

Safe Sanctuary Policy for St. John United Methodist Church

The congregation of St. John United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children, youth, and volunteers who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect our congregation's commitment to preserving this church as 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.

- A. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers.
 - 1. No adult who has been convicted of child abuse (either sexual abuse, physical abuse, or emotional abuse) should volunteer to work with children or youth in any church-sponsored activity.
 - 2. Each volunteer shall be a minimum age of 18 and out of high school. Each volunteer shall be at least 5 years older than the oldest child in that activity.
 - 3. Each volunteer must be active in our church for at least 6 months.
 - 4. Each volunteer shall sign a participation covenant and those in a long term assignment (program season or longer) will complete an application.
 - 5. St. John will conduct a background check on all paid workers and on all volunteers in a long-term assignment supervising children and youth. Last minute substitutes who meet the above requirements will not need a background check on file.

- B. We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events.
 - 1. During Family Activities, parents or guardians are to supervise their own children.
 - 2. All children and youth program rooms will have a half-glass door, or the door will remain open during the activity.
 - 3. We will try to have two adults (non-married or from same household) supervising children and youth during programs, including, but not exclusive to: Sunday school classes, nursery, Wednesday night programs, special programs, and off-site events.
 - 4. During programs on site, when a single adult is with children or youth in designated rooms, we will try to provide a trained volunteer to float among the rooms.
 - 5. Counseling sessions, regardless of subject matter or sex of the recipient of counseling, must have an additional adult present, or the door to the room must remain open. Exceptions, if any, shall be made by the Senior Pastor on a case-by-case basis.
 - 6. It is acknowledged that group field trips or other specific events may necessitate the need for parental release forms and participation covenants. That decision will be made by the staff leader and the Senior Pastor.
 - 7. If a child needs assistance in the bathroom, the door to the bathroom shall remain open while the adult assists.

- C. We will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of appropriate policies and methods.
 - 1. Volunteers and paid workers shall attend regular training and educational events provided by the church to keep them informed of church policies and state laws regarding child abuse.
 - 2. Volunteers shall be provided with forms for discipline notes and injury reports.
 - 3. Volunteers shall be trained on the location and use of first aid kits.

- D. We will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse that conforms to the requirements of state law.
 - 1. Volunteers shall make a report within 24 hours to their supervisor and document on the provided forms any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.

- E. We will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if an incident occurs.
 - 1. Volunteers shall refer all media contact to church staff.
 - 2. The church staff shall be provided with the Augusta District Media Protocols.