

**GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
VULNERABLE ADULTS PROTECTION POLICY¹**

1. PURPOSE

- a. To help Grace United Methodist Church (GUMC) provide a caring and secure environment for vulnerable adults in all aspects of church life.
- b. To ensure that volunteers and paid staff desiring to work with vulnerable adults properly screened, trained and interested in promoting the well-being of all persons.
- c. To help GUMC reduce its legal risk and liability exposure.

2. THEOLOGICAL AND BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’” Matthew 25:40.

“If so, the host who invited both of you will come and say to you, ‘Give this person your seat.’ Then, humiliated, you will have to take the least important place. But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, ‘Friend, move up to a better place.’ Then you will be honored in the presence of all the other guests. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

“Then Jesus said to his host, ‘When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or sisters, your relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.’” Luke 14:9-14.

Grace United Methodist Church (GUMC) is committed to the care of all persons and seeks to create a safe environment for vulnerable persons, whether children or adults, in which opportunities for abuse are minimized by the proper enlistment and supervision of persons working with them. We uphold the idea that to report abuse is to be a witness to the world of the love and justice of God, and we fully recognize that reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. Simply stated, reporting abuse may help stop existing abuse and prevent further abuse.

As caring Christians, we also are committed to protect and advocate for vulnerable persons – whether adults or children - participating in the life of the church. The church, at all levels of its organization, is entrusted with the responsibility of providing an emotionally and physically safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for vulnerable persons, in which they are protected from abuse. Additionally, we care for vulnerable persons and their families by offering resources that will contribute to healing. Finally, we recognize the grace that God gives

¹ Adapted from the policy of the North Alabama Conference of the UMC.

in upholding Christian community; and we will look for grace-filled ways of dealing with both the victim and the accused.

3. Working Definitions

- **Abuse** – The infliction of physical pain or injury or the willful deprivation of services necessary to maintain mental and physical health, by a Caregiver or other person.
- **Caregiver** – An individual who has responsibility for the care of a Vulnerable Person as a result of a family relationship, or who has assumed that responsibility voluntarily, by contract, or as a result of the ties of friendship.
- **Older Adult** – At GUMC, this includes adults 55 and older
- **Emotional Abuse** – The intentional or reckless infliction of emotional or mental anguish, or the use of a physical or chemical restraint, medication or isolation as punishment or as a substitute for treatment or care of any Vulnerable Person.
- **Exploitation** – The expenditure, diminution, or use of the property, assets or resources of a Vulnerable Person without the express voluntary consent of that person or his or her legally-authorized representative.
- **Financial Exploitation** – The use of deception, intimidation, undue influence, force or threat of force to obtain or exert unauthorized control over a Vulnerable Person’s property, with the intent to deprive the Vulnerable Person of that property.
- **Neglect** – The failure of a Caregiver or other person to provide food, shelter, clothing, medical services, medication or health care for a Vulnerable Person.
- **Vulnerable Person** – Any person, regardless of age, whose behavior indicates that he or she is mentally incapable of adequately caring for himself or herself and his or her interests without adverse consequences to himself or herself or others, or who, because of physical or mental impairment, socioeconomic status, language barriers, education, or otherwise, is unable to protect himself or herself from abuse, neglect, exploitation (whether physical, mental, emotional, or financial), sexual abuse, or emotional abuse by others.

4. POLICIES FOR REDUCING THE RISK OF ABUSE

In an effort to create the safest possible environment within GUMC, the following prevention measures will be used:

- Any Staff Person working with Vulnerable Adults shall be properly screened and complete a criminal background check.
 - No one who has had a formal child abuse accusation or conviction, or who refuses to complete the screening form will be permitted to work with GUMC’s vulnerable adults
- All volunteers serving in a leadership capacity to vulnerable adults must be members or active in GUMC for at least 6 months.
 - Exceptions: This requirement may be waived if a person transfers from another church AND provides references to the appropriate staff member. The

verification of these references must be documented before allowing the person to begin to work independently with vulnerable adults at GUMC.

- Staff Person or Volunteer may not engage in any form of neglect, abuse or exploitation of Vulnerable Persons, whether for financial gain or for any other reason.
- Persons leading any group of Vulnerable Persons must be 18 years of age or older.
- Two-adult rule: Two non-related adults must always be present in groups of Vulnerable Persons, except in emergency situations and where not reasonably feasible.
- Where the two-adult rule is not feasible, a separate adult supervisor will be required to spot-check or make unannounced visits as necessary.
- Doors are never to be locked and are to remain open unless equipped with windows. Staff Persons and Volunteers will avoid being alone with a Vulnerable Person without being visible to others in the immediate surroundings.

5. TRAINING OF VOLUNTEERS AND STAFF

All members of the Senior Adult Council, along with any volunteers and paid staff serving in a leadership capacity to vulnerable adults will be asked to read the GUMC Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy and sign a Statement of Understanding and Intent Regarding GUMC Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy (located in Appendix A of this document).

6. COMMUNITY GROUPS

Leaders of community groups using the church facility and working with vulnerable adults shall have access to this policy and expectations to adhere to it.

7. PLAN FOR RESPONDING TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

Should there be an allegation of abuse at Grace United Methodist Church, the matter should be reported immediately to the Senior and Associate Pastor. Together, these individuals shall ensure that the appropriate actions will be taken. If the allegation involves one of the pastors, the matter should be reported to the other pastor and the chair of the Leadership Board.

Appendix A

GRACE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Statement of Understanding and Intent Regarding GUMC Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy

I, the undersigned, have read GUMC's Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy, understand what it means, and agree to abide by it.

I (my organization) will abide by GUMC's policy when working with vulnerable adults both on and off church premises.

Signature _____ Date _____

Printed Name _____

Address _____

Phone Numbers: Home _____ Work _____

Name of organization using the church facility if other than church affiliated activity:
