



Safe Sanctuaries Child/Youth Protection Policy



**Effective Date:
December 1, 2011**

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in April 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child abuse in the church. Aldersgate United Methodist Church (the “Church”) will join with all United Methodist congregations to work towards the prevention of child and youth abuse in our church.

This Policy shall be applicable to all activities involving children and youth sponsored by Aldersgate United Methodists Church (AUMC) or held on church property. This includes, but is not limited to, Sunday School programs and events, Youth programs and events, all After School and Pre School programs and events, Scouting programs and events and other programs and events involving the care of children and youth that may, from time to time, be approved by the Board of Trustees. This policy shall be in effect beginning at the appointed starting time of each program / event and shall end with the adjournment of the program / event.

STATEMENT OF COVENANT

As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers; we will implement prudent operational procedures in our programs and at our events; we will educate our workers regarding the use of appropriate policies and methods; we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of any abuse or neglect; and we will be prepared to manage and respond to the congregation and media inquiries if an incident occurs.

In all of our ministries with children and youth, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child 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).

PREAMBLE

“At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, ‘Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?’ He called a child, and had him stand among them. And he said, ‘Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever welcomes a little child like this in my name welcomes me, ‘But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.’” (Matthew 18:1-6) When the disciples tried to keep children away from Jesus, he instructed them to let them come. Jesus welcomed and included children and lifted them up as examples to the faithful. He warned against putting anything in their path that would cause them to stumble. Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the little ones, the children.

Aldersgate United Methodist Church welcomes children and youth knowing that for some it may be the only place where they will experience God’s unconditional love and grace. Aldersgate UMC is committed to providing as safe and secure an environment as possible for all children, youth and those who participate in the ministries and activities sponsored by our church.

DEFINITIONS

Adult: A person 18 years of age or older.

Adult Volunteer: A volunteer who is in regular contact with children/youth, must be 18 years old or older, is included in the "two adult rule", agrees in writing to abide by this policy and is Safe Sanctuaries trained. They must also be screened as later defined herein. While an Adult Volunteer is not required to be a member of the Church, he or she should have been attending the Church for at least six months. A volunteer who has not attended AUMC for at least six (6) months may assist, but may not be counted in the "two adult rule" counting.

The SPRC shall recommend to the Chair of the Administrative Board the final list of positions falling under the "Adult Volunteer" definition based upon recommendations of Staff Members, the Education Committee, the Missions Committee, and any other committee responsible for children/youth activities.

AUMC: Aldersgate United Methodist Church

Child: Any person under the age of 18.

Child abuse: North Carolina law defines an abused juvenile as, "Any juvenile less than 18 years of age whose parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker inflicts or allows to be inflicted serious physical injury by other than accidental means, or creates or allows to be created serious risk of injury, inappropriate behavior modifications, or sexual abuse. Child abuse may be physical, sexual, or emotional."

Abusive Behavior: Any action, speech, or behavior that is cruel, humiliating, or demeaning, or inflicts intentional harm, either emotional or physical, on another person. Any behavior by a person or persons that is irresponsible or neglectful and leads to, directly or indirectly, the harm of a minor in the care of that person or persons.

Children/Youth Activities: Any activity or program in which children are under supervision of staff persons or volunteers of AUMC, or groups using AUMC facilities.

Staff Member: Any person employed by AUMC or programs using AUMC facilities. This person has direct and regular contact with children, must be 21 years old or older, is included in the "two adult rule", agrees in writing to abide by this policy and is Safe Sanctuaries trained.

Student Volunteer: A volunteer (paid or unpaid) who assists Adult Volunteers or Staff Members, must be at least 14 years old, a church member or have attended AUMC for at least six months. They will not, under any circumstances, substitute for an Adult Volunteer or Staff Member with regard to any section of this Policy.

Two Adult Rule: No children, (regardless of number) will ever be left in the supervision of one (1) adult. Two (2) adult supervisors must be present at any and all activities for children and youth. A Hall Monitor may fill in if one adult must leave temporarily or due to emergency. If the adult supervisors are related (by birth or by marriage) a 3rd adult must be available. (A stationary Hall Monitor may act as the third adult in classroom settings).

Hall Monitors: All children's areas will be patrolled by approved Hall Monitors. Hall monitors must be Safe Sanctuary trained and pre-approved by appropriate church leadership. The Hall Monitor is responsible for making sure that Open Door, Two Adult, and other policies are enforced. A stationary Hall Monitor (one who is stationed outside a specific classroom area for the duration of an activity) may act as a second (or third) adult for classroom settings. In the event of a policy violation the Hall Monitor shall contact the Children's Pastor or Designated Children's Ministry Coordinator immediately.

Safe Sanctuary trained: Documented as having attended Safe Sanctuary training as required by AUMC.

SPRC: Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee, responsible for all personnel issues for AUMC.

Procedures

1. Procedures for Hiring Staff and Paid Employees

- a. All paid staff will fall under guidelines established by the SPRC.
- b. The Senior Pastor and / or SPRC designee will be responsible for screening all paid staff employees. Background checks for arrests, conviction and previous employment using a National registry process will be conducted in accordance with guidelines established by the SPRC.
- c. The SPRC will coordinate the processing of background checks and determine a reasonable renewal period.
- d. The maintenance of such documents shall reside in a locked file or cabinet, on the church premises, as determined by the SPRC.
- e. Persons who are deemed by church leadership as a threat to children and/or youth based on a criminal record check, application response or reference feedback may not volunteer service, be employed or be accepted as a volunteer or paid worker in any church sponsored program for children or youth.

2. Screening Process for Adult Volunteers

- a. All volunteers who will have regular and direct contact with children, youth or vulnerable adults must first complete a Volunteer Information Form and will give written permission for a background check. A positive report is required prior to that person assuming any volunteer position.
- b. The SPRC will establish procedures for collecting, processing and filing Volunteer Information Forms.
- c. The SPRC will coordinate the processing of background checks. Outside groups meeting at Aldersgate UMC will be asked to sign a statement acknowledging receipt and understanding of the Aldersgate UMC Safe Sanctuary policy. This signed copy will be kept on file in the office.
- d. Outside groups not screened by Aldersgate UMC are responsible for ensuring their staff and volunteers are familiar with and follow the AUMC Safe Sanctuary policy.
- e. The maintenance of such documents shall reside in a locked file or cabinet, on the church premises, as determined by the SPRC.
- f. Persons who are deemed by church leadership as a threat to children and/or youth based on a criminal record check, application response or reference feedback may not volunteer service, be employed or be accepted as a volunteer or paid worker in any church sponsored program for children or youth.

3. Supervision

- a. A Safe Sanctuaries orientation / training session is a requirement for all staff and volunteers in charge of children's and youth activities. This training will cover AUMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy, church policies to prevent child abuse, appropriate steps to report an incident of abuse, and details of state laws regarding child abuse.
- b. Basic CPR and First Aid training will be made available to all volunteers and staff.

- c. Minimum supervisory standards will include the “two-adult rule” during any church-sponsored program, event or ministry involving children or youth. This indicates that no matter the size of the group, there will be two adults present. When this is not possible, an adult roamer will visit the room periodically.
- d. An adult volunteer in a leadership role with children and youth must:
 - i. Be at least 18 years of age.
 - ii. Be five years older than the youth with whom he/she is working.
- e. No worker under the age of 18 will have sole responsibility for, nor be alone with any children. Ever.

4. Facilities

- e. Each room or space where children are being cared for shall have an eye-level window in the door or the door shall be left open. All activities should occur in open view. This applies to counseling sessions with children or youth.
- f. Open Classroom Policy: Classroom child-care rooms may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents or guardians, hall monitors, or ministry leaders. Classrooms shall always be unlocked with windows unobstructed. Doors MUST remain open in all unused classrooms.

5. Classroom administration

- e. Communications/Notices to Parents/Guardians: Parents/guardians should be kept informed about programs in which their children/youth are involved, and they should be given advance notice and information about any activity which deviates from the regular programs offered by the Church. Photocopies of permission forms should accompany children/youth on any activities involving travel or sports activity (such as skiing, amusement parks, etc.).
- f. Registration materials for activities in which children are outside of the direct supervision of their parents/guardians shall require signed written permission forms or registration event log sheets that include general health information in order to participate. All information will be kept confidential.
- g. Sign In / Out Policy:
 - i. to enforce the policies for signing in and out, nametags will be available for each child signed up for Sunday School.
 - ii. There are two clip nametags for each child so one goes to the parent and one to the child.
 - iii. There will be a sign-in table right when you walk in to Sunday school at a central point.
 - 1. parents will sign their child in on their class clipboard and put one nametag on the child (on the back for the smaller kids) and take one with them.
 - 2. After Sunday school starts the clipboards will be delivered to the classrooms for any latecomers.
 - 3. At the end of class, parents will pick up their child and the teacher will make sure they have matching nametags so only the parent (or the parent designee if the parent gives the nametag to someone else to pick up their child) can pick up the child.
 - 4. The nametags will then be put back on the clipboards for the next week.

- d. No Secret or Closed Activities: there are **not any** “secret or closed” activities recognized by AUMC. All aspects of the church program are open to observation by parents, guardians, and congregational leaders at any time without prior notice or consent. Confidentiality or secrecy is not a privilege of adult leaders while involved in church activities with children.
- e. Two Adult Rule: No children, (regardless of number) will ever be left in the supervision of one (1) adult. Two (2) adult supervisors must be present at any and all activities for children and youth. A Hall Monitor may fill in if one adult must leave temporarily or due to emergency. If the adult supervisors are related (by birth or by marriage) a 3rd adult must be available. (A stationary Hall Monitor may act as the third adult in classroom settings).
- f. Hall Monitors: All children's areas will be patrolled by approved Hall Monitors. Hall monitors must be Safe Sanctuary trained and pre-approved by appropriate church leadership. The Hall Monitor is responsible for making sure that Open Door, Two Adult, and other policies are enforced. A stationary Hall Monitor (one who is stationed outside a specific classroom area for the duration of an activity) may act as a second (or third) adult for classroom settings. In the event of a policy violation the Hall Monitor shall contact the Children’s Pastor or Designated Children's Ministry Coordinator immediately.
- g. The church nursery will require all parents to sign their child in for events, according to the church nursery policy.
- h. Any person or group using, attending, or visiting any area of the church cannot leave their children under the age of 12 unsupervised. Children may not be left in a room by themselves or allowed to roam the church campus. This includes the playground and outdoor open areas.
- i. Release of children to parent’s policies are as follows.
 - i. On-campus daytime: Preschool and elementary children will be released only to parents, guardians, or specifically authorized persons as described in pp 5.d above. Children in 5th grade and younger must be picked up by a parent or guardian. Emergency cases will be determined on a case by case basis. No child may be released to a sibling or other older child. Exception: We will release children to brothers or sisters who drive and have previously arranged with the staff prior permission from the parent.
 - ii. On-campus nighttime: All children and youth 8th grade and younger must be picked up by a parent or guardian. Emergency cases will be decided on an as needed basis. No child may be released to a sibling or other older child. Exception: We will release children to brothers or sisters who drive and have previously arranged with the staff prior permission from parents.
 - iii. Accurate daily records showing the arrival and departure times of each child, and each adult present, shall be kept.

6. Away trips or off-church-property activities

- a. The Two-Adult Rule applies. Two adult supervisors/chaperones will be present at all times. These persons must have completed Safe Sanctuary Training and be approved in advance through church leadership. If the group is mixed gender, the leaders must include at least one male and one female.
- b. Parental Permission. Children and youth must have specific individual parental permission for involvement in each church sponsored activity or program. Adult workers must obtain written consent from child(s) parent or guardian BEFORE

going on partial day, full day or overnight trips. Permission Slips must be obtained from church office and must be renewed for each trip, activity, or program. IF permission has not been obtained, workers are required to notify appropriate church leadership of failure to have a permission slip immediately.

- c. Overnight Stays:
 - i. Overnight trips shall not be permitted with only one adult.
 - ii. On overnight trips with children and youth, safe sleeping plans will be followed:
 - 1. In hotel situations, whenever possible, adults will not be housed in rooms with youth unless it is a parent/child relationship.
 - 2. If the setting is such that adults must be housed in hotel rooms with children/youth in a non-parent/child situation, then only Adult Volunteers will be housed in these rooms. The adult must avoid occupying the same bed as a minor, with the exception of a parent or guardian.

7. Transportation:

- a. Each vehicle transporting children/youth on behalf of the Church must have either a Screened Adult driver or two unrelated drivers. However, no child/youth may travel alone with an unrelated adult without the express permission of his/her parent or guardian.
- b. On out-of-town trips, all vehicles must have first aid supplies and a cell phone available.
- c. No one under the age of 25 may be a driver.
- d. A copy of the driver's valid drivers license must be on file at the Church.
- e. Seat belts must be used for every passenger. The number of passengers cannot exceed the number of seat belts. State law must be followed in terms of age, weight-appropriate car seats and seating within the vehicle.
- f. All drivers with children or youth should have more than one child/youth and another adult with them when traveling in a vehicle.
- g. "Permission to Participate" forms should be signed by parents or guardians prior to transporting children/youth.
- h. Parents may transport their own children at any time.

8. Reporting of accidents/medical emergencies: Any accident that results in injury must be reported on the "Accident/Medical Emergency Report" form and given promptly to a Staff Member. This is the Director of PreSchool / After School for school related incidents or the supervising Staff Member or Adult Volunteer. For other activities This report shall be provided to the Senior Pastor within 24 hours.

9. Non-church events or activities involving children/youth: Leaders or other authorized representatives of the organization (such as Boy Scouts of America) who use the Church facilities must sign a statement agreeing to adhere to the Policy. Other non-organization groups (such as family reunions) will be made aware of, the Policy and shall be responsible for the supervision and conduct of their own children. For Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN) guest families, parent(s) shall be responsible for the supervision and conduct of their own children.

10. Reporting & Response: If an incident of child abuse is alleged, it is crucial that it be dealt with immediately and in a clearly outlined manner.

- a. The person who observes alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported shall report the incident immediately to the Staff Member, Adult Volunteer or Director of PreSchool / After School person in charge of the children's or youth activity. This person shall notify the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor, or designated representative, shall notify law enforcement or Durham County Social Services Department of Children's Protective Services (CPS) (919-560-8424) AND the Durham District Superintendent as soon as practically possible. Upon receiving such information, the Senior Pastor, or the person designated by and accountable to the Staff Parish Relations Committee, will confirm notification of law enforcement or CPS.
- b. Incident reporting and response procedure in case of allegation of abuse: Reports of any type of abuse should never be taken lightly or disregarded. Such reports should be treated as confidential.
 - i. The Response Team will consist of the Senior Pastor, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, the Chair of the Administrative Board, the Chair of SPRC, the Chair of Education Committee, and a member-at-large (preferably from the field of law, education or medicine). The member-at-large shall be selected by the Senior Pastor, the Chair of the Board of Trustees, the Chair of the Administrative Board, the Chair of SPRC, and the Chair of Education Committee. A Coordinator of the Response Team will be selected by that group from the members of the Response Team.
 - ii. The Senior Pastor or designated spokesperson will respond to any media inquiries.
 - iii. The Response Team Coordinator and the Senior Pastor will notify the parents/guardians of the alleged victim and law enforcement officials if such reporting has not already been made. If one or both parents/guardians are the accused, the advice of the law enforcement officials will be followed.
 - iv. The Response Team will decide whether a brief statement should be made to the congregation.
 - v. The Response Team is NOT intended to advocate for any party; act as legal counsel; determine guilt or innocence; or replace the functions of the SPRC.
- c. The first person to learn of the incident should not undertake an inquiry alone and should not question the accused or the accuser. The person should assure the immediate safety of the child/youth and promptly report the incident as noted in paragraph 10.a above.
 - i. The person receiving the initial incident report will promptly forward written copies of the "Report of Suspected Incident of Child/Youth Abuse" form to the Coordinator of the Response Team and the Senior Pastor.
 - ii. The Response Team Coordinator is responsible for the completion and filing of the written form.
- d. All records related to a reported incident shall be kept in a secure place. This secure place shall be accessible to only the Chair of the Response Team and the Pastor if the accused is a volunteer. The Chair of the SPRC will have access to the records if the accused is a Staff Member. If any of the above is the accused, the records will be accessible only to non-accused persons listed above.

- d. The accused will immediately be removed from further involvement with children/youth until evaluated by the Response Team.
 - e. If the allegation concerns activities or persons outside any relationship to a church related event or activity, it is the responsibility of the person in charge of that event or activity to notify CPS.
 - f. Persons who are the objects of the report will be required to refrain from all children's activities until an administrative decision is reached by Children's Protective Services. In any removal of a person from any children's activities, care should be taken to handle this in a discreet manner, recognizing that an investigation is still being conducted.
 - g. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse is expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed abuse in a children's or youth activity, all volunteers or staff involved in that activity shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies.
 - h. This policy prohibits retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports allegations of sexual harassment or sexual misconduct or assists in investigating charges. Anyone found to have participated in retaliatory actions will be confronted by the SPRC and appropriate action will be taken, which may include termination as a volunteer or employee of AUMC. Likewise, anyone found to have made a malicious false report of allegations will be confronted by the SPRC and appropriation will be taken, which may include termination as a volunteer or employee.
 - i. If allegations are made against the Senior Pastor, the chairperson of the Staff Parish Relations Committee and the Durham District Superintendent shall be contacted immediately and shall act as the senior pastor's designee until an administrative decision is reached by CPS.
1. **Review and Revision:** The Safe Sanctuary Task Force Team will review this policy annually and report to the Administrative Board and the SPRC any proposed changes. Proposed revisions shall be submitted in writing for adoption.