



P.O. Box 128 • Altamont, TN 37301 • (931) 692-3999 • [www.mountain-top.org](http://www.mountain-top.org)

YOUTH MINISTRIES • YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES • ADULT MINISTRIES

## Youth and Parent Packet

Welcome to the Mountain T.O.P. (Tennessee Outreach Project) experience! This packet is designed to give you important information about camp and how to personally prepare to come.

We have realized over the years that the more preparation we can encourage prior to camp arrival, the more successful the experience will be for everyone. By giving you a personal copy of the Mountain T.O.P. philosophies, camp guidelines, what to bring list, weekly schedule, frequently asked questions and the release forms, we can ensure a higher level of understanding with all the campers.

**NOTE TO PARENTS:** The ministry spends a great deal of time and resources ensuring its participants understand what they are coming to and how they can have the optimum experience. In an effort to help you know more about the camp your youth will be attending this summer, we want to include you with this packet. We are looking forward to your youth coming to the Middle Tennessee region of Appalachia to help make a difference in the lives of Cumberland Mountain families. We are excited about the program we can offer your youth as they learn about serving God by serving others. If you have any further questions, please call us at our office at 931-692-3999.

Can't wait to see you on the Mountain T.O.P.!

In Christ's Service,

Rev. Ed Simmons  
Executive Director

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# **Special Characteristics of a Mountain T.O.P. YSM Week**

## **DAYBREAK**

To be intentional about our time with God while at Mountain T.O.P., we provide each participant with the opportunity to begin their day with the Lord. Daybreak is a 15-20-minute time after breakfast when campers sit alone for study, reflection and prayer. Campers will need to bring their Bibles, journals or any other items desired for this time to breakfast. Mountain T.O.P. will provide materials to guide this time that relates to the focus for each day as it pertains to programming. We pray this helps participants grow closer in their relationship with God.

## **YRG (YOUTH RENEWAL GROUP)**

Each participant is part of a YRG, which consists of 6-7 people, including 1-2 adults. The YRG experience is designed to give youth the opportunity to renew themselves, discover new meanings about their lives, increase their self-esteem and confidence, make new friends, and be a contributing part of a team with a common goal. When dividing into YRG's our staff members will ensure that they are as balanced as possible across age, gender, experience and home church.

## **COMMUNITY EVENING PROGRAMS**

These programs are a time for fun and fellowship with the whole camp community. Programs may consist of group recreation, group builders, or free time.

The evening always includes a sharing time and worship. Sharing gives everyone the opportunity to express their thoughts and insights from their day in the community. Worship is an ecumenical experience designed to focus on serving God. It is an opportunity for campers and staff to engage in reflective moments as they seek to grow closer and further develop their commitment to God.

## **MAJOR GROUP WORSHIP**

Mountain T.O.P.'s style of worship is often participatory, engaging campers to connect with the Lord in creative, tangible and unique ways. One aspect of our camp weeks that may differ from other organizations is Thursday evening Major Group Worship. Each group will be responsible for planning their own worship service. The Major Group Leader will facilitate the planning. This experience gives youth the opportunity to be on the planning end of programming. For some youth, this may be the first time to be a part of thinking about how to extend the opportunity to worship to others. This challenges youth to explore their own faith while also giving them the chance to be creative and develop skills.

## **YRG (YOUTH RENEWAL GROUP) CELEBRATION**

This is the closing celebratory time for each YRG on Friday afternoon before returning to camp. It is a time for each member to express his or her thoughts and feelings to the others about the team experience along with rejoicing in the growth and renewal that comes from giving of yourself to others. Many YRG's exchange gifts at this time, but it is not required.

## **FRIDAY CLOSING WORSHIP**

This worship is dedicated to celebrating the journey of the camp community throughout the week and to asking participants to commit to being a fisher of people in the valley below. This time of reflection is designed to highlight for participants that the Mountain T.O.P. experience does not stay on top of the mountain, but it goes home with each participant in their hearts.

## **SATURDAY MORNING CLOSING CIRCLE**

This celebration is designed to reconnect participants with their own youth groups and to challenge the youth groups to go forth and continue to share God's love in the valley below. Mountain T.O.P. seeks to enrich the lives of its participants so they will take their experience and build on it when they return home.

# The Week at A Glance

## The Week at A Glance

<b>ARRIVE ON SUNDAY MORNING</b>		6:00	Dinner
12:30	Gates Open --Registration, unload and move-in	6:30	Major Group Meeting (M,T,Thu)
1:30	Adult Meeting with the Director	7:15	Evening Community Program * Recreation Sharing Worship
2:15	Orientation: What is this week going to look like?		
		<b>FRIDAY SCHEDULE</b>	
3:00	Worship	7:30am	Breakfast
3:30	Break (healthy snack)	8:00	Daybreak
3:45	Field and Program Orientation Major Group Division YRG Division	8:30	Major Group meetings and then load up tools/coolers
6:00	Dinner YRG Development Time Major Group Meeting Community Moment	9:00	Go to site for the day <i>Work, work, work</i>
9:45	Lights Out	12:00pm	Lunch at site
		1:00	YRG Celebration in county
<b>MON - THUR SCHEDULE</b>		4:00	Return to camp – church load up
7:30am	Breakfast	6:00	Dinner Campfire Fishhook worship service
8:00	Daybreak		
8:30	Major Group meetings and then load up tools/coolers	<b>SATURDAY SCHEDULE</b>	
9:00	Go to site for the day <i>Work, work, work</i>	7:00am	Breakfast Camp Evaluations
4:30	Return to camp, unload tools/coolers	7:30	Daybreak
		8:00	Camp Cleanup Closing Circle
		10:00	Depart

\*The evening activities vary from night to night. Tuesday evening the Camp Director will lead a brief Adult Huddle, Wednesday evening all adults will be honored by the Mountain T.O.P. Support Staff, Thursday evening the Camp Director will lead a Prospective Staff meeting for those interested in serving on the Mountain T.O.P. Summer Staff.

# Frequently Asked Questions

## **What am I getting into?**

You are getting yourself into an incredible experience of serving others and experiencing Christian community. Monday through Friday you will go out with a small team of people to complete minor home repair projects (Service Project) or to build relationships with children through a day camp (Day Camp). We mix up all the churches that come and as a result the community builds quickly. One of the most unique characteristics of a Mountain T.O.P. camp is this deep sense of a community.

## **What is provided in the cost?**

- Lodging in cabins with bunks
- Meals from Sunday dinner through Saturday breakfast are provided
- Materials and project coordination
- All programming, including nightly worship
- Camp staffing

## **What is the size of a camp community?**

Usually anywhere from 100-170 people, with about 5-8 different church groups.

## **How long is a workday?**

A workday is from 9AM – 4:30PM

## **Do you eat lunch at the worksite?**

Yes, when the groups gather their tools in the morning before leaving, they will also pick up a food and water cooler. They eat lunch at the family's house and invite them to join in for food and/or conversation.

## **How old does a participant have to be?**

He or she must have finished the 7th grade or be at least 13 years old.

## **Why is there an age requirement to be a participant?**

The type of work being done requires a certain level of maturity and physical stamina. The YRG is comprised mostly of youth that are empowered to take ownership in the work and direction of the team. A certain level of physical and emotional maturity is necessary to help these teams function in the most effective way possible. The experience as a whole is best understood at this age.

## **Where exactly will we be going?**

Mountain T.O.P. serves 7 counties in Tennessee out of two camp facilities in middle Tennessee. Camp Baker Mountain is in Spencer, TN and Camp Cumberland Pines is in Altamont, TN.

## **What are the accommodations like?**

The camps are in wooded areas on top of the Cumberland Plateau. There is a dining hall, pavilion, cabins, worship center, tool shed, infirmary room, snack shop, basketball court, sand volleyball court and grassy field. The cabins have wooden bunks with foam mattresses. Participants bring their own bedding. Some of our cabins have bathrooms

inside and some are in bathhouses a short distance from the cabin. There are no private rooms or married housing; men and women sleep in separate areas.

**Who provides the tools for service project and the materials for day camp?**

Each youth group will be asked to bring the appropriate amount of tools/materials prorated by group size. It is critical that groups understand that they are the ones providing a portion of the tools needed to do the work. For service project, the materials (lumber, paint, nails, etc.) will already be at your project site.

**Can I come late on Sunday or leave early if I have other plans?**

Arriving late or leaving early from the camp week is NOT an option. Leaving at any time during the week and coming back to camp is also NOT AN OPTION. We design our program very carefully to ensure that all participants receive the maximum benefit from their experience. On Sunday our staffs will be breaking the community into work teams and on Saturday morning the community will have its final closure experience; missing either of these would hinder the experience for a person and the community. If there is an extreme situation, we are willing to address special cases.

**What do we do at night?**

The evenings are designed to promote community development within the camp. All youth and adults are expected to participate in the structured activities each night. There will be a time for community fun and recreation, community sharing, worship and some free time. These activities will be with the whole camp community and focus on the "whole" rather than individual groups.

**Will we be able to have meetings to process as a group during the week?**

Because of the way we mix up and build community throughout the week, we prefer if you do not hold any meetings exclusive to your youth group unless they are a part of our schedule. We recognize that it is very important for you to be able build relationships with the youth based on your experiences together. We have provided a resource to you for debriefing the experience as a group that many groups have found to fit perfect as a break when traveling home. Of course, if an emergency comes up and you need to communicate to all of your youth, we will work with you to make time in the schedule for this. Please ask us if you have any questions.

**What do the adults do?**

The program is designed so that all campers, youth and adults, will participate in 100% of the camp activities. The role of the adults at camp is one of support and partnership with the staff. The camp director will be responsible for behavioral situations and will need the adults to act as role models of appropriate behavior. Many adults will serve as drivers to the various work projects and day camp sites. Within the work team, YRG (Youth Renewal Group), the adult serves as a team player, encouraging the youth to develop their leadership and relationship building skills. The adult brings a level of maturity to the YRG that Mountain T.O.P. and the people of the Cumberland Mountains appreciate and expect.

# Expectations for Participation

The following are some of the basic expectations we hold for all youth and adults who participate at Mountain T.O.P.

- Camp Attendance and Participation - Arriving late or leaving early from the camp week is NOT an option. Leaving at any time during the week and coming back to camp is also NOT AN OPTION. We design our program very carefully to ensure that all participants receive the maximum benefit from their experience. On Sunday, our staffs will be breaking the community into work teams and on Saturday morning the community will have its final closure experience; missing either of these would hinder the experience for a person and the community. If there is an extreme situation, we are willing to address special cases.
- Programming - (youth and adults) is expected to attend and participate in all structured activities, recreation, programs, and worships. Please do not ask us for any exceptions to this camp participation expectation. We want everyone to gain the most they can while at camp together.
- Dress Code - Shirts are to be worn at all times. Shirts with beer, liquor or other possibly offensive subject matter should not be brought to camp. Additionally, halter or spaghetti-strap tops, bathing suit tops, sports bras, shorts with an inseam less than 4" and jeans with offensive holes are not appropriate and should not be brought to camp. For safety reasons, the youth and adults with Service Project are to wear long pants (NO Leggings or yoga pants), closed-toe shoes and shirts with at least short sleeves during the workday. Youth and adults participating in Day Camp can wear appropriate shorts instead of pants and do not have to wear closed toed shoes. Shoes should be comfortable and appropriate for all day activities such as hiking or touring the area (please no flip-flops—or other slip-ons). Appropriate shorts are fine at camp in the evening.
- Alcohol & Drugs - Do not bring any alcoholic beverages or illegal drugs to camp. Those who bring such items can be sent home at their parent's expense.
- Prescription Drugs - Sharing of prescription drugs is strictly prohibited. Those who do can be sent home at their parents' expense.
- Fireworks - Do not bring fireworks into camp – these are dangerous items, especially in wooded areas.
- Adult Self-Screening Forms - All adults ages 18 and over need to have completed a satisfactory background check before they arrive at camp. If a background check has not been performed in the last 3 years, then one is completed by Mountain T.O.P. at their expense. Adult Self-Screening Forms are kept in the Mountain T.O.P. office.
- Lights Out Policy - Your camp staff will set times for "lights out" each night, and they typically set a slightly later time on Friday night. The staff will take

responsibility for the initial bed check at the designated lights out. Our expectation is that everyone will stay in his or her cabins after this time. We do not intend for the staff (nor are they able) to stay up for hours putting people back to bed and/or chasing them around camp. We ask for your group's understanding and cooperation in this matter. We depend on the leadership and maturity of the adults present in camp for assistance. If campers are found out of their cabins, the staff will find the youth group leader and have the camper call their parents. If there is a second incident of them sneaking out, the policy is to send the camper home at their parent's expense.

- Tobacco - The use of tobacco is discouraged and prohibited in some cases due to camp regulations, sensitivity and fire hazards. Our tobacco policy follows the guidelines of the United Methodist Social Principles. Anyone under the age of 18 is prohibited from smoking, using or possessing tobacco in any form during a Mountain T.O.P. camp week. Mountain T.O.P. recognizes the need to establish a designated tobacco area for those who use tobacco. This designated area is to be in a private and discreet area of camp. This is due to our desire to discourage the use of tobacco products and the need to not promote the use of tobacco as a social activity or as a part of the community process.
- Electronic Devices - The use of cell phones, iPods, radios and headsets is prohibited at the work sites. We want to encourage socializing and visiting with each other and the Cumberland Mountain families. Also, we want to be sensitive to one another's musical tastes. The use of these items in camp is strongly discouraged for the same reasons.
- Camp Visitation Policy - All our Partners, family, and former staff members are welcome to visit our camps during program periods with prior notification and approval of the camp director. In your desire to come visit please acknowledge that part of the Mountain T.O.P. participant experience is to get away from the norms and expectations of their everyday life. Mountain T.O.P. values providing this environment to its participants and discourages visitation to a point that it becomes distracting to the individual or community. For this reason, the number of visitors will be limited each evening and will be handled on a first come first serve, case by case basis. If you want to visit, please let us know as far ahead of time as possible so that we can make appropriate accommodations. Call the administrative office (931) 692-3999 to schedule your visit.

***The Mountain T.O.P. Summer Staff has overall responsibility for all activities. Therefore, camp directions and expectations given by the staff are to be followed.***

**ALL THREE PAGES MUST BE KEPT IN THE VEHICLE IN WHICH  
YOU ARE TRAVELING AT ALL TIMES.**

**(One copy plus the original must be brought to camp for each participant)**

**This is a 3 page form and must be FULLY completed.**

## **Medical Information Form**

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_ MI \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
\*Social Security Number \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_  
Church \_\_\_\_\_ Church Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Church Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ St \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Personal Physician \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
\*Insurance Company \_\_\_\_\_ \*Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
\*Policy # \_\_\_\_\_ \*Insured ID # \_\_\_\_\_ \*Prescription Card # \_\_\_\_\_  
In case of emergency contact:  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_  
Daytime Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Medication(s) you cannot take \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Medication you are currently taking \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
These medications are to be administered by (circle one): Youth / Contact Person / Staff  
Allergies / special health problems or concerns \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Do you have a current tetanus shot? Yes / No  
If yes, indicate date \_\_\_\_\_ If no, we encourage you to get one before you come.

***\*In lieu of this information, you may provide a copy of the front and back of your  
medical insurance card.***

## Statement of Activities and Release Form

Youth Service Ministry (YSM) at Mountain T.O.P. is a Christian Service ministry to the people of the Cumberland Mountains in Tennessee. Volunteers participating in the activities of this ministry will be expected to be involved in all activities and to respect the people of the Cumberland Mountains at all times.

Volunteers will participate in (but will not be limited to) yard work, porch and steps repair, flat roof painting and repair, shed construction, winterization projects, painting, cleaning, insulation, window repair/replacement, and other minor home repairs as need determines and are within the capability of the volunteer service team. These activities include may include the use of hand tools and the handling of materials and supplies. Power tools will only be used under the direct supervision of an adult and then only if the individual has the necessary skills to appropriately handle the power tool. Participants are never forced or required to engage in any work or activity in which they feel they are not able to participate safely.

YSM participants understand that photos and video may be taken during the course of the camp week that may be used by Mountain T.O.P. in the future promotion of our ministries and programs.

Participants are expected to follow all guidelines of participation, philosophies, and expectations set by the organization and camp staff. Participants are expected to follow all camp guidelines, philosophies, and expectations set by the ministry and camp staff. Examples of unacceptable behavior include sneaking out after lights out, violating the tobacco policy and other Mountain T.O.P. policies, going to places in the area which have been identified by camp staff as dangerous, and being disruptive to the camp life.

We acknowledge that every effort has been made in preparing the participants for this mission experience. We therefore release Mountain T.O.P., Incorporated, its agents, employees, and any and all persons connected therewith from any and all liability, claims, and causes of action of any type whatsoever arising out of or in any way connected with participation in the activities of the Mountain T.O.P. mission project.

Further, consent/permission is given for (participant) \_\_\_\_\_ to be treated by competent medical personnel in the event of an accident or medical emergency and to receive reasonable medical treatment as deemed necessary by a licensed physician.

In the event treatment is called for which a physician and/or other professional health care provider in the hospital/clinic refuses to administer without my consent, we hereby authorize:

Adult Group Leader (Print full name): \_\_\_\_\_

*and*

MTOP Camp Director (Print full name): \_\_\_\_\_

to give such consent for us in the event that we are not readily accessible by phone. If in the event it becomes necessary for either of the identified persons to give consent for us, we agree to hold such person free and harmless of any claims, demands, or suits for damages arising from giving such consent. We understand that Mountain T.O.P. requires proof of personal insurance or acknowledgement of financial responsibility for all medical expenses. We agree that our insurance company (if applicable) will be used for all necessary medical expenses and we are aware that we may be billed by the medical provider for any medical expenses not covered by our personal insurance policy and will be responsible for payment of those expenses.

This is the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Participant)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature (Parent or Guardian if participant is a minor)

**THIS FORM MUST BE NOTARIZED for anyone under the age of 18:**

Subscribed and sworn to before me this \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Notary Public signature

My commission expires: \_\_\_\_\_

Notary Public seal or stamp required above

# What to Bring

## Must Haves:

- Work clothes for one week
- Casual clothes for one week
- Bedding for a twin bed: sheets and blanket or sleeping bag
- Pillow
- Bath Towel
- Toiletries
- Shower Sandals
- Rain Gear
- At least one long-sleeve shirt, jacket or sweatshirt for possible cold evenings
- Sunscreen
- Bug Repellent
- Flashlight
- Hat or visor
- Bible
- Pen / pencil
- Watch (so you can be on time)
- Closed-toe, hard-sole shoes / work boots
- Water bottle

## Optional:

- Portable camp chair for more comfortable seating than the ground offers
- Fan (might need small extension cord for it)
- Spending money for canteen, camp store (T-shirts and other items will be sold, local dairy bars, local shops, etc.)
- Musical instrument (if you play one)
- Plastic bags for wet, soiled or filthy clothing

## Special Notes:

- Required during workday
  - Service Project - Long pants (NO leggings or yoga pants), closed-toe, hard-sole shoes or work boots and shirts with at least short sleeves
  - Day Camp - Shorts are okay, as well as open toe shoes. Shoes should be comfortable and appropriate for all day activities such as hiking or touring the area (please no flip-flops, or other slip-ons). Appropriate shorts are fine at camp in the evening.
  - All clothes should be conservative when it comes to their content (i.e. no beer or possibly offensive designs) and how revealing they are.
- Bring enough clothes for the entire week. Laundry facilities are not available.
- Please leave valuables at home and/or locked in vehicle for the week. This includes expensive jewelry, iPods, and large amounts of cash. Although we do the best we can, we cannot always ensure the security of the facilities.
- There are no separate sleeping accommodations for married couples.

# Youth Abuse Prevention Policy

“Safe Sanctuary” for Mountain T.O.P., Inc.

**Introduction:** Mountain T.O.P. (MTO) is an ecumenical faith-based Christian organization, affiliated with The United Methodist Church and holds a covenant relationship with the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church. The ministry agrees with the following statements of the General Conference and the policies and procedures that it recommends. The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April 1996 adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of abuse of children and youth in the church. This would include sexual, emotional, physical, and ritual abuse, and neglect. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, “Whoever welcomes a child...welcomes me” (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our futures, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of the church and in the realm of God.

Jesus also said, “If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones...,it would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state “...children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation, and abuse” (Paragraph 161C).

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation and ritual abuse (“ritual abuse” refers to abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites; ritual abusers are often related to cults, or pretend to be) occur in churches, large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation in their churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church, and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional, and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.

(From *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church – 2000*; pp. 180-181.  
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Thus, in covenant with the Tennessee Conference of the United Methodist Church, and in commitment to the church universal and to God Almighty, Mountain T.O.P. adopts this policy for the prevention of abuse of youth at our camp locations, worksites, and en route to and from our worksites. The purpose and intent for establishing this Youth Abuse Prevention Policy (including the Mountain T.O.P. Operating Procedures) is to demonstrate the absolute and unwavering commitment of MTO to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all of youth participants.

**Statement of Covenant:** Therefore, as a Christian ministry of faith and service to God and others, we, Mountain T.O.P. pledge to conduct the ministry of the Gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our youth participants, summer staff, administration, and people for whom we provide home repairs. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of staff; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events; we will educate all of our staff and administration regarding the use of all appropriate policies and methods (including first aid and methods of discipline); we will have a

clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law; and we will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs. We will strongly encourage each church participating in the ministry of Mountain T.O.P. to establish its own “Safe Sanctuary” policy and procedures.

**Conclusion:** In ministry to and with youth, Mountain T.O.P. is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each youth will be “...surrounded by steadfast love, ...established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (From “Congregational Pledge ,” “Baptismal Covenant II,” The United Methodist Hymnal, p. 44).

**Endorsed by:**

Mountain T.O.P. Board of Directors

*Adapted from Youth Abuse Prevention Policy, Safe Sanctuaries for Youth; Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries by Joy Thornburg Melton, Discipleship Resources 2003.*