

PREAMBLE

God has called us to make our ministries safe, protecting our children, youth and vulnerable adults from abuse and exploitation. God has also called us to create communities of faith where children, youth and vulnerable adults can be safe and grow strong.

Jesus taught that *"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me,"* (Mark 9:37 NRSV) and *"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 depths of the sea."* (Matthew 18:6 NRSV).

The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state that *"...children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation and abuse."*

At each child's baptism, we affirm our responsibility to their safety by our congregational response, pledging:

With God's help, we will so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal. (From The Book of Worship, Baptismal Covenant, Congregational Pledge II)

Building on these foundations, we recognize that our faith calls us to offer hospitality and protection to all children, youth and vulnerable adults, as well as those who are committed to ministering to them as volunteers and employees. Every 15 seconds, a child is abused or neglected. Often, abuse occurs in places where children and youth feel safe-homes, schools, camps and churches. In over three quarters of reported cases, the victim was related to or acquainted with the abuser. In light of this, the Virginia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church and St. Paul United Methodist Church has seen fit to outline policy and procedures that can:

1. Prevent such abuse from happening in our church.
2. Be a place where children, youth and vulnerable adults can feel safe in disclosing abuse.
3. Protect the Volunteers and Employees that minister to our children, youth and vulnerable adults.

4. Allow those known sexual offenders who choose to worship at St. Paul United Methodist Church to do so in a manner that protects our children, youth and vulnerable adults while at the same time protects and safely integrates those known sexual offenders into our congregation.

Building on the Safe Sanctuaries policies established by the Virginia Conference, St. Paul United Methodist Church has incorporated within its Safe Sanctuaries policies additional measures to further protect children, youth and vulnerable adults and those known sexual offenders worshipping as a part of our congregation.

This policy sets forth the requirements in the areas of:

1. Screening
2. Supervision
3. Reporting
4. Response Plan
5. Protection and Integration of Known Sexual Offenders

Child, Youth & Vulnerable Adults Protection Policy
St. Paul United Methodist Church
Woodbridge, Virginia

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 depths 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 states that "...children must be protected from economic, physical and sexual exploitation and abuses." (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 site 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 devastation 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 abuse in our church.

Purpose

Our purpose for establishing this Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adults 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.

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 our employed staff and volunteers who work with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting volunteers; we will implement appropriate operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our employed staff and volunteers on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse consistent with the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Theological Reflection

We adopt this policy in accordance with the statement we make 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 and youth 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 the life eternal." (Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Book of Worship, p. 96.)

Definitions

- A. "Child", "Youth" and "Adult"
Following the public school system, a "child" is anyone age 11 or under. A "youth" is anyone not a "child", and under the age of 18. An "adult" is anyone 18 years of age or older **and** had finished high school.

- B. **"Paid Profession Staff"** "Paid Staff Person", "Screened Adult Volunteer" "Adult Volunteer"
"Paid Professional Staff" is someone who appointed or hired to fill one of the following roles, Pastor, Assistant

Pastor, DCE, DCM, DYM, DFM, Music Director.

"Paid Staff Person" is someone paid by the church, overseen by Parish Staff and screened (Nursery worker for example).

"Screened Adult Volunteer" is a volunteer who has gone through the screening process. These persons may or may not be members, but they must be regular attendees and active in the church activities for at least six months.

"Adult Volunteer" is someone who has not been screened. They can work in a room with a Screened Adult or paid staff person.

- C. Youth Helpers—Youth below the age of 18 years
Assisting with child or youth activities. They can assist with activities but should not be considered an adult volunteer and should be supervised themselves.

Staff/Volunteer Selection Policies

All volunteer, paid staff, paid professional staff who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults at SPUMC must be:

1. 21 years old
2. At least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth they will be supervising
3. Volunteers must have been active in the life of SPUMC for at least 6 months.

All volunteers and paid staff who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults at SPUMC will:

1. Complete and sign an application and related waivers giving permission to check references and background information. (appendix)
2. Provide names and contact information of 3 personal references (not relatives by blood or marriage) (appendix)
3. Undergo a criminal background check at no expense. 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 vulnerable adults. Individuals with a criminal history may also be deemed unacceptable depending on the offenses.
4. The Director of Children's Ministries will be responsible for the process screening and maintaining all records.

5. Volunteers records, background checks and/or letters from building users are filed in the DCM office in a locked cabinet.

Staff/Volunteer Supervision Requirements

1. Whenever supervising activities involving children, youth and vulnerable adults at SPUMC:
2. Two **unrelated** adults **must** be present at all times. One must be a paid staff or screened adult.
3. Children and youth will be checked in to and out of a church sponsored activity by their parent or legal guardian or adults authorized by parent/legal guardian. (see appendix)
4. The supervising adults will have access to a telephone, cell phone or pager when groups are at or away from the church facility.
5. One-on-one interactions with children and youth will be with an open door and visibility to all...counseling by paid church professional staff is addressed later in this policy.

Ratios Adult to Child

Nursery 3 years and under	1 to 4
Sunday School/Mid-Week Program	1 to 7
Preschool to 5th grade	
Youth Sunday School/Youth Group	1 to 8
Grades 6 to 12	

Despite the ratio, the 2 adult rule ALWAYS applies.

Wherever SPUMC sponsors an activity involving children or youth:

1. Anyone has the right to visit and observe the children's/youth activity, classroom, or church sponsored program at any time, unannounced.
2. All classrooms and office doors will have a window or visibility from the hallway or remain open while occupied.
3. Windows will be kept free from adornment

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

1. No youth should drive to/from events away from the church building.
2. Adults should never transport child/youth alone.
3. Approved and covered by the church's insurance company
4. Drivers should go through the same screening process as all other paid/volunteer staff.

Trip and Retreat Supervision

Trip and Retreat settings do call for different child/youth protection requirements depending on the circumstances. What follows are Requirements and Guidelines of this Policy. The Requirements should always be implemented. Depending on the circumstances of the setting, who is in attendance, etc., some or all of the Guidelines should be implemented. Those in charge of the trip or retreat should be mindful of both Requirements and Guidelines, in addition to applying their own wisdom to the needs of a given occasion.

Requirements

1. There will be at least two screened adults present for all trips, retreats and other events where the children and/or youth gather overnight at, or away from the church campus.
2. There will be at least one screened adult for each gender present at co-ed overnight events. At single gender overnight events at least one of the two screened adults present shall be of the same gender as the child/youth.
3. The person in charge of the youth/children for each overnight trip and/or retreat shall carry parental permission slips including permission for emergency medical care. (See appendix)

Guidelines

In a hotel type setting, rooms should be assigned as follows:

1. Separate rooms for adults and children/youth should be assigned with at least two children/youth per room.
2. Assignments should be made so that an adult room is between two children/youth rooms.
3. Adults should make random monitoring hall trips and room checks at by two adults of the same gender as those being checked.
4. A hotel should be selected where the rooms open to the interior of the building(i.e., do not open to the outside).

Counseling of Youth and Children

In instances of youth or child counseling where circumstances dictate that counseling would be most effective on a one-on-one basis, an appropriate church Professional paid staff may meet individually with a youth with the knowledge of at least one other Professional paid staff member. At any counseling session with children or youth, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session, unless there is glass in the door or wall which gives a clear view into the room. If another paid staff is not in the building when the counseling occurs, the session should be moved to a public place, such as a restaurant or outside where other people are present.

NOTE 1: At the initial meeting, the Professional staff should first determine if they are qualified to address the child's/youth's needs effectively. Counseling should be limited to no more than three sessions. Referral to another more qualified counselor should be considered.

NOTE 2: This is not meant to govern a licensed professional counselor in a paid relationship with the child/youth whose organization may use church space.

Online Safety

It is acknowledged that the use of electronics or media communications may be useful tools in supporting child and youth ministries. However, it should also be recognized that these forms of communications also potentially pose a unique risk. Church computers that are set up for guest or program participants to access the internet should be in high-traffic places and randomly monitored by staff. Controls should be in place to prevent access to inappropriate content.

Events & Building Usage by Others

1. Whenever SPUMC host an activity involving children or youth from another church or community organization; the outside groups will follow SPUMC Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures.
2. Whenever outside groups (Building Users) use SPUMC facilities, they **must** adhere to the SPUMC safe sanctuaries policies and procedures. They will provide to the DCM a list on official letterhead of the names and dates of background checks for those providing and/or working with children/youth within their program, that will be kept in a locked file cabinet.

Training

DCM will conduct at least annually training on this policy and information that relates to it. Attendance at the training shall be required of all paid staff members, screened and non-screened adults (18 years and finished high school) who work/serve with children and/or youth.

Response to Allegations of Abuse by Church Staff/Volunteers

As caring Christians, we are committed to protect and advocate for children/youth participating in the life of the church. The church is entrusted to provide an emotionally safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, youth, and adults in which they are protected from abuse. It is our legal and moral responsibility to report suspected abuse whenever it comes to our attention regardless of where that abuse takes place. We shall report suspected abuse to stop potentially existing abuse and to prevent further abuse. To report abuse is to witness to

the world of the love and justice of God. Reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. If abuse occurs, it is our intention to act as an advocate for all affected persons, providing support, information, assistance and intervention. We seek to provide a supportive atmosphere, offering both objectivity and empathy as we seek to create a climate in which healing can take place.

To that end a response plan is attached to this policy in the appendix.

Protection and Integration of Known Sexual Offenders

St Paul United Methodist Church affirms the dignity and worth of all people. We are committed to being a religious community, open to those who wish to worship with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. In that regard fulfilling our commitment to be an open worshipping community a Covenant of Participation for known sexual offenders is included in the appendix of this policy. The Safe Sanctuaries committee that said policy refers to is to be made up of the following persons: Leadership Team Chairperson, Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee Leader, Senior Pastor and Director of Children's Ministries (or DCE).

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 adults 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)

Implementation

Unless otherwise specifically stated, it shall be the responsibility of the Church Leadership Team to implement this policy; to designate the DCM or other professional staff to facilitate and conduct future training; and to ensure along with the Pastor, DCM and other professional staff the ongoing effectiveness of this policy.

Application

All of those who participate in the life of this congregation and use its facilities--individuals, organizations, and groups within and outside of this congregation--are expected to respect, implement, and adhere to these provisions as a minimum.

ADOPTION

This Child, Youth and Vulnerable Adult Protection Policy is adopted by action of the Church Leadership Team of St. Paul United Methodist Church this _____ day of _____, 2019.

Appointed Clergy

Leadership Team Chair

Appendix

1. Glossary
2. Emergency Medical Authorization Form
3. Child Registration Form
4. Youth Registration Form
5. Child Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure
6. Volunteer Packet
7. Response Plan for Alleged Abuse
8. Covenant of Participation for Known Sexual Offenders
9. Emergency Phone Numbers

Response Plan for Alleged Abuse by Church Staff or Volunteer

If abuse is suspected by, observed by or disclosed to a volunteer and/or paid staff member of the church, that person shall report the incident immediately to the pastor or designee. (If the accused is the pastor, see information below.) Be prepared to do the following:

- A. Ensure the protection of and tend to the immediate needs of the child, as the situation requires.
- B. IMMEDIATELY notify the proper authorities (immediate supervisor, designated church child protection representative or the adult in charge of the event.)

This person will:

1. provide written documentation concerning the incident on the designated form
 2. notify the County Office of DSS. This is a requirement of the law. (Note: Do not attempt an investigation. This should be left to professionals who are familiar with these cases.)
 3. notify the Senior Pastor. If the pastor is the accused party, the designee will notify the chair of the Leadership Team and the District Superintendent.
 4. give written documentation to the Senior Pastor and/or Chair of the Leadership Team.
- C. The pastor or designee will notify the parents of the victim and take whatever steps are necessary to assure the safety of the child/youth until the parent(s) arrive. It is important to emphasize that the proper authorities must be notified even if the parent(s) does not wish the incident to be reported. (Note: If one or both of the parents is the alleged abuser, contact the proper authorities listed above. Follow their advice about notification of the parents.)

- D. After having reported the suspected abuse to the proper authorities, the incident is to be reported immediately to the church's attorney, the church's insurance company, and the district superintendent. The district superintendent will report the allegation to the bishop's office. Do not try to handle this without professional assistance. If the accused is a clergy (deacon or elder) member of an annual conference, local pastor, or diaconal minister, provisions of The 2012 Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church must be followed.
- E. A list of emergency numbers will be available to the staff at all times.
- F. If the accused is working in a volunteer or paid position with children or youth in the church, immediately, yet with dignity and respect for the sacred worth of the person, remove the accused from further involvement with children and/or youth.
- G. Once the proper authorities have been contacted and the safety of the child or youth is secured, the pastor or other designated person may tell the accused that a report has been made. If the accused is a volunteer or paid staff of the church, that person shall be relieved temporarily of his or her duties until the investigation is finished. If the accused is a paid staff person of the church, arrangements should be made to either maintain or suspend his or her income until the allegations are cleared or substantiated.
- H. Any contact with the media should be handled by a predetermined spokesperson (Senior Pastor or Leadership Team Chair if the accused is the Senior Pastor). **Care will be taken to safeguard the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.** The spokesperson should generally convey that the matter is under investigation and any comments made prior to the conclusion of the investigation would be premature.
- I. A written report of the basic information shall be kept to ensure ongoing ministry to, and advocacy for, victims and others involved. A form for this purpose is part of the appendix. The report shall be brief and contain only factual information relevant to the situation. It shall be filed in a secure place in order to ensure confidentiality. (The DCM office in the file cabinet with the background checks is a logical place). It shall be written in ink or typed to prevent it from being changed. The church must also file a copy of the report with the bishop's office of the State Conference where it shall remain confidential.

Sign-in/Sign-out Procedure

Each September a new Child information form will be completed for each child, 5th grade and below, to include those in the nursery. This form will be housed in DCM office...emergency contact information for each child will be kept in the classroom attendance/sign in sheet binder, except for those in the nursery, a copy of the form will be kept in a labeled binder.

Parents/designated Adult should walk each child to the appropriate classroom and sign them in. Parents/designated Adult should then return at 10:50 to sign their child out. Children whose parents have worship responsibilities are addressed further down.

Visitors will be provided a 2 part sticker, one part has the child's name and the name(s) of the parents/guardians and their cell phone number. The name tag is placed on the child and the other part is given to the parent/guardian to be presented at pick up.

Children whose parents have worship responsibilities should have a designated pick up adult other than the teaching team and staff members. This is who the child will sit with during the opening of worship.

Acolytes in 3 to 5 grade should be walked upstairs by their parents at 10:50. Children will not be allowed to walk up by themselves.

For Worship Learning

Worship Learning is for children 4 years(Preschool) to 2nd grade.

The Assistant of the day will write down children's names at the time of departing to WL. Visitors will have been asked to use the 2 part sticker that will be in the pews. At the conclusion of worship parents or designated adults will come to room D158 to sign their child out. The visiting parents will present the top half of the sticker.

Siblings under the age of 18 are NOT allowed to pick up younger siblings from Sunday school or Worship Learning.

GLOSSARY

Child...under the age of 11 years old

Youth...anyone not a child, under the age of 18 and not finished high school.

Vulnerable Adult...somebody over the age of 18 who is usually somebody older in life, so over the age of 60 or 70. Vulnerable Either by age or by other disability(mental or physical), a condition where they have a decreased capacity to stand up for themselves and defend themselves or otherwise merits some type of special treatment.

Adult...some who is 18 years of age or older **and** had finished high school or dropped out of high school.

Paid Professional Staff...someone who is appointed or hired to fill one of the following roles, Pastor, Assistant Pastor, DCE, DCM, DYM, DFM, Music Director.

Paid Staff Person...someone paid by the church overseen by Parish Staff and screened(Nursery worker for example)

Screened Adult Volunteer...a volunteer who has gone through the screening process. These persons may or may not be members, but they must be regular attendees and active in the activities of the church for at least six months.

Adult Volunteer...someone who has not been screened, They can work in a room with a Screened Adult or Paid Staff.

Youth Helpers...someone under the age of 18 and had NOT finished high school who may assist but is not counted in the 2 Adult rules and MAY NOT be left alone with children.

Building Users...outside groups who use church facilities with or without paying a fee.

DCM...Director of Children's Ministries

DCE...Director of Christian Education

DYM...Director of Youth Ministries

DFM...Director of Family Ministries

Volunteer Packet

1. Application
2. References
3. Authorization for Request for Criminal Records Check
4. Participation Covenant Statement

Volunteer Application
Please Print

Full Name: _____

Home Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

How long at this address? _____

Daytime Phone: _____

Evening Phone: _____

Previous address if less than 1 year

Street Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

How long at this address? _____

On a separate piece of paper provide addresses for a 5 year period.

Occupation: _____

Employer: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

How long employed? _____

Current Job Responsibilities: _____

Previous employment if less than 1 year

Occupation: _____

Employer: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

How long employed? _____

Responsibilities: _____

On a separate piece of paper provide addresses for a 5 year period.

Previous Experience with Children/youth:

Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ ST _____ ZIP _____

Phone # _____

Supervisor: _____

Email address: _____

Provide the same information on another sheet of paper for other organizations.

Special Interests, Hobbies, Skills:

Availability to Work? (Check One or More)

Days: _____ Evenings: _____ Weekends: _____

Can You Make a One-Year Commitment? Yes or No
Do You Have Your Own Transportation? Yes or No Do You
Have a Valid Driver's License? Yes or No
If Yes Please Provide Your License Number _____
Why Do You Want To Work With Children/Youth?

What Gifts, Education, Training, or Interests Do You
Have That Would Help You Work With Children/Youth?

What are your views on appropriate ways to
discipline? _____

Have you ever been charged with, convicted of, or
plead guilty to a crime, either a misdemeanor or a
felony (including but not limited to drug-related
charges, child abuse, or other crimes of violence,
theft or serious motor vehicle violations)?

Yes or No

If "Yes" explain: _____
