Dear Ministry Leader,

As part of His public ministry, Jesus committed the then-radical act of welcoming children. Churches today want to bless the children as Jesus did. We extend invitations to children and youth, but we also face the tragic reality that sexual abuse of children and youth occurs in our communities. Wesley Freedom is committed to ensuring that all people involved in the church may participate in an environment that is safe and secure, as one way that we live out Jesus’ act of love.

The Baltimore-Washington Conference of the United Methodist Church (BWCUMC) has adopted the book *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth*, by Joy Thornburg Melton, as its policy for keeping children and youth safe in its churches and conference. In addition, BWCUMC has adopted a Sexual Ethics Policy for Ministry Leaders, the purpose of which is to maintain an environment that is safe for people to grow in God’s love by providing guidelines for the prevention of incidents of sexual misconduct, and for reporting and responding to incidents of misconduct, should they occur.

It is the strong assumption by the Baltimore-Washington Conference and by Wesley Freedom that the great majority of workers with children and youth within the Conference and at Wesley Freedom are above reproach.

At Wesley Freedom, we have created a Safe Sanctuaries policy to protect our children, youth, volunteer servants, staff, and church. The Leadership Development Team (LDT) serves as the executive agent for oversight of this policy and has assigned specific duties to a Safe Sanctuary Administrator in carrying out the requirements of the policy.

Specific Requirementswill be provided to all Ministry Leaders prior to service, but include completion of annual training, a questionnaire on sexual misconduct, a participation covenant, reference forms, and authorization for a background check.

**Purpose of the Questionnaire.** The Laity Sexual Misconduct Questionnaire has been prepared by the BWCUMC to assist churches in assessing the suitability of potential workers with children and youth. The information provided on this form will be reviewed annually.

**Who will see my information?** The LDT is charged with reviewing information obtained during the screening process and with deciding who may and may not work with children and youth. A limited number of staff and/or volunteers may assist the LDT with these activities. While every effort is made to maintain the confidentiality of sensitive personal information, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed.

Decisions of the LDT regarding whether persons may work with children or youth should not be construed as making any value judgment concerning the character, reputation, or credibility of the individual who has applied. Decisions of the LDT can be appealed to the Senior Pastor, whose decision is final.

F. Kevin Silberzahn

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Chair, Leadership Development Team