



## ST. PAUL UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

11000 H.G. Trueman Road, Lusby, MD 20657

### **SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY**

*Adopted by the Staff Parish Relations Committee: August 2019*  
*Adopted by the Church Council: September 2019*  
*Updated by the Staff Parish Relations Committee: February 2020*  
*Revised by the Staff Parish Relations Committee: June 2024*

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at eliminating any potential for child sexual abuse in the church. The adopted resolution includes the following statement:

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes a child welcomes me." (Matthew 18:5). Children are our present and our future, 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 that "...children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse." (para. 162C)

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, both 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*. (P. 384-386)

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, St. Paul United Methodist Church adopts this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church.

## **Purpose**

Our purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of all our children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

## **Types of Abuse**

“Safe Sanctuary for Youth Reducing the risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries” by Joy Thornburg Milton categorizes abuse in five primary forms: physical abuse, emotional abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and ritual abuse.

***Physical Abuse:*** This is abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a youth or child. Examples may include violent battery with a weapon, burning, choking, fracturing bones, and other non-accidental injuries.

***Emotional Abuse:*** This is abuse in which a person exposes a youth or child to spoken threats or emotional cruelty. Such abuse devalues the subject’s sense of self-esteem and makes them feel unloved or undeserving of love and care. Exposure to emotional abuse may include withholding parental affection, being locked in closets or other confined spaces, being constantly criticized, or being forced to abuse alcohol, or illegal drugs.

***Neglect:*** This is abuse in which a person willfully endangers a youth or child’s health, welfare, and safety through deliberate negligence. It may include withholding food, medical care, affection, or education to destroy sense of self-esteem or self-worth.

***Sexual Abuse:*** This type of abuse includes sexual conduct between a youth and an adult. The victim is not capable of consenting to such contact or resisting advances. The victim may be physically or psychologically dependent on the perpetrator.

***Ritual Abuse:*** This is abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violence is inflicted intentionally in a stylized way, by someone or groups with responsibility for the victim’s welfare. Examples of ritual abuse may include cruel treatment of animals or repeated threats of violence to the youth victim or to people related to the victim.

## **Covenant Statement**

St. Paul United Methodist Church hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children and youth as well as all of our workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with children and youth on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of Maryland law. All SPUMC volunteers and staff are considered mandated reporters.

**If a suspected incident of child abuse or neglect occurs at or is revealed to a SPUMC volunteer/paid staff the report must be made to the adult in charge, and the adult in charge of the activity will**

- 1) Ensure the safety of the child or youth**
- 2) Call the church pastor or designee**
- 3) Call the County Office of DSS at 443-550-6900**

## **A. Staff/Volunteer SELECTION Policies**

All volunteer and paid staff who work with children and youth at SPUMC will be:

- At least 18 years old.
- At least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth they will be supervising.
- A member or active participant of SPUMC for at least 3 months or provide references from previous church

All volunteer and paid staff who work with children and youth at SPUMC will:

- Complete Statement of Acknowledgement and Agreement to SPUMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Procedure, Appendix A.
- Complete and sign SPUMC Sexual Misconduct Questionnaire, Appendix B, annually giving permission to check references and background information.
- Provide the names and contact information of 3 personal references.
- Undergo a criminal background check at no expense if they will have supervisory program responsibility for children/youth. Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, children, youth or vulnerable adults.

All youth between the ages of 13 and 17 will complete the Youth Aide Covenant, Appendix C.

## **B. Staff/Volunteer SUPERVISION Guidelines**

Whenever supervising activities involving children and youth at SPUMC,

- Two non-related adults will be present at all times.
- For Vacation Bible School and Sunday School: one adult and non-related youth can be present in lieu of two adults.
- Children and youth will be checked in to and out of a church sponsored activity by their parent or legal guardian or people authorized by parent/legal guardian.
- They will have access to a telephone or cell phone groups are at or away from the church facility
- One-on-one interactions with children and youth will be with an open door and visible to all.

Whenever SPUMC sponsors an activity involving children or youth,

- Anyone has the right to visit and observe the children's/youth activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced.
- All classroom and office doors will have a window or visibility from hallway or remain open while occupied.
- Window decorations must not block visual access to the room.

Whenever SPUMC transports children or youth away from the church campus,

- The driver must be the child's/youth's parent/guardian, a screened adult, or a paid staff member of the church.
- Drivers shall be at least twenty-five (25) years of age.

- All drivers shall be designated and approved by the event leader in advance.
- Parents/guardians must give written permission for their child/youth to be transported to the event.
- Drivers must have a current valid driver's license. If commercial transportation is used, the company providing the service is responsible for certifying the driver's credentials.
- Children/youth must wear seat belts in private vehicles. The number of passengers shall not exceed the number of seat belts available. Drivers will ascertain that children/youth are wearing seat belts before commencing driving.
- Drivers shall certify to the church that they have current automobile insurance policies in force.
- Drivers should be accompanied by at least one other *approved* adult.
- Drivers should be familiar with the route to/from the trip site. If traveling in a group, all drivers should follow the same route as designated by the leader and cars should stay together as much as possible.
- Drivers should go through same screening process as all other paid/volunteer staff

### **C. Trip and Retreat Supervision**

Protection requirements for trip and retreat settings will vary depending on the circumstances. Requirements defined in the policy below shall always be followed, while some or all of the guidelines should be implemented. The trip/retreat leader shall be mindful of both requirements and guidelines, and apply their best judgement given the needs of the occasion.

#### ***Requirements:***

1. There will be at least two (2) screened adults present for all trips, retreats, and events for children and youth away from the church.
2. There shall be two (2) screened adults for each gender present at co-ed overnight events.
3. The event leader shall secure permission slips from parent/guardians of all youth/children participating in the event to include permission for emergency care if needed.

#### ***Guidelines:***

1. Separate rooms should be assigned for children/youth with at least two (2) children/youth per room.
2. Adult rooms should be between the children/youth rooms.
3. Adult leaders should make random monitoring trips and room checks at night for the same gender children/youth they are responsible for.
4. Hotels should be selected where the rooms open to an interior hallway of the building.

### **D. Social Media**

The internet and portable devices allow people to stay in contact with each other more easily than at any other time in the history of civilization. Some incredible ministry can take place using modern

technology, but as with all forms of ministry there are some inherent risks involved with the use of electronic communications. However, following basic Safe Sanctuaries procedures can help to minimize those risks. There is no such thing as privacy on the Internet. Consider anything and everything on the internet as public information.

Social Media is defined as social networking websites or applications that foster interactions in a virtual environment, including, but not limited to: Facebook, Instagram, X (Twitter), Snapchat, YouTube, TikTok, blogs, dating websites and apps, and video calling services such as FaceTime, Zoom or Skype, as well as email, instant messaging, texting and phone calls.

St. Paul UMC live streams and records its worship services and frequently posts pictures and videos on the church's website and Facebook.

As St. Paul UMC seeks to provide a safe environment, it shall be within the scope of our ministry to educate parents/guardians, youth, and children on the safe use of social media platforms. It is recommended that parents/guardians frequently monitor their child's/student's social media interactions. Workers and volunteers shall NOT:

1. Share photographs or videos of children/youth anywhere on the internet or social media platforms. In certain limited circumstances, SPUMC or a partner organization may invite workers to share photos of children from their organization on the workers' personal social media account
2. Post personal or identifying information of children/youth with or without photos or videos, anywhere on the internet without specific written permission, given to St. Paul UMC by their parents/guardians. For example, pictures of children/youth/parents will not have names posted or be "tagged."
3. Ask a child/youth – to whom the worker is connected via St. Paul UMC – to be a "friend" using any type of social media, such as Facebook. Workers may accept a "friend request" from a child/youth ONLY with the knowledge and permission of the child/youth's parents/guardians.
4. Use email, texting, phone calls, or other social media to communicate with children/youth in inappropriate ways. Inappropriate communication may involve, but is not limited to, discussions of a sexual nature, sexting, sharing inappropriate pictures, manipulation, harassment, intimidation, or grooming issues.

Conversations through social media should always be conducted by means that can be recoverable (e.g. email, text message, voicemail, Facebook). Prolonged private discussions between an adult and a children/youth are also inappropriate. It is always strongly recommended that parents/guardians be aware of communication that exists between their child and any adult.

#### **E. Outside Organizations**

All organizations and groups using SPUMC facility who are hosting an activity involving children or youth must follow SPUMC's Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures. Organizers will be provided

the information upon reserving the facility and must disseminate it to their workers and/or volunteers. Each adult will complete Appendix A and Appendix B prior to the start of the activity.

**Conclusion**

In all of our ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child, youth and vulnerable adult will be “surrounded by steadfast love...established in the faith and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (Baptismal Covenant II, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, p.96).

Approved by the Church Council on this \_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 2024.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Senior Pastor

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chair, Church Council

**Appendix A**

**STATEMENT OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND AGREEMENT TO  
ST. PAUL SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY and PROCEDURES**

I have received and read a copy of the Safe Sanctuary Policy and understand the importance of the material in the manual. I agree to abide by these guidelines during my service at this church.

I understand the manual may be modified, and that any guideline may be amended, revised, or eliminated by this church. Any changes will be made public.

I acknowledge and understand that the materials and guidelines contained in this manual in no way express or imply a contractual employment relationship between me and this church. If applying as a volunteer, I acknowledge and agree that I will receive no monetary compensation for hours worked.

I understand it is my responsibility to review new guidelines which may be created and distributed, as well as manual guidelines that are changed or deleted.

I acknowledge receipt of the policies and procedures manual.

I understand that by not complying with these policies and procedures that my employment or right to volunteer could be revoked.

Any questions in regard to the SPUMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy have been addressed by the Pastor and/or his designee.

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**Worker's name (please print)**

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**Worker's signature**

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**Date**

Appendix B

Laity Sexual Misconduct Questionnaire

To be completed and signed by all persons who are to work with children and youth within the ministries of this congregation. Please check the appropriate box. If more space is needed, please use an additional piece of paper.

Name:
Date:

YES NO

- 1. Have you ever filled out this questionnaire for this church or agency?
- If NO (or unsure) please answer questions 3 – 9 below. Then sign and return this form.
- If YES, please give the date: \_\_\_\_\_ and answer question #2.

YES NOT SURE NO

- 2. If you answer YES to Question #1, have any answers changed since you filled out that copy?
- If NO, please sign and return this form.
- If YES OR NOT SURE, please answer questions 3 – 9 below.

YES NO

- 3. Have you ever been accused, in a written and signed statement of sexual misconduct with a child or youth?

YES NO

- 4. Have you ever been accused in a written and signed statement of sexual misconduct with an adult?

YES NO

- 5. Have you ever been accused in a written and signed statement of sexual misconduct with an adult?

YES NO

- 6. Have you ever resigned from any position, volunteer or salaried, because of an accusation of sexual misconduct on your part, or to avoid being dismissed because of an accusation of sexual misconduct on your part?

- 7. If your response to any of the forgoing questions (2 through 5) is YES, please provide all details regarding each accusation of sexual misconduct that has been made with respect to you, including a description of the alleged conduct, the name of the person who made the accusation, the date of the alleged misconduct, and the name of your employer at the time of the alleged misconduct.

Provide explanation in the space available or attach additional documentation.

YES NO

- 7a. Have accusations of sexual misconduct on your part ever resulted in civil or criminal court proceedings at any level (e.g. indictment, arrest, trial, etc.)? If yes, please provide the complete details of those proceedings (including dates, circumstances, the jurisdiction where the proceedings occurred, the nature of the accusations, and the result of the proceedings).

Provide explanation in the space available or attach additional documentation.

YES NO

- 7b. Have accusations of sexual misconduct against you resulted in civil or criminal court proceedings on more than one occasion? If so, please provide the same details with respect to each such proceeding.

Provide explanation in the space available or attach additional documentation.

YES NO

- 8. Other than the above, is there any fact or circumstance involving you or your background that would call into question your being entrusted with the supervision, guidance, and care of young people?

Provide explanation in the space available or attach additional documentation.

[Empty box for providing explanation or documentation]



9. Please provide three adult references (names, addresses, phone numbers) of persons who are not related to you by blood, marriage or other family relationships and are not employed or supervised by you, who can to the best of their ability, provide statements in support of your good behavior and clean record in regard to sexual misconduct with children, youth and adults.

Name 1:	
Address:	
City, State Zip:	
Phone:	
Name 2:	
Address:	
City, State Zip:	
Phone:	
Name 3:	
Address:	
City, State Zip:	
Phone:	

**\*\*\*\*\*QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONSE FORM\*\*\*\*\***

I verify that the answers I have provided on this Questionnaire are true and accurate to the best of my ability. I understand false answers, as well as the failure to sign this Response Form, will result in my being denied the position for which I am being considered. I understand that SPUMC will search sex offender directories and my signature below authorizes such a search.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print your name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's name has been checked against his or her driver's license or other Maryland ID:

\_\_\_\_\_

(Program Leader's Initials and Date)

Appendix C

# *St Paul United Methodist Church*

## Youth Aide Covenant

This covenant agreement is required for youth aides, ages 13-17 years, who work with children at our church. We greatly value the helping hands and support that our youth have always offered the ministries of this church. As we enter into this covenant agreement, we the church promise to provide support you will need to best serve our small children.

I have agreed to work as a volunteer aide in the ministry of care giving for children in our congregation. As a participant in this ministry, I agree to:

1. Demonstrate behavior appropriate for a person who has responsibility for children:
  - a. Maintain a calm, loving, and gentle demeanor.
  - b. Demonstrate respect for children, parents, my supervising teacher(s) and peers at all times.
  - c. Focus my attention on the children in my care.
2. Seek to understand the children. This means that I will learn about the physical and developmental characteristics as well as appropriate ways of responding and interacting with children of various temperament and personalities.
3. Follow the policies and procedures of the program.
4. Ask any questions in regard to the SPUMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy have had them answered by the Pastor and/or his designee.

I have read and understand the Safe Sanctuary Policy and will abide by this policy. I understand and agree to these responsibilities.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Sign

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent /Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

