

# SAFE SANCTUARIES Policy:

## A Ministry to Protect Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults



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**Our Mission:** To make new disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

**Our Vision:** Invite, Grow, Serve.

## Policy Statement

We care deeply about the welfare and safety of each child, youth and vulnerable adult who participates in the ministries and programs provided by St. Luke's United Methodist Church. We take seriously our responsibility to do everything in our power to see that neither neglect, nor physical, emotional, sexual, or ritual abuse occurs in any ministry setting. We hold everyone as a person of immeasurable worth, a child of God, who is created in the image and likeness of God. To abuse another person is to deny this value. Therefore, we have a strong commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all. This includes all church workers.

### **Types of Abuse as defined in Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in the Church for Children and Youth by Joy Thornburg Melton (Upper Room, Nashville, TN):**

**Physical:** Abuse in which a person deliberately and intentionally causes bodily harm to a person.

**Emotional:** Abuse in which a person exposes someone to spoken and/or unspoken violence or emotional cruelty. Emotional abuse sends a message of worthlessness and undeserving of love and care.

**Neglect:** Abuse in which a person endangers someone's health, safety, or welfare through negligence. Neglect may include withholding food, clothing, medical care, education, and even affection and affirmation of the person's self worth.

**Sexual:** Abuse in which sexual contact between a child under the age of 18 and an adult (or another older and more powerful teen) occurs. The child is never truly capable of consenting or resisting such contact and/or such sexual acts. However, sexual abuse in any context or age is not condoned.

**Ritual:** Abuse in which physical, sexual, or psychological violations are inflicted regularly, intentionally, and in a stylized way by a person or persons responsible for another's welfare.

### **Reporting Abuse**

People are our most precious resource. The future hope of our country and the church rests upon their development and potential. All types of abuse endanger the future, and shatter innocence, faith and purity of all concerned. Therefore, workers shall immediately report suspected abuse to a ministry leader or pastor who will call the authorities if deemed necessary. Workers shall complete an Incident Report. Those who are mandated by law to report suspected abuse directly to authorities are expected to do so immediately, followed by notifying the lead pastor.

## **Procedures for the Safety of Children and Youth**

The following procedures for child and youth ministries include the Early Education Center, Nursery, Sunday School, Summer Adventure Camp, Vacation Bible School, LOGOS, United Methodist Youth Fellowship and any future ministries sponsored by the church.

### **Two-Adult Rule**

Children and youth are defined as any people under age 18. Ideally two adult workers/teachers/counselors will be present during any child or youth activity. At least one of the supervisors should be over the age of 18. Supervisors/counselors must be five years older than the youth being supervised. The two workers/teachers/counselors should not be related.

We have a procedure whereby an adult checks on the children's classes to be sure two adults are present. In situations where a second adult is not available the door shall remain open or we will use a "roving assistant" who will stay in that classroom.

### **Parental Permission Required**

1. Parental or guardian written permission must be obtained for any child or youth involvement in church sponsored activities off the church premises.
2. Parents/guardians must always receive advance written notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will be participating.
3. When small group meetings with few children in child care occur, two youth or one adult may work in the nursery. A "roving assistant" will be used in those situations.
4. Parental or guardian permission must be obtained if an adult will spend time with a child/youth in a one-on-one situation. Notification to an appropriate church leader of such situations should be made in advance if possible.

### **Open-Door Atmosphere**

All classroom doors have windows in them. Nothing should be placed over them to obstruct the view into the room. There shall be an "open door" standard operating procedure in all ministry settings for children and youth. Church members, parents, or staff persons are welcome to visit and/or observe without prior notice.

The exception to the open door rule is in our Child Care Center where doors are locked on weekdays for security purposes. Parents, members, and staff are welcome to visit, but prior arrangements would be most helpful.

## **Education and Training**

All persons who work with or drive children and youth, whether they are paid or unpaid staff, volunteer, part-time, full-time, clergy, or lay, must be Safe Sanctuary certified. All workers must receive a copy of this policy. Signature and date are required when trained.

## **Worker Selection**

All workers will become Safe Sanctuary certified by completing the training offered by the Missouri United Methodist Annual Conference. The on-line address is [moumethodist.org](http://moumethodist.org); click on the safe sanctuaries tab. This includes references and national background checks. In addition, workers in Early Education and any future ministries where state certification is required, will complete the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Family Care Safety Registry process. Exceptions are interns from state schools where this certification has been met through their institutions.

Volunteers need to have been active in the life of the church for at least six months prior to working with children or youth.

## **Parent/Guardian Education**

There shall be an ongoing means to provide parents/guardians information relating to policies and procedures. Brochures may be included in ministry orientation.

Workers shall report all abusive behavior to the ministry leader, or pastor who will call the authorities if deemed necessary. Workers will assist the leaders or pastors in completing an incident report.

## **Insurance**

Our congregation, through the Board of Trustees, has secured adequate coverage for liability insurance.

## **Thank You**

The Safe Sanctuaries Policy is an important part of our commitment to the community. We thank you for your assistance in providing a safe environment for all who enter our doors.