

# SAFE SANCTUARIES<sup>®</sup> Revision Process Explanation

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Our biblical faith and our United Methodist Social Principles affirm that God has called us to create communities of faith where children, youth, and vulnerable adults can be safe and grow as disciples of Jesus. The West Ohio Conference Safe Sanctuaries Task Force has been charged with revising the Safe Sanctuaries Standards of the Conference. It is a complex charge as we are a beautifully diverse Conference. In West Ohio, we have churches that worship 10 or fewer to some that worship over 1000 weekly. We have urban, suburban, rural, town and country, and county seat congregations. There are churches composed of persons who may speak different languages and who are acclimating to our culture. West Ohio also has churches that engage in camping, Volunteer in Mission Teams, ministries with returning neighbors, and a host of other multi-generational ministries that may require special consideration when it comes to implementing their Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

Our Task Force is composed of people who represent the diversity of our annual conference. We have members from various racial and ethnic backgrounds; women and men; rural, urban, suburban; smaller and larger congregations; laity, Deacons, and Elders. From the Conference, we have Task Force members who are knowledgeable about ministry with persons who are vulnerable, returning to our communities following legal issues, acclimating to Western culture, and have experience and knowledge around an assortment of other special interests and concerns. We have intentionally tried to represent a broad spectrum of the diversity that makes up our Conference. Our diversity is a gift, and we celebrate it.

The West Ohio Annual Conference is presenting a Safe Sanctuaries Policy with recommended practices and procedures. Each local church is responsible for writing, implementing, training, submitting, and annually reviewing an appropriate Safe Sanctuaries Policy. Community groups, insurance companies, and those who are part of your church can be affected by changes made to your Safe Sanctuaries Policy. The expectation of the Conference is that all churches regardless of size, location, ethnicity, culture or background will seek to implement these practices and procedures in a manner reasonably permitted by their resources and circumstances. Support documents will be provided through the conference website. These documents are designated to assist churches that need and want more guidance with specific ministry opportunities. Supporting documents offer a variety of resources including, but not limited to Safe Sanctuaries and: transportation, retreats, ministry with returning neighbors, camping, mission teams, and several other areas where churches seek guidance from the Conference. It is our prayer, that you will find in this policy, help for your church in your ministry location.