

Safe Sanctuary Policy and Guidelines

Salem United Methodist Church ("Church") is eager to do all it can to protect the youth, children, and other vulnerable people who participate in the life of this congregation. We believe implementing a policy and adopting procedures to protect our children, youth, and other vulnerable people recognizes that:

Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to our children, youth, and other vulnerable people. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state, "...children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuse." The Social Principles also state, "...all persons are individuals of sacred worth, created in the image of God." The following policy statements and guidelines reflect the Church's commitment to preserving a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter, and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

Volunteer/Paid Staff Policy and Guidelines

1. All employees and volunteers will complete and sign an application and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information. The individual will provide the names and contact information of three personal references and undergo a criminal background check if they will have responsibility for children, youth, or other vulnerable people. Background checks will be rechecked every 5 years. Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for children, youth or other vulnerable people.

2. All employees and volunteers have a **continuing obligation to inform the Pastor of this Church if he/she is ever or ever has been adjudicated a "perpetrator" or convicted of perpetrating Child Abuse** (as herein defined) or any related offense, at any time an in any jurisdiction, **or if he/she is at any time charged with Child Abuse or a related offense**, in any jurisdiction.

3. All employees and volunteers shall be at least 18 years old. Exceptions apply for youth helpers.

4. All employees and volunteers expected to have contact with children, youth, or vulnerable persons must have been members of/or active participants in the Church for at least the preceding six months. *Rare exceptions may be made in consultation with the pastor in charge for special situations.*

Training Policy and Guidelines

1. All employees and volunteers expected to have contact with children, youth, or vulnerable persons will **attend child protection safety and child sexual abuse training prior to working in the youth's or children's ministries (or any area including other vulnerable people) and remain informed of the Church's Child Abuse Policies.** This training should be offered annually.

2. All employees and volunteers expected to have contact with children or youth shall **immediately report known or suspected Child Abuse to ChildLine at 1-800-932-0313 or compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home.**

3. All employees and volunteers expected to have contact with vulnerable persons shall **immediately report suspected abuse to Adult Protective Services at 1-800-490-8505.**

Ministry Supervision Policy and Guidelines

1. All employees and volunteers supervising activities involving children, youth, and vulnerable persons shall have at least two adults, not from the same household, present at all times. If the two-person rule cannot be observed, a screened designated roamer will regularly check on groups with one adult.

2. All employees and volunteers supervising activities involving children, youth, and vulnerable persons shall have the children, youth, or vulnerable persons checked in and out of a church-sponsored activity by their parent or legal guardian or people authorized by the parent/legal guardian.

3. All employees or volunteers will have access to a telephone or cell phone when groups are at or away from the Church.

4. All employees or volunteers will be sure classroom and office doors have a window or are visible from the hallway, or the doors should remain open while the room is occupied.

5. All employees or volunteers will follow the guideline for overnight events at the Church and Church-sponsored off-premise activities, two or more screened adults must be present. This arrangement must include at least one male and one female if the group is mixed gender.

6. The use of electronics or media communications may be useful tools in supporting ministries with children, youth, and other vulnerable people. However, in such circumstances, all employees and volunteers will follow these requirements:

- The employee or volunteer shall never initiate a connection (friending, following, etc.) on social media.
- If a student initiates a connection, the connection shall cease immediately and the child, youth, or vulnerable person's parent or guardian as well as the pastor shall be notified.
- Employees or volunteers should post photos on social network sites only with prior written permission granted by a parent/guardian. When posted, PHOTOS MUST NOT BE TAGGED with names or location indicators. All photos must be appropriate and in keeping with the spirit of the ministry event. For large group events, signs will be posted that informs participants that photos for social media will be taken.
- All in-person protection policies apply to online platform meetings like Zoom, Skype, Messenger, and so on. (For example, two unrelated adults, from different households, should be present in the virtual room just as they would be in a physical room.)
- An official church account should be established and used for online activities, not a personal account.
- Communication about online meetings should be shared with parents/guardians as well as with children, youth, and other vulnerable people.
- Adult leaders and participants should use their real names as usernames.
- Attendance of online meetings should be documented.

- All electronic communications shall be documented and retained, whenever the Church hosts an activity involving children, youth, or other vulnerable people from another church or community organization.

Groups of church events will follow the Church's Safe Sanctuary Policy and Guidelines.

Church volunteers and paid staff, including clergy, will be given the opportunity for training about Safe Sanctuaries policies, procedures, and child abuse issues on a regular basis. They will be retrained annually.

If a known or suspected incident of abuse or neglect occurs or is revealed to a volunteer or paid staff person at a Church-sponsored activity, the adult in charge of the activity will:

- Ensure the safety of the child, youth, or other vulnerable person.
- **CHILDLINE** for child or youth **1-800-932-0313**
- **ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES** for vulnerable persons **1-800-490-8505**
- Call the ministry supervisor, pastor in charge, or designee.

Congregational Covenant and Adoption

Salem United Methodist Church's purpose for establishing this Safe Sanctuary Policy and Guidelines and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical wellbeing, emotional safety, and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable people. We adopt this policy in accordance with the statement we as a congregation make at each baptism—that we will “nurture children and youth in the Christian faith and life and include them in our care.” With this policy, we renew our baptismal pledge to “live according to the example of Christ” and surround children, youth and other vulnerable people with a “community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be thus confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Book of Worship, p.96). This policy supersedes the previous policies used by Salem UMC.

As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we are committed to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth, and vulnerable people, as well as all the workers with the children, youth, and vulnerable people. By this policy and its accompanying procedures, we implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events.

a. Training: We will conduct training on this policy and its procedures to assure that adults involved in activities with children, youth, and vulnerable people are aware of these standards and will abide by them. Retraining will be annually.

b. Screening: All people who are subject to this policy will be rescreened every five (5) years. Any person wishing to serve in the Salem UMC community for more than one (1) year and thereafter returns, will be rescreened.

c. Supervision: All activities covered by this policy and its procedures will be supervised by the appropriate number of screened adults.

Conclusion: In all our ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable people, Salem United Methodist Church is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each of God's children here 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 Hymnal, p.44.) This Safe Sanctuary Policy and Guidelines is adopted by action of the of the Salem United Methodist Church this

8th day of February (month), 2023 (year).

Appointed clergy and/or supply pastor(s):

[Signature]

Chair, Staff Parish Relations Committee:

[Signature]

Chair, Church Council:

[Signature]