

1 Methodist Church recognizes the need to respond to these situations by outlining  
 2 policies and procedures that can  
 3  
 4 • 1) prevent abuse from happening in our churches;  
 5 • 2) affirm we are a place where children can feel safe in disclosing abuse;  
 6 • 3) protect volunteers and employees that minister to our children, youth and  
 7 vulnerable adults.  
 8  
 9 (You shall find within this policy the) minimum requirements in the areas of;  
 10  
 11 1) Screening,  
 12 2) Supervision,  
 13 3) Reporting, and  
 14 4) Response Plan.  
 15  
 16 (Churches are welcomed and encouraged to go beyond these minimum  
 17 requirements.)  
 18  
 19 **DEFINITIONS**  
 20  
 21 **“Abuse”** means harm or a threat of physical or emotional harm to a child or vulnerable  
 22 adult by a parent, guardian, or other person. Abuse includes: (a) the infliction of  
 23 physical or emotional injury by other than accidental means; (b) the creation of a risk,  
 24 or allowing the creation of a risk, to a child by other than accidental means; (c)  
 25 committing or allowing to be committed an act of sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or  
 26 prostitution upon the child.  
 27  
 28 **“Child”** or **“children”** or **“youth”** means any person who has not reached his/her  
 29 eighteenth birthday.  
 30  
 31 **“Exploitation”** means obtaining or using another person’s resources, including but not  
 32 limited to funds, assets, or property, by deception, intimidation, or similar means, with  
 33 the intent to deprive the person of those resources.  
 34  
 35 **“Sexual abuse”** includes, but is not necessarily limited to, any contacts or interactions  
 36 in which the parent, guardian, or other person allows, permits, or encourages the use of  
 37 the child for the purposes of sexual stimulation of the perpetrator or another person.  
 38  
 39 **“Sexual exploitation”** includes, but is not limited to, a situation in which a parent,  
 40 guardian, or other person allows, permits, or encourages the child to engage in an act  
 41 which constitutes prostitution under New York law; or a parent, guardian, or other  
 42 person having custodial control or supervision of a child or responsible for his/her  
 43 welfare, allows, permits, or encourages the child to engage in an act of obscene or  
 44 pornographic photographing, filming, or depicting of a child as provided for under New  
 45 York law.  
 46  
 47 **“Supervision”** means to oversee or direct a ministry or activity.  
 48

1 **“Vulnerable Adult”** means a person whose mental or physical condition makes them  
 2 susceptible to abuse.  
 3  
 4 **SCREENING PROCEDURES**  
 5  
 6 Careful screening is one way to prevent abuse and exploitation of children, youth and  
 7 vulnerable adults. (It can be both time consuming and expensive, but it is well worth  
 8 the effort in peace of mind that the most reliable, committed and experienced staff and  
 9 volunteers are in place for every program that involves children, youth, and vulnerable  
 10 adults).  
 11  
 12 1. All (paid) staff(;) and volunteers who have regular and direct contact  
 13 with children, youth and vulnerable adults shall be required to fill out  
 14 background screening information that shall include, but is not limited  
 15 to:  
 16  
 17 a. Standard contact information.  
 18  
 19 b. Experience and qualifications for the position.  
 20  
 21 c. Voluntary disclosure of past criminal history, including any criminal  
 22 charges and/or convictions.  
 23  
 24 d. Waiver of confidentiality allowing the church to secure background  
 25 checks and references as necessary.  
 26  
 27 e. Listing of 2 non-relative references. This list shall have complete  
 28 contact information for all references. This portion of the  
 29 application process is considered incomplete if full contact  
 30 information for the references is not received.  
 31  
 32 (All paid staff; and volunteers shall have a completed background check prior  
 33 to beginning their ministry and service.)  
 34  
 35 2. Background screening:  
 36  
 37 a. Minimum – NY state background check.  
 38  
 39 b. Recommended – National Background check.  
 40  
 41 c. A national background check is highly recommended if the person  
 42 has lived outside the state and/or lives near the border of another  
 43 state or country.  
 44  
 45 *Note:* Clergy serving in the North Central NY Annual Conference will  
 46 undergo a background screening upon entrance into the conference  
 47 and/or candidacy process. This information may be updated as requested  
 48 by the Office of the Bishop and the documentation shall be kept in the  
 49 personnel files of the annual conference.

## New ACT *continued from page five*

Clarification was requested on the responsibilities for development of the 2010 and 2011 budgets between Asset Allocations and New ACT. A sub-team made up of all four Upper New York conferences’ Directors of Connectional Ministries and Treasurers as members with Executive Assistant to the Bishop Christine Doran facilitating.

### **Election determines Team membership**

The Joint Distributing Committee is defined by **The Book of Discipline** and members will be elected by each of the six (Central PA, New England, North Central New York, Troy, Western New York, and Wyoming) Annual Conferences at sessions this spring. Until the election takes place, the appointed committee is gathering information such as service records of active and retirees; looking at the possibility of special grants for retirees; and gathering information on health care cover-

age so members have the information they need to begin work once elected. Timelines, equity, and justice questions impact this committee’s work.

Bishop Marcus Matthews (New York West Area) and Bishop Susan Hassinger (Albany Area) are meeting with the General Board of Health and Pensions this week to clarify some of the issues impacting the work of the Joint Distribution Committee. Bishops Matthews and Hassinger are also meeting with the Conference Chancellors to discuss the actual date incorporation needs to take place.

### **BOOM**

A report from the Board of Ordained Ministry sub-team indicated the primary concern currently expressed is who those in process should contact. The determination was to continue to talk to who they have been until notified a change has been made.

### **Programs**

Questions around how to care for initial programs and ministry in the New Conference were raised and will be moved forward for discussion by the appropriate body.

### **Sessions**

A report from the interim sessions team indicated a number of sub-teams will be in place to address financial planning, worship, agenda, details (including hospitality), technology related to worship and communications pieces for the new Annual Conference sessions.

### **Teams**

A Spiritual Formation team was suggested to lead people in the new conference with prayer and study.

Communications Task Force is working on strategy, marketing, and IT resources needed. Timelines and a Strategy Document are being developed and a newspaper will be distributed at Annual Conference Sessions.

Communicators were asked to assist in the development of a report for Annual Conference.

Appointments to the Interim Leadership Development and Interim Personnel Committee will be made by Bishop Matthews and Bishop Hassinger. The names will be processed through the cabinet and efforts made to have diversity.

### **Thank You**

Bishop Matthews expressed appreciation for the work of Convener Bill Gottschalk-Fielding and Administrative Assistant Anne Hutchins for their work on behalf of New ACT.

### **Uppernewyork.org**

Minutes and other information on the work of New ACT and others teams and committees working on the creation of the new Conference in Upper New York can be found at uppernewyork.org