

**St. John's United Methodist Church**

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## **Safe Sanctuary Policy**

In compliance with the regulations of the Peninsula-Delaware Conference of the United Methodist Church concerning safe sanctuary policies and procedures, the One Board of St. John's UMC hereby adopts the following Safe Sanctuary Policy effective January 1, 2025.

Adults (defined as those age 18 or older) working with children and youth (defined as those under the age of 18) in an isolated location will adhere to the following personnel requirements:

1. Attend St. John's regularly and/or be a church member for at least 6 months prior to working with children/youth
2. Complete a written application which includes contact information for personal references every two years
3. Agree to the screening process as described in this section. The Pastor is responsible for completing the screening process for each applicant. The screening will verify the applicant's name and address and will include both a criminal background check and a sex offender registry search. Each applicant will be screened at least once every two years.

The following procedures will be deemed official policy:

- A. There will be two or more unrelated adults at any church event which includes children/youth. Should there be a shortage of volunteers, a designated adult be assigned to randomly audit any situations in which a single volunteer is engaged with children/youth.
- B. A list of adults approved to work with children/youth will be maintained in the Pastor's office. Both the Pastor and the Spiritual Formation One Board Representative will have access to the list to allow organizers of events to determine eligibility of adults to participate.
- C. All adult workers must be at least 5 years older than the oldest child/youth in the group they are working with.
- D. All rooms must have a window in the door or the door must remain open while activities are taking place.
- E. Any person under the age of 18 is not to be left unattended during any church activity with the exception of restrooms, in which case the adult will remain in the hallway within earshot.
- F. Adults who are not certified by the above personnel requirements may be observers of activities but may not take the place of the certified adults.
- G. A parent or authorized caregiver must sign their child in and out of Sunday School. Sunday School will not be dismissed until the church service is over. Parents/guardians must initial the attendance sheet that they have picked up their child.
- H. The SAFE Team will ensure all adults working with children/youth as well as parents/families of those children/youth are provided an annual review of the Safe Sanctuary policy. This may take various forms such as providing a written copy of this policy, via Zoom, or in-person.
- I. The SAFE Team will encourage adults working with children/youth to avail themselves of opportunities to participate in CPR/First Aid training and to be re-certified every three years.
- J. Physical contact between an adult and a child/youth should be kept to a minimum. Minimal physical contact to ensure the safety of a child/youth may occur. Should a child/youth initiate

physical contact with an adult, the adult should disengage carefully and politely and advise the parent/guardian as soon as possible.

- K. Adults should be aware of how their comments may be interpreted to ensure off-color language and sexual innuendo/remarks are avoided.
- L. Children/youth should not be contacted directly by adults through text, email, videochat, or phone without the express permission of the parent/guardian.
- M. If bulk email communication is used to keep children/youth informed, "bcc" should be used so that individual email addresses are not accessible to others.
- N. If the pastor is asked to counsel children/youth, a parent/guardian must be present. Meetings will be held in a public setting and parent permission must be obtained beforehand. An additional adult should be present in the building within earshot of the meeting. Such counseling should be for a limited number of sessions before referral to another professional.
- O. If a child/youth reports abuse (or it is suspected), the adult must personally and immediately inform the authorities. (Note: Informing the Pastor is not sufficient, it must be the authorities.)

The SAFE Team will be responsible for maintaining, upholding, and annually reviewing and revising this Safe Sanctuary Policy. This Team will encourage all adults in ministry to children/youth to participate in available training. The Team will administer the policy and protect the confidentiality of all information. In the event there is reason for concern, the Team will work collectively to discern and implement actions and interventions. The SAFE Team shall consist of:

- a. Trustee representative
- b. SPRC representative
- c. Sunday School representative
- d. Pastor

*Revised June 16, 2025*