

**State Street United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy**  
*(Approved by Church Council – August 22, 2005, revisions: June 18, 2007,  
July 25, 2011, July 29, 2013, July 27, 2015)*

**I. Safe Sanctuaries Policy**

In April 1996, The General Conference of The United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of sexual abuse of youth and children in the church. In 2004, the Holston Annual Conference also adopted a resolution requiring each congregation to develop a Child Abuse Prevention Policy. These resolutions are grounded in scripture.

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 depth of the sea” (Matthew 18:6). Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to the most vulnerable among us.

God calls us to make our church a safe place, protecting our children and other vulnerable individuals from sexual, ritual and other forms of abuse. God calls us to create a community of faith where children and youth grow safe and strong.

*(From the Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church, pages 180-181, 2000, United Methodist Publishing House, 2000.)*

State Street United Methodist Church establishes this Safe Sanctuaries policy to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety, mental well-being and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

Any group using State Street UMC facilities, where activities include minors, is required to abide by this Safe Sanctuaries policy.

**II. Recruitment, Screening and Selection of Workers**

Volunteers with children and youth at State Street UMC are designated as:

1. Core Volunteers - those who have regular and ongoing contact with children and youth, and
2. Occasional Volunteers – those who have short-term or infrequent contact with children and youth (such as VBS, summer shepherds, nursery volunteers or substitutes).

Criminal background checks shall be completed on employed workers and repeated every three years. Criminal background checks shall be completed on Core Volunteers and repeated every five years.

All background checks for Core Volunteers shall be completed within 90 days of the annual Safe Sanctuaries training.

Any criminal background check information that raises concerns will be discussed with the Senior Minister and the appropriate program staff.

Prior to beginning work as a volunteer or paid staff with children or youth, each volunteer or staff member should complete Safe Sanctuaries training as described in Section IV of this policy.

All volunteers (Core and Occasional) and staff who work with children and youth must complete and sign the Participation Covenant Statement.

### **III. Procedures and Rules for Working with Children and Youth**

The following procedures should be a part of the prevention strategy in this Safe Sanctuaries Policy:

#### 1. The Two Adult Rule

A minimum of two unrelated adults and who do not live in the same household, shall be present with each group of children or youth for any church sponsored program, event, or ministry. If a second adult is not available during times of major use at the church (Sunday school, Wednesday nights), the classroom door should remain open and a designated adult “floater” may supervise the area.

#### 2. Supervision of Children

Children and youth under age 18 shall be supervised at all times while at the church.

#### Special Situations

##### Personal conferences:

When situations require personal conferences, meetings should be conducted in view of other adults, children or youth or in a public place. One on one counseling with youth is permitted, however, the session should take place with the door open, in eyesight of other adults or by notifying another staff member that counseling is about to take place. If no other adults are in the building, the counseling session must be rescheduled to a more appropriate time.

##### Meetings:

The two-adult rule shall be in effect during meetings at the church when children accompany adults. Childcare may be provided by the church when requested in advance.

Children must remain with the childcare workers or in the room with his/her parent.

Youth who wish to “hang out” at the church must do so in a “high traffic” area and during work hours when staff members are present and on the same floor.

Specific bathroom procedures vary according to age and ministry— See Appendix J.

#### 3. Age Limit Rule

Hired Childcare Workers must be at least eighteen (18) years of age. Childcare assistants, who are a minimum age of sixteen (16), may be hired, but must work with a second adult who is 18 or older. The minimum age for those hired to work with youth is 22, with the exception of youth interns who must be at least age 20.

At least one volunteer or paid worker in each nursery, preschool or children’s area must be age eighteen or older. Childcare assistants (paid or volunteer) who are a minimum age of 16 may substitute as one adult required under Rule 1 for children’s ministry only. Childcare assistants must complete Safe Sanctuaries training and sign a participation covenant.

No elementary children will be allowed in the nursery or preschool areas unless they are children of the volunteer or worker.

#### 4. Five Year Older Rule

Volunteers must be at least five years older than the group with which they are to work, except for workers with senior high youth who must be at least 22 years old (exception youth interns-see above).

#### 5. Transportation Rule

There must be two adults in all church vehicles transporting children or youth. Chaperones and drivers of all church vehicles (except for vehicles requiring additional licensing) must have a valid driver's license and submit to a MVR check (See Appendix K). Drivers must be at least age 21 with a good driving history. Chaperones must be at least 18 years of age with a good driving history.

When using contracted bus transportation that includes a hired driver, a minimum of two adults, 18 years or older must chaperone.

For church-sponsored events all youth should ride to and from the event in the church vehicle. Youth may drive themselves in personal cars (with no unrelated minor passengers) with written parental permission only.

#### 6. Six Month Rule

Volunteers must have participated regularly in the ministries of SSUMC for six months. This requirement may be waived upon recommendation from a pastor of this church or a former church. This rule shall not prevent parents from visiting and participating in activities with their children or youth.

#### 7. Advance Notice Rule

Children and Youth ministry leaders shall always give parents advance notice and full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will participate.

#### 8. Parental Permissions

For off-site events, overnight events or those that require transportation, parents must give written permission for their child's participation.

#### 9. State Reporting Rule

Any suspected cases of child abuse must be reported to the proper authorities. State Street United Methodist Church will use the Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse form (Appendix F-G) to capture necessary information regarding allegations of abuse. See details in Section V.

#### 10. Photographing Children/Youth

Parents may give permission for their children to be photographed or videotaped when they fill out annual Program Participation forms. No identifying names shall be displayed at the church, on the church website or other social media (this includes a "no tagging" rule for children or youth on church sites). Parents are not required to give permission for their children to be photographed or videotaped in order to participate in programs.

#### 11. Church Sponsored Web Sites/Social Media/Texting

Church-authorized social networking, blogging and web sites are used to convey information about State Street UMC, communicate with members and fulfill the church's mission.

Each church site must have more than one staff member or designated volunteer serving as authorized administrators and who monitor the site regularly.

When communicating through social media, State Street UMC should ensure that content is appropriate at all times, reflecting the church's Christian identity and values. The publication of confidential information is prohibited. Any content deemed inappropriate will be deleted.

#### **IV. Implementation of the Safe Sanctuaries Policies and Procedures**

The following procedures will be used as a part of the implementation strategy of this Safe Sanctuaries Policy:

1. There will be an annual orientation for volunteer workers, staff and parents regarding the Safe Sanctuaries procedures.
2. Program staff shall maintain First Aid and CPR certification.
3. Accidents resulting in injury or other serious incidents (excluding child abuse) should be reported on the Accident Report Form (App. D) or the Incident Report form (App. E).
4. Other serious incidents, excluding abuse (which shall be documented according to directions in Section V of this policy) should be documented on the Incident Report form (Appendix E).
5. There should be windows on all classroom doors where children or youth are actively in class. Door windows should remain uncovered. If the door does not have a window, the door should remain open while the room is in use.
6. This Safe Sanctuaries policy, including reporting procedures and the plan of action in the event of an allegation, and procedures and rules for implementation, should be reviewed annually.

#### **V. Responding to Allegations of Abuse**

Every volunteer and staff person working with children and youth should be trained regarding Virginia and Tennessee requirements for reporting abuse to law enforcement authorities and child protection services. Should an incident occur at the church, the Virginia authorities shall be notified at 1-800-552-7096 or 804-786-8536. (See Appendix F). If an alleged incident of abuse involving church activities happens away from the church, then the incident must be reported in that jurisdiction. (See Appendix G) Volunteers or staff members who suspect abuse of a child or youth in a non-church situation are also obligated to report the alleged incident to the appropriate authorities.

Allegations must be reported to the proper authorities, and the child or youth should be told that the proper authorities will be advised but no one else will be told. ***It is very important that no one except child protective services (and if applicable one of the persons listed below) be told about allegations of abuse – if the allegations cannot be substantiated, one can be sued for defamation of character.***

Allegations by a child concerning abuse in a church-related activity must also be reported to one of the individuals listed below, immediately following the notification of state authorities. A committee will be immediately convened to investigate the allegation. The Committee will be composed of the following people:

Senior or Associate Minister  
Director of Children and Family Ministries  
Youth Leader  
Lay Leader and/or Church Council Chair

**Appendix B**  
**State Street United Methodist Church**  
**Reference Interview Summary Form**  
**Reference Check (employees only)**

Applicant name \_\_\_\_\_

Reference name \_\_\_\_\_

Reference address \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is your relation to applicant?
2. How long have you known applicant?
3. How well do you know applicant?
4. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to children and/or youth?
5. How would you describe the applicant's ability to relate to families of children and/or youth?
6. How would you describe applicant's leadership ability?
7. How would you feel about having the applicant work with your child or youth?
8. Do you know of any characteristics that would negatively affect the applicant's ability to work with children and/or youth? If so, please describe.
9. Do you have any knowledge that the applicant has ever been convicted of a crime? If so, please describe.
10. Please list any other comments you would like to make:

Reference inquiry conducted by: \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Date

**Appendix D**  
**State Street United Methodist Church**  
**Accident Reporting Form**

**Please print all information!**

Date of accident \_\_\_\_\_ Time of accident \_\_\_\_\_

Name of child/youth injured \_\_\_\_\_

Address of child/youth \_\_\_\_\_

Location of accident \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person(s) who witnessed the accident:

Name	Phone

Description of accident:

Action taken \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parents notified \_\_\_\_\_

(include date and time, and indicate if by phone or in person)

Report filed with Senior Minister \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person filling out this report \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

Parent Signature (if notified in person) \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix E**  
**State Street United Methodist Church**  
**Incident Reporting Form**

**Please print all information!**

Date of incident \_\_\_\_\_ Time of incident \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of child/youth involved \_\_\_\_\_

Address of child/youth \_\_\_\_\_

Location of incident \_\_\_\_\_

Parent or guardian \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person(s) who witnessed the incident:

Name	Phone

Description of incident:

Action taken \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Parents notified \_\_\_\_\_  
(include date and time, and indicate if by phone or in person)

Report filed with Senior Minister \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person filling out this report \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Parent Signature (if notified in person) \_\_\_\_\_

*This form should be destroyed 18 months from the date of the incident.*

**Appendix G**  
**State Street United Methodist Church**  
**Report of Suspected Incident of Child Abuse**

1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse
  
2. Victim's name
  
3. Victim's age/date of birth
  
4. Date/place of initial observation/conversation with/report from the victim
  
5. Observation/victim's statement. (Give your detailed summary here)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. Name of person accused of abuse
  
  
7. Relationship of accused to victim (paid staff, volunteer, family member, other)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Reported to Senior Pastor, DCE or program leader.
  - a. Date/time:
  - b. Summary
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. Call to victim's parent/guardian (if not involved in allegations of abuse)
  - a. Date/time
  - b. Spoke with
  - c. Summary

10. Call to local authorities.
  - a. Date/time
  - b. Spoke with
  - c. Summary

OR

11. Call to local law enforcement agency.
  - a. Date/time
  - b. Spoke with
  - c. Summary

12. Other contacts (CAUTION: WE SHOULD BE VERY CAREFUL ABOUT WHO WE CONTACT – LEGAL IMMUNITY ONLY EXISTS WHEN REASONABLE SUSPICION OF ABUSE AND “GOOD FAITH” DIRECT REPORTING TO CHILD ABUSE AUTHORITIES)
  - a. Name
  - b. Date/time
  - c. Summary

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Signature

Date

*Note: Before taking any action or completing this report, it is imperative that the person filling out this report be familiar with Virginia and Tennessee law reporting requirements, as well as legal liability for possible defamation and invasion of privacy lawsuits .*

Appendix H

**Holston Annual Conference  
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT  
AND SEXUAL ABUSE  
REPORTING PROCEDURES**

**The United Methodist Church takes seriously any allegation  
of sexual misconduct or abuse or harassment.**

In the event an allegation involves a **minor** (through age 17), you must:

Immediately contact your local Children's Protective Services Office or local Law Enforcement.

Children's Protective Services phone: \_\_\_\_\_  
Fill in local number

Police: 911 or \_\_\_\_\_  
Fill in local number

Then notify the persons listed below. However, if the alleged abuser is a pastor, contact the District Superintendent named below.

In the event an allegation involves a person 18 years of age and older:

If you have personal, actual knowledge of, or have reasonable cause to suspect an incident of sexual misconduct, abuse, or harassment, first contact *one* of the following (If the alleged abuser is a pastor, contact the District Superintendent or Bishop below.):

Your Pastor: Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Fill in local number

Your local District Superintendent: Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
Fill in local number

The office of the Resident Bishop in Knoxville: phone **865-690-4080**.

Furthermore, the Reverend Judith Anna, a qualified, trained clergy member of Holston Annual Conference, is available to provide confidential counseling with victims of abuse, misconduct or harassment and may be reached on her cell phone at 423-237-5240.

**Appendix J**  
**State Street United Methodist Church**  
**Bathroom Procedures for Children's Ministry**

**Nursery – Birth to age 3**

Paid nursery workers (not volunteers) shall be responsible for diaper changes and shall follow the diaper changing procedure posted in the church nursery.

**Preschool – 3-4-PreK**

In order to move to the 3-4 year preschool class children should be toilet-trained. If a child needs assistance while in the bathroom, one volunteer may assist but the door must remain open.

**Elementary – K-grade 5**

Parents should be encouraged to take their children to the bathroom before and after classes, programming or worship. In the event a child needs to use the bathroom during an activity, one volunteer should escort the child to the bathroom and remain outside the hallway bathroom door. If possible, take two or more children at the same time. The other volunteer should remain in the classroom with the door open.

*\* In situations with special needs children, diaper changing procedures will be discussed and agreed upon with parents/guardians.*