

**St. Andrew's United Methodist Church**  
**327 Marlton Pike West**  
**Cherry Hill, New Jersey 08002**

## **Safe Sanctuary Policy**

In order to provide and foster a safe environment for children, youth and vulnerable adults, St. Andrew's United Methodist Church (SAUMC) and its members will abide by the following policies:

### ***Employee and Volunteer Background Check Requirements***

1. *Employment application* and background check are required for all employees of SAUMC.

The information for employees is to be reviewed by the Pastor and the chair of the Staff-Parish Relations committee (SPRC).

2. Background checks are required for all volunteers involved in church children's, youth's and/or vulnerable adult's programs.

The information for activities involving volunteers will be reviewed by the Pastor. The chairman of the Education Commission, Missions and Trustees, the Vacation Bible School (VBS) Director(s), Music Director and Youth Leader(s) will have only a list of approved volunteers.

3. All background checks are to be renewed every five (5) years.

4. The Greater New Jersey Annual Conference (GNJAC) approved service Trak -1 will be used for background checks. For volunteers who will be driving children, youth and vulnerable adults, a Child Protection Plus check is required, For all other volunteers, a Child Protection check is required. A link for this service can be found at <https://www.gnjumc.org/safe-sanctuaries/> for volunteers to request the background check for themselves. Alternately, they may fill out the current Trak-1 background check request form to permit the Church Office Administrator(s) to request the check be done.

5. Proof of a more stringent background check, such as fingerprinting, is deemed acceptable.

6. All forms are to be confidential.

7. All forms are to be stored in a locked location in the church office. Forms are to be accessed by the Pastor or a designee of the Pastor only. The Pastor designee will be the church Office Administrator(s) until the Pastor deems otherwise.

8. The cost of the background check will be borne by SAUMC through related department funding.

### **Building Compliance Requirements**

Safe Sanctuaries policy applies to all church operated programs for children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults. These programs are to be clearly differentiated from those that are non-church operated

1. All buildings in which such programs are housed shall have any necessary "certificates of occupancy".
2. All groups conducting such programs shall have the necessary certificates of insurance for both liability and workers compensation. They shall be displayed as required by law.
3. All such programs shall conform to Federal and State wage and tax laws for employees.
4. All certificates and documentation: Certificates of Occupancy, Certificate of Liability Insurance, Certificate of Workers Compensation Insurance, and Compliance with Federal and State wage and tax laws will be kept in the church office.

## Basic Procedures for Safe Ministry with Children, Youth and/or Vulnerable Adults

All church children, youth and/or vulnerable adult programs should adhere to the following basic procedural guidelines:

1. The "Two-Adult" Rule: 2 adults should be present at all times. One adult may be 18 years old but the other adult must be 19 years old or older.
2. If it is not at all possible to have Two-Adults in each classroom at the same time, a "Floater" is acceptable with the following requirements:
  - a. The Floater must be an adult on the volunteer list
  - b. The Floater must continuously visit each room without a second adult
  - c. There must be a Floater for each floor of the building. The first floor floater may be the Nursery Lead.
  - d. Classroom doors must remain open
3. Avoid all one-adult-one-child situations, such as closed-door bathroom breaks.
4. First Aid/CPR Trained personnel shall be available at all times.
5. Orientation will be held annually to remind all volunteers and paid staff of appropriate behavior, accepted policies and procedures. Alternately, this document may be emailed by the office administrators with a response requested.
6. The "Five-Years-Older" Rule: Adult volunteers and employees should be at least 5 years older than the oldest youth.

| <u>If youth is</u> | <u>Adult must be</u> |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 17 years old       | 22 years old         |
| 16                 | 21                   |
| 15                 | 20                   |
| 14                 | 19                   |
| 13                 | 18                   |

7. All classroom door windows will be unobstructed and doors will remain unlocked.
8. Sunday School classes may not physically change location without prior notification to the person stationed at the desk in the narthex. .
9. Sunday School Attendance Coordinator visits each classroom at least once during the session.
10. Counseling will be done with an open-door policy whenever possible or with a second adult nearby.
11. Parents will be given advance notice about program events and special activities.
12. Parents and family will be given our Safe Sanctuary Policy.
13. There will be appropriate equipment and supervision for the setting and activity. Some settings or activities will require more supervision or expertise than others.
14. Transportation and sleeping arrangements for overnight trips must be thoughtfully planned out and be appropriate to the 2008 edition of *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in*

*the Church for Children and Adults* by Joy T. Melton.

15. All church computers will be password protected and should always be monitored when in use by children, youth and vulnerable adults.
16. Cyber Space
  - a. Social Media
    1. The Youth social media outlet will be incorporated into the general church social media outlet.
    2. The general administrator for the church's outlet will serve as the administrator on the account and will approve all additions, postings and changes.
    3. Written parental consent will be acquired in order for pictures of youth under 18 years old to be posted on the page.
    4. Identifying information such as child/youth's name, school, sporting team, etc... will not be posted on the page in order to further protect the child/youth should the page be accessed by unauthorized individuals.
  - b. Church Web Site
    1. Written parental consent will be acquired in order for pictures of youth under 18 years old to be posted on the site.
    2. Child's/ youth's name will be included only with parental consent.
    3. Large group pictures will be allowed as long as an announcement is provided to the congregation during the service.
17. Transportation
  - a. All vehicles used by the organization transporting children and youth affected by this policy must be in proper functioning condition. This includes rentals and buses.
  - b. All vehicles (van, buses etc...) must have proper insurances. The insurance must be on file in the church office. Vehicles, that are rented by the church for church activities, are covered by the church's insurance.
  - c. All adult drivers must have a valid driver's license on file in the church office and are to be properly insured.
  - d. All passengers and drivers must wear safety belts as required by New Jersey state law.
  - e. There will be enough space in the vehicle for the passengers to be reasonably comfortable and for all luggage and equipment.
  - f. A First Aid Kit is to be in all vehicles. Drivers must insure that first aid kits are in the vehicles. Church will have some to loan.
  - g. No child/youth is to be alone in a vehicle with an adult church leader or church volunteer without the prior consent of the child's/youth's parent.

**Congregational Plan for Responding to Allegations of Abuse:**

Every individual in New Jersey, including clergy is required to report child abuse to the authorities if

there is a strong reason to believe that it is occurring. If you believe a child has been abused or neglected, you have a legal responsibility to report it. The Division of Child and Protection and Permanency (DCP&P) of New Jersey are required by law to investigate reports of child abuse and neglect. (<http://www.state.nj.us/dcf/about/divisions/dcpp/>)

DCP&P is New Jersey's child protection/child welfare agency. It is responsible for investigating allegations of child abuse and neglect and if necessary arranges for the child's protection and the family's treatment.

In addition, DCP&P operates a 24-hour hotline to receive reports of suspected child abuse and neglect during evenings, weekends and holidays. This Child Abuse Hotline is linked with a statewide network of Special Response Units who respond to emergency reports.

### **Plan Summary**

This is a plan for complying with the legal reporting requirements and for making statements to other officials and the media.

Only the Pastor is authorized to speak to the media on behalf of the congregation. Beyond the State's requirements, the Pastor will notify conference authorities including District Superintendent, Conference Coordinator of Youth and Bishop.

### **Procedure Details**

#### Reporting:

All complaints and allegations of child abuse occurring outside the church or church programs and activities should be reported to the DCP&P Abuse Hotline as a citizen of New Jersey.

#### **CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT HOTLINE**

**1-877-NJ ABUSE (652-2873)**

**1-800-835-5510 (TTY)**

**24 hours a day - 7 days a week**

All complaints and allegations of child abuse occurring inside the church or during a church program or activity should be directed to the Pastor as well as to DCP&P. The SPRC Chair should also be informed immediately by the pastor.

**Our job is not to try to investigate the suspected abuse, but to document the specifics that cause us to suspect abuse and to carefully report them. NJ Law does not require proof to call the hot line.**

The following procedure will be used in response to a child's complaint or allegations of child abuse occurring inside the church or during a church program or activity.

1. Remove child to safe place. The safety of the victim must be the Church's primary concern.
2. Do not confront the alleged abuser with anger and hostility - treat with dignity but immediately remove from further involvement.
3. Notify Authorities and document each contact using Report Form for Suspected Abuse by the pastor.

**a. Call DCP&P hotline: 1-877 NJ ABUSE (1-877-652-2873)**

They will instruct us of the steps we should follow for the specific situation. For sexual abuse cases, DYFS will contact a local center and dispatch a trained interviewer to interview the child.

**b. Call police: 911**

**c. Call the Pastor and /or Chairman of SPRC**

**The Pastor and/or Chairman of SPRC will insure the following are notified:**

**District Superintendent  
Conference Youth Coordinator  
The Greater NJ Conference Bishop  
The Church Insurance and Attorney**

4. Keep a written record of all steps taken in response to the allegation.

#### **Communications with the Congregation**

Once approved, this Safe Sanctuary Policy will be communicated through a letter to all parents of children of SAUMC, to the general congregation through a letter to be published in the Network newsletter, and a general e-mail broadcast to the entire congregation of SAUMC.

#### **Review and Approvals of Safe Sanctuary Policy:**

The Education Commission and/or the Safe Sanctuary Task Force of SAUMC will review the Safe Sanctuary Policy of SAUMC on an annual basis and notify the Administration Board .

#### **Definition of Terms:**

**VULNERABLE ADULTS:** Those adults diagnosed with diminished physical, mental, or emotional capacities.

**CHURCH PROGRAMS/NON-CHURCH PROGRAMS AS RELATED TO INSURANCE:** Programs relating to children, youth and vulnerable adults are covered under the conference-wide Property and Casualty Insurance Program so long as they are church operated. That is, the church must have control over starting and stopping the operation, hiring or firing the employees, and the management of the day-to-day operations. The decision to operate a program, as described above, should be a matter of record in the meeting minutes of the Administrative Board or Board of Trustees of the local church. This will lay to rest the question of whether it is a church operated or a non-church program that is using the church premises. The non-church program is not covered by the conference insurance and the church should be sure that these non-church programs carry a minimum of \$1,000,000 General Liability Insurance and are covered by Workers' Compensation insurance. Certificates of these insurance coverage should be requested and received by the church annually. The Annual Conference and the local church should be named as additional insureds on these policies. The employees of the church-operated childcare centers are covered under the Workers' Compensation Program and as such should be reported on the annual Workers' Compensation salary audit of the local church.

**BACKGROUND CHECKS:** Background checks are designed to protect those individuals involved in the programs offered by the church to children, youth and vulnerable adults.

Modified: May 4, 2016

Approved: as revised \_\_\_\_\_ (*Revisions in italics*)