thursday, September 23 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.	First Farragut UMC - Knoxville, TN
Sunday, September 26 2:00 - 5:00 p.m.	Ooltewah UMC - Ooltewah, TN
Thursday, September 30 6:00 - 9:00 p.m.	First UMC - Morristown, TN

Bring with you
a copy of the
blue or green
Safe Sanctuaries
workbook by
Joy T. Melton
available at
Cokesbury.
Books may be
purchased on site
for \$13 each.

In 1996 the General Conference of The United Methodist Church passed a resolution calling on local churches to develop policies and procedures to reduce the risk of child abuse.

REGISTRATION

Name _____ Church _____

Address _____

Day Phone _____ Evening Phone _____

E-mail _____

Please circle the location where you will be attending:

First Pulaski

Wesley Memorial

Holston View

First Farragut

Ooltewah

First Morristown

Check this box to receive .3 CEU's.

Mail registration **two weeks prior to workshop** to:

The Wesley Institute, ATTN: Bonnie Cox, PO Box 2506, Johnson City, TN 37605.

Questions? Call Dan Gray at 423-928-2156 or Anita Henderlight at 865-690-4080.

Safe Sanctuaries Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

- **What is Safe Sanctuaries?**

Safe Sanctuaries is the name commonly given by local United Methodist Annual Conferences and local churches to their individual efforts to make conference, district, and local church programs welcoming and safe for children and youth. *Safe Sanctuaries* is the title of two guidebooks, *Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church* and *Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries*, written by United Methodist deacon and lawyer Joy Thornburg Melton and published by Discipleship Resources in 1998 and 2003, respectively. Both books are available at your local Cokesbury store or through www.discipleshipresources.org or www.cokesbury.com.

- **Is there a set standard of care that local churches must follow?**

Although *Safe Sanctuaries* is a guide published to help local congregations in planning, *Safe Sanctuaries*, Discipleship Resources, The United Methodist Church, and the Holston Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church are not engaged in the practice of law and accounting. If legal advice or other expert assistance is required, the services of a professional advisor should be sought. *Safe Sanctuaries* does not establish a standard of care for churches. Each local church makes its own decisions and determines what is best for it. *Safe Sanctuaries* and Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church provide information that may be helpful to churches.

- **What does the term Safe Sanctuaries encompass?**

Safe Sanctuaries, as referred to by Holston Conference, encompasses the efforts made by a local church, district, or the Conference to reduce the risk of abuse to children and youth and to protect the adult workers (either paid or volunteer) who interact with those children and youth in any church activity, whether on-site or away from the church building. The level of *Safe Sanctuaries* care must be tailored to and provided by each individual local church or district based on the specific needs of that church or district and the specific needs of a given activity. Being known as a *Safe Sanctuaries* church or district indicates to persons entering your building that a level of care and protection is being provided in that local church or at that district or Conference event.

- **Why do we need to have this Safe Sanctuaries program?**

For Holston Conference, the physical and emotional safety, as well as the spiritual growth of all God's children and youth, is important. We as a Conference are

committed to the holistic well-being of each child, youth, and adult entrusted to us. We believe that we as a Church must take reasonable steps to love and protect our children and youth while they are involved in programs and activities provided in and by our local churches, districts, and our Conference. In addition, we must take reasonable steps to love and protect those adults who work with our children and youth. The resolution *Reducing the Risk of Child Sexual Abuse in the Church* was adopted in 1996 and reaffirmed in 2000 by the General Conference of The United Methodist Church. This resolution became the impetus for all Annual Conferences and local churches to implement child and youth abuse prevention policies. In all of our ministries with children and youth, the Holston Conference is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child will be "... surrounded by steadfast love, established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal" (*Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44). This effort at *Safe Sanctuaries* demonstrates our commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

- **Why conduct background checks and interviews of existing employees and volunteers?**

One aspect of *Safe Sanctuaries* care includes conducting background checks on persons – both paid and volunteer – who work with children and youth. Doing background checks on staff members and volunteers who have regular and direct contact with children and youth provides uniformity in treatment of the workers. It demonstrates that background checks are not targeted or random. Uniformity of treatment helps guard against any misunderstanding or resentment that might otherwise arise.

- **What costs are involved?**

The cost of preparing to be a *Safe Sanctuaries* church or district depends on several factors. For example, a church needs to do a physical facilities review for child and youth safety and protection. This physical facilities review may result in the installation of windows in doors to classrooms and offices, an integrated fire alarm and smoke detector system and emergency lighting, and window guards in classrooms for small children. Costs will vary according to your facility's size and configuration.

Another expense is that of doing background checks for workers (both paid and volunteer) who are in direct contact with children and youth in our churches and districts. Currently, the cost of those clearances varies widely, depending on the agency chosen to conduct the background checks. While the cost may vary, each background check may cost as little as \$6 per search, depending on the nature and extent (county, state, or federal) of the search. You may visit these websites for more details or make your own choice: TRAK-1 at www.trak-1ok.com; Oxford Document Management Services at www.oxforddoc.com; or ChoicePoint at www.churchmutual.com. Discounted rates are available to Holston Conference local churches, districts, and agencies through TRAK-1 or through Oxford

Document Management Services. With TRAK-1, there are no set up fees, no annual fees, no storage fees, and no monthly minimum requirements.

Safe Sanctuaries manuals are reasonably priced at Cokesbury bookstores or on-line at www.cokesbury.com or through www.discipleshipresources.org and will also be available at District and regional Safe Sanctuaries training events.

- **Why should we conduct background checks on our friends who are lifelong church members?**

We believe each church should develop an expectation that any person who works with children and youth in that local church or district will have a background check. These checks should not be done randomly, but rather uniformly and consistently. The background checks help to ensure the safety of the children and youth as well as provide appropriate assurance for the adult workers.

- **What if you find these expenses difficult to manage?**

First, some steps that can be taken have no cost associated with them. For example, having two non-related adults in a room with a group of children or youth has only the cost of the two adults' time (which would mean no financial cost in the case of volunteers). It is likely that you will not be able to make all of the improvements to your physical facility at one time. Instead, you may need to create a ranking of these improvements in terms of highest risk to children and youth and begin there. It may take you several years to accomplish all the projects. For example, you might budget for one project a year. You might consider asking persons to donate to these projects, ask volunteers to fund the cost of their own background checks, or conduct a comprehensive *Safe Sanctuaries* fundraising campaign emphasizing the need to make your church a safe and welcoming place for all of God's children and youth.

- **What training resources will the Holston Conference of The United Methodist Church make available to local churches?**

In March 2004, the author of *Safe Sanctuaries*, Joy Thornberg Melton, provided training in four workshops in the Holston Conference (one for District Superintendents, two for adult workers with children, and one for adult workers with youth). Now, persons who were trained in one of those four sessions will be available to provide workshops in numerous locations around Holston Conference beginning in August 2004 and continuing through Charge Conferences 2005. Check the Conference website, www.holston.org, after July 1, 2004, for a schedule of training sessions or call 865-690-4080.

- **What will be included in the training sessions?**

Workshop leaders will provide instruction on how to develop a *Safe Sanctuaries* policy in your local church, along with sample policies and forms. Assistance will be provided to churches that have questions about their specific situations. A copy

of the book, *Safe Sanctuaries*, will be available for each church or individual participant to purchase.

- **Where can we access sample forms and documents?**

Sample forms and documents are contained in the *Safe Sanctuaries* books.

- **What if we encounter difficulty or have questions in implementing a *Safe Sanctuaries* policy and program in our congregation?**

The Holston Conference staff of the Office of Connectional Ministries – including the Director of Connectional Ministries, the Coordinator of Children’s Ministries, and the Coordinator of Youth Ministries – may be able to provide a consultant who can assist you at no cost to your local church. These consultants will be persons trained to work with individual churches in implementing *Safe Sanctuaries*.

- **How long do we have to begin implementing *Safe Sanctuaries* in our local church?**

Some steps toward implementing *Safe Sanctuaries* can easily begin very soon after Annual Conference 2004. Other steps, such as physical renovations, may take longer. The resolution presented to Annual Conference 2004 asks that each local church develop and implement a *Safe Sanctuaries* policy by the time of Charge Conference 2005. In the interim, training sessions will be provided beginning in August 2004 to assist local churches in their planning and implementation.