

ST. JAMES UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
LITTLE ROCK, AR.

Safe Sanctuary Policy

2020

1. Introduction to the Policy: Our calling and our mandate is to ensure a safe sanctuary for God’s children (Luke 18:15-17).

- A. **Purpose:** The purpose of this policy is to address the safety of all children and youth at church sponsored events. These policies are intended (1) to help prevent the opportunity for the occurrence and/or the appearance of abuse of children and youth (otherwise known as protected persons) and (2) to help protect workers from false accusations and/or suspicions at church calendared events.

The policy is not based on a lack of trust in workers, but it is intended to protect our Protected Persons, workers, employees, volunteers and the entire church body from the devastating effects of abuse or event allegations of abuse. This policy reflects our congregation’s commitment to preserving the Church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

- B. **Scope of the Policy:** This policy applies to all Employees (as defined in paragraph 2.F.), Leaders (as defined in paragraph 2.H), and Volunteers (as defined in paragraph 2.N). This policy applies to events or programs sponsored and calendared by St. James United Methodist Church. Examples include, but are not limited to the following: Sunday School, choir, youth group meetings, retreats, Bible studies, mission trips/projects, Vacation Bible School, nursery care, and any event or program at Protected Persons are present whether on campus or away from campus.
- C. **Coordination with Other Rules:** While it is our intent that this policy shall apply to all church sponsored and calendared programs of the church, we recognize that the Church’s Child Enrichment Ministries programs (Learning Center and Kids LIFE Ministries) must also comply with the licensing requirements of the Arkansas Department of Human Services (ADHS). Therefore whenever the licensing requirements of ADHS and this policy shall be in conflict, the licensing requirements of ADHS shall prevail.

2. Definitions

- A. Abuse (Arkansas Code §9-30-103) Arkansas Code defines a child as being any person under eighteen (18) years of age. Child abuse is any non-accidental physical injury, mental injury, or sexual exploitation inflicted by those legally responsible for the care and maintenance of the child or an injury which is at variance with the history given. The term encompasses both acts and omissions. See appendix A, for more defined terms of abuse.
- B. “Adult Volunteer” means any person meeting the requirements of paragraph 3.A. of this policy.
- C. “Campus” means the physical grounds and facilities of the Church located at 230 and 321 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock, AR 72212. This definition extends to any vehicle owned, rented, or operated for a St. James United Methodist Church event no matter the location of the vehicle.

- D. “Child” (“Children”) means any person under eighteen (18) years of age.
- E. “Church” means St. James United Methodist Church, Little Rock, Arkansas.
- F. “Directors” refers to Director of Nursery Ministries, Director of Children’s Ministries, Director of Middle School Youth Ministries, or Director of Sr. High Youth Ministries.
- G. “Employee” means any person (lay or clergy) employed by the Church. Employee does not include independent contractors.
- H. “Event” means any activity that is sponsored and/or calendared by St. James United Methodist Church.
- I. “Leader” means any Employee or Qualified Volunteer meeting the requirements of paragraph 3.C. of this policy who is designated as and agrees to serve as the primary responsible persons for ensuring the safety of the Protected Persons during a specific church sponsored and calendared event or program that is subject to this policy. In most cases the Leader will be the person primarily responsible for conducting the program and/or class session.
- J. “Member” means any person who has been a member of the Church for at least six (6) months.
- K. “Pastor” means the Senior Pastor, Executive Director of Ministries, Contemporary Worship Pastor, other clergyperson assigned by the Bishop of the Arkansas Conference to serve at the Church.
- L. “Protected Person” is defined as children (infants-5th grade; youth grades 6th-12th); and vulnerable adults (those over years of age and are mentally and/or physically challenged.)
- M. “Qualified Adult Volunteer” means an Adult Volunteer who has completed Safe Sanctuary Training.
- N. “Safe Sanctuary Training” means the program of certification referred to in paragraph 5 of this policy.
- O. “Supervisor” means any of the following as appropriate: Senior Pastor, Sr. Associate Pastor, Contemporary Worship Pastor, Church Administrator, Executive Director of Ministries, Director of Youth Ministries, Associate Director of Youth Ministries Director of Children’s Ministries, Director of Nursery Ministries, Director of Child Enrichment Ministries, Assistant Director of Child Enrichment Ministries, Child Enrichment Ministries Site Supervisor (or her assistant.)
- P. “Volunteer” means any person who is not paid and serves in the capacity of Adult Volunteer or Adult Assistant Volunteer.
- Q. “Youth Volunteer” means any person meeting the requirements of paragraph 3.B of this policy.

3. Qualifications of Volunteers and Leaders

- A. Qualified Adult Volunteer must:
 - 1. Be at least eighteen (18) years of age;
 - 2. Have completed a Volunteer Application;
 - 3. Have approved background checks;
 - 4. Completed the Safe Sanctuary Training as described in paragraph 6 of this policy;
 - 5. Have an executed Covenant Agreement on file; and

6. Be a member for six months or if not a member has provided the appropriate Director with:
 - a. At least three (3) references from persons not related to the applicant and who have known the applicant for at least two (2) years,
 - b. and the Director, based on interviews with those references, has determined that the applicant to be an Adult Volunteer has sufficient moral character to serve as an Adult Volunteer at the Church.

B. Youth Volunteer must:

1. Be eleven (11) years of age.
2. Be at least four years older than the oldest protected person at event/program in which the youth is volunteering;
3. Have completed a Youth Volunteer Application and Covenant form;
4. Parent or guardian of the youth must also sign the Safe Sanctuary Application for Youth Volunteer.
5. Read the Safe Sanctuary Policy, watched or participated in Safe Sanctuary training, passed the Safe Sanctuary online test.

C. Contracted Workers, Programs, and Vendors

All contracted workers and vendors that are not employed by the church that conduct extracurricular programs with children are required to complete and sign the Safe Sanctuary Application for Adult Volunteers and consenting to a criminal history and sex offender registration search. Additionally, the authorization for Intervention, Therapy and Extracurricular Activities must be completed and signed by all parties (parents of the child involved in the activity, Director of the Ministry area, and vendor) before providing services or activities. This form must be renewed yearly if services are rendered for duration longer than one year. Contracted workers, programs, and vendors do not require a six-month relationship with the church to qualify as an approved adult. All programs/vendors must be appropriately staffed with Safe Sanctuary approved adults in order to adhere to the Two-Adult Rule at all times.

D. Leader must be:

1. An Employee or
2. A Qualified Adult Volunteer who
 - a. Completed the Safe Sanctuary training as described in paragraph 6 of this policy;
 - b. Is a Member for at least six (6) months
 - c. Or if not a member for six (6) months has, in addition, to the recommendations referred to in paragraph 2.A.5., provided the appropriate supervisor with a
 - i. Recommendation from the Senior Pastor or other appointed clergy person at St. James.
 - ii. A recommendation from a pastor or other representative from another church stating:
 - i. The applicant left the church in good standing

- with no concerns or accusations of abuse;
- ii. The applicant completed that church's equivalent of Safe Sanctuary training with the last three (3) years;
- iii. The applicant favorably served in leadership positions with Protected Persons at the former church.

4. Application Process

- A. Leaders, Employees and Volunteers: Any person desiring to be employed by the Church or desiring to serve as a Leader or Volunteer shall complete the appropriate Safe Sanctuary application and Consent to Background Check. The applicant can receive the applicable forms from any Director or online at www.stjameslr.org/safe-sanctuary. Employees will receive Safe Sanctuary forms with new employee information packet. In addition, the application shall submit any other information required for the position by paragraph 2 of this policy. Upon submission of all completed forms. The Family Ministries Administrative Assistant shall check references, if required and the background check shall be completed in accordance with paragraph 4 of this policy.
- B. Confidentiality of Information: The Church will keep confidential all information received in the applicant selection process. Information will be marked and stored in a locked location with limited access afforded. Information will be used for official church purposes only. The Family Ministries Administrative Assistant is responsible for completing background checks and maintaining all files relating to Safe Sanctuary applicants.

5. Background Checks

- A. Background Checks: Background checks shall be performed to the extent permitted by law on all Employees and Adult Volunteers who work with Protected Persons. Four (4) different checks shall be conducted:
 - 1. A Multi-State Criminal and National Sex Offender search through a reputable background check company retained by the Church;
 - 2. A record of Arkansas State Police Sex Offender Registry; and
 - 3. A child maltreatment central registry check with ADHS.
 - 4. Search for Orders of Protection
- B. While all four (4) background checks must be completed, at least three (3) must be conducted and the applicant shall be determined to be in good standing prior to employment or serving as a volunteer, as applicable.
- C. All persons who will be transporting (driving) Protected Persons are also required to provide proof of insurance, copy of valid driving license, and have their motor vehicle record checked.
- D. The Church reserves the right to recheck volunteers at any time. The criminal and sex offender background checks will be completed on active Volunteers every three years

and when appropriate motor vehicle records will also be checked every three years. Completion of Volunteer Application is required every three years. Employee's criminal and national sex offender background checks will be completed every year. The Child Maltreatment check will be completed every three years on employees.

- E. Any volunteer who leaves the church for a period of more than six months shall reapply for screening prior to volunteer service with children and/or youth.
- F. If a criminal report is returned indicating a felony conviction, a sex offense, or order of protection, that is considered to be a "Red Flag." Any person who has a "Red Flag" background check or reference may not work or volunteer with Protected Persons. In general, a "Red Flag" will prohibit persons from working with Protected Persons. A Senior Staff Person will offer to meet with the prospective volunteer to discuss the "Red Flag" The purpose of the conversation is to determine the reason for the "Red Flag" and if applicant will be allowed to work with Protected Persons. If the applicant refuses to discuss the issue, then the applicant will not be allowed to work with Protected Persons. In certain cases exceptions may be made following an interview with the Senior Pastor, Executive Director of Ministries, and the age-level program director. The Senior Pastor may designate another member of the Senior Staff to serve in his/her place.
- G. Permission to work with Protected Persons will not be granted until the 3 of the 4 background checks are completed and Safe Sanctuary Training is completed

6. Safe Sanctuary Training

- A. All Employees are required to complete a Safe Sanctuary Training within ten (10) days of their initial hire date and thereafter in accordance with the terms of this policy.
- B. Any person desiring to be a Leader or Qualified Adult Volunteer must meet all of the training requirements of this paragraph 6 prior to serving as a Leader or being designated as a Qualified Adult Volunteer.
- C. Non-Employees shall receive Safe Sanctuary training by either of these two (2) methods:
 - 1. Attendance at a training event provided by members of the Safe Sanctuary committee, or
 - 2. Participation in on-line training at www.stjameslr.org/safesanctuary and passage of the on-line test following the video.
- D. Employees shall receive Safe Sanctuary training from other Church staff approved by the Safe Sanctuary Committee/SPRC.
- E. Qualified Adult Volunteers must obtain recertification of their Safe Sanctuary training at least every three (3) years.
- F. It is the responsibility of Executive Director of Ministries to ensure that every Employee has the necessary training and background checks.
- G. It the responsibility of the Director of each program to ensure that every Leader and Qualified Adult Volunteer and Youth Volunteer has the necessary training and background checks.

H. Safe Sanctuary training for adults will include, but not be limited to the following:

1. An explanation of Abuse;
2. Written information describing the Arkansas laws regarding the reporting of suspected Abuse;
3. Training in the identification of Abuse;
4. Delivery of a copy of this policy and Guiding Principles of Safe Sanctuary.

I. Safe Sanctuary training for youth will include, but is not limited to the following:

1. Expectations of Youth Volunteer behavior;
2. Explanations of what the Safe Sanctuary policy is and why it is needed;
3. What to expect from Adults whom they volunteer with;
4. What they can and cannot do as youth volunteer;
5. What to do if they think something is wrong;

7. Safe Sanctuary Procedures

- A. An Employee or Leader must be in attendance and assume responsibility for compliance with this policy at every Event. It is also strongly encouraged that there be present at least one Employee, Leader, Adult Volunteer, or Youth Volunteer who is trained and certified in First Aid and CPR at all Events.
- B. Two (2), in any combination of Employees, Leaders or Qualified Adult Volunteers, whenever possible, shall be in attendance at every calendared Event. However, if there are extenuating circumstances (such as an unplanned absence) which prevent two (2) Employees, Leaders or Qualified Adult Volunteers from being present, then other adults may be called upon to assist the Employee, Leader or Adult Volunteer. There must be at all times at least one (1) Employee, Leader or Qualified Adult Volunteer in the room. This shall be known as the “Two Adult Rule.”
- C. Whenever possible, teachers will be assigned in teams of two or more per Sunday school hour to every class of children or youth. Concerted effort will be made to recruit sufficient numbers of volunteer teachers/leaders to permit such team teaching. At times when it may be impossible to adhere to the Two Adult Rule, a roving Employee, Leader or Qualified Adult Volunteer may be used to move in and out of rooms, alternating time in each classroom with only one adult.
- D. The Church has a goal of maintaining the following ratios of ministry workers to children whenever feasible. These ratios are goals.

Program	Workers	Children
Nursery	2	12
Sunday School	2	16

Middle School Youth Programs	2	20
High School Youth Programs	2	24
Mid-week Classes	2	14
VBS	2	16

The Church recognizes that in some circumstances achieving these ratios may not be feasible, such as an unexpected number of Children showing up for an event. Youth Volunteers are not be counted in the ratio of worker to children. When it becomes apparent or likely that the ratios cannot be achieved, the Leader(s) for the event shall contact the Executive Director of Ministries promptly to determine if church staff or other Leaders are available to attend the event to achieve the required ratios. In consultation with the Executive Director of Ministries, the Leader(s) may determine that no additional Protected Persons may be admitted to the event due to the lack of enough leaders. If the Executive Director of Ministries and the Leader(s) mutually agree that the particular event does not pose a serious risk to the additional Protected Persons due to the nature of the event (e.g., the event is in contained classroom setting such as a Sunday School room with other Leaders in close proximity or a youth event where other youth groups and their leaders are in one room together an event such as a rally), then the additional Protected Persons may be admitted for that particular event without achieving the required ratios so long as the ratio request is not exceeded by 25%. If the ratio is exceeded three or more times for regularly scheduled events during a sixty-day (60 day) period, staff shall not allow the ratio to be exceeded thereafter and any Protected Persons who seek to attend the event shall not be admitted unless and until there are sufficient leaders to meet the required ratio.

- E. Recognizing that there is safety in numbers, Protected Persons should be instructed to use the “buddy system.”
- F. Sign-In Guidelines
 1. Children, ages infant through fifth grade, must be checked in to our electronic security system when they are away from their parent/guardian. Parents check their children in at one of the seven check-in stations that are located around the church (either manual or self-guided). Once a family’s information is in the computer, check-in process should take no more than a few seconds.
 2. All children will have a customized name tag printed. Infants-24 months of age should wear their name badges on their back. Children two years and older should have name badges on their front, clearly visible.
 3. Parents of Infants-two years of age will receive a second name badge. This is considered the security receipt for your child. When picking up the child from their church event, the parent will have to show the corresponding name badge to the leader in order for the child to be released.

4. In the event that computers are down, a paper sign-in system will be used. Parents will sign their child in at their nursery or Sunday School room. They will receive a badge with two parts – one for their child and one for the parent. Both will have a matching code that will be used when picking up the child. All other procedures remain the same

G. Open Door Policy. Parents, guardians or caretakers of the Protected Persons involved in a ministry program, the clergy, administrative and professional staff of the church have the right to visit and observe the children's/youth activity, classroom, or church-sponsored program at any time, unannounced.

H. Doors and Windows. All classroom and office doors will have a window or a door will remain open while occupied by a Protected Person. Inside windows will be kept free from adornment that obstructs visibility into a room from the hallway. If an event requires anyone to have the ability to change clothes, then gender specific changing rooms will be provided. If the room provided has windows, then the window will be blocked for privacy purposes and will be supervised in accordance to these policies. Once all clothes have been changed, all windows are to be unblocked.

I. Individual Conferences: Individual conferences with Protected Persons will be conducted in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. Another adult is to have knowledge of staff members' whereabouts and with whom they are meeting. Protected Persons participating in individual conferences should be told they are free to discuss any aspects of the counseling process with a parent or other adult, especially if they are uncomfortable about anything that occurs in counseling. All incidents of suspected abuse and neglect revealed during the session will be reported in accordance with section 8 of this policy.

J. Church Sponsored & Calendared Events Away From Church Property All Protected Persons participating in out-of-town and over-night outings must have written consent, release of liability and a medical release form. These forms may be completed for a one-year period and must be renewed annually.

There must be access to a phone or cell phone when groups are away from the Campus. It is preferred that on outings away from the Campus at least one adult be certified in CPR and First Aid. If the outing involves water activities such as swimming, it is suggested that a certified lifeguard accompany the group.

K. Church Sponsored & Calendared Overnight Outings In no circumstance is one adult (other than the parent) to take one or more Protected Persons on an overnight outing alone.

1. On all overnight outings, the ratio of adult to Protected Person supervision shall be observed.
2. A female Leader will supervise female Protected Persons in or adjacent to their sleeping quarters and a male Leader will supervise male Protected Persons in or adjacent to their sleeping quarters.

3. An adult and Protected Person will not occupy the same bed, sleeping bag or tent.
 4. In hotels/motels and personal dwellings, there should be a minimum of three Protected Persons to each room with four being preferred.
 5. Leaders and Qualified Adult Volunteers will provide adequate and appropriate supervision.
 6. All adults in the presence of Protected Persons will conduct themselves appropriately. This includes, but is not limited to, changing clothes behind closed doors, and wearing appropriate sleeping attire and swim attire.
- L. Small Group Meeting. Childcare arrangements made by Church-sponsored small groups that meet in private homes are considered private arrangements and do not fall under the auspices of this policy. The Church will not be held liable for accidents or injury incurred in small group settings in private homes.
- M. All Youth Volunteers must be supervised by an Employee or Qualified Adult Volunteer at all times and a Youth Volunteer should never be alone with a Protected Person at any time.
- N. Volunteers working with Protected Persons must be four (4) years older than the oldest child participating in the Event.
- O. Outside Groups at Church. Any organization or group that includes Protected Persons not connected with the Church that wishes to use the facilities of the Church must either comply with this policy by one of the following:
1. All volunteers of the outside organization or group must comply with this policy, other than the membership requirements;
 2. The outside organization or group must provide a copy of their own child protection policy, agree in writing that such policy, not St James' Safe Sanctuary Policy, will govern while the organization or group is utilizing Church facilities; and demonstrate compliance with its policy; or
 3. Arrange for either Employees or Leaders to be in attendance during the time period the outside organization or group is on Church property to assure compliance with this policy.
- P. Every Event including Protected Persons must comply with this policy. If this policy cannot be complied with, the Event must be cancelled.

8. Youth Sexuality Conduct Policy

The St. James UMC Youth Ministries (including but not limited to: Sunday School, Sunday Night Youth, retreats, missions, and youth music groups) requires abstinence from any conduct of a sexual nature while participating in any events that youth (6th-12th students) are present. This includes, but is not limited to: sexual intimacy, sexual relations, telephone sex, texting or apps to send inappropriate messages, pictures, or videos of a sexual nature, romantic kissing or other touching of a romantic or sexual nature, whether between persons of the opposite gender, same gender, or transgender. Violation of this requirement will result in the youth's parent(s) or

guardian(s) being contacted concerning the conduct and the youth being prohibited from participating in youth activities until there is a meeting to address the violation with the appropriate St. James Staff Member, the youth and the youth's parents or guardian. Limitations on future participation by the youth may be imposed by the appropriate St. James Staff Member based upon the nature of the conduct, including but not limited to, a temporary ban from youth activities involving overnight travel or a requirement that a parent or guardian accompany the youth.

No youth who are in a romantic or sexual relationship shall be permitted to sleep in the same room during youth activities involving an overnight stay. Youth of the same gender who are in a romantic relationship shall not be allowed to room together unless all youth of that same gender sleep in the same room as a large group.

Any conduct that is believed to be a violation of this policy shall be reported to the appropriate St. James Staff person immediately. If the St. James Staff person believes that the conduct requires a report to the child abuse hotline, that staff person will comply with the St. James Safe Sanctuary Policy in making the report and notifying other appropriate pastoral staff and the parent(s) or guardian(s) of the youth. If that staff member believes that the conduct may be criminal, the youth director shall also consult with the Senior Pastor or other member of the pastoral staff, and then report the conduct to law enforcement authorities if appropriate.

The St. James UMC Youth Ministries understands that youth may consider public displays of affection such as holding hands, hugging, and kissing on the cheek as signs of Christian love and not romantic or sexual in nature. St. James Staff Members will provide guidance on what conduct is permitted and adult volunteers and other St. James UMC Staff Members will remind youth of this policy if it appears that certain questionable conduct may be a violation.

Both the youth and the youth's parent(s) or guardian(s) shall be responsible for complying with this policy. If the youth or the youth's parent(s) or guardian(s) refuse to meet with the appropriate St. James Staff Member following a violation or if there are repeated violations, the youth will not be allowed to participate in any youth activities except Sunday School and Sunday night UMY until the youth and the youth's parent(s) or guardians have agreed to comply with the limitations and additional requirements set by the appropriate St. James Staff Member.

This policy shall not preclude youth from speaking confidentially to the St. James UMC Youth Ministries staff in a ministry capacity concerning issues of a sexual nature. St. James UMC Youth Ministry affirms that all youth are of sacred worth. Youth may need the ministry care and support of the St. James UMC Youth Ministry regarding issues of a sexual nature, and that ministry care and support will be provided in a confidential and appropriate Christian manner unless the youth's parent(s) or guardian(s) have instructed the youth ministry staff not to minister with the youth concerning matters of a sexual nature. The youth who seeks ministering will be advised that if the ministering reveals that there has been a violation of the St. James UMC Youth Sexual Conduct policy while the youth was participating in a St. James youth event, the youth's parent(s) or guardian(s) will be notified per the requirements of this policy. If, however, the ministering does not relate to any conduct that is a violation of this policy and simply

seeks ministering regarding matters of a sexual nature that are not related to conduct while participating in St. James youth events, the information communicated to the St. James UMC staff during the ministering will remain confidential.

10. SOCIAL MEDIA AND SAFE SANCTUARY

Giving the increased use of technology and social media in the life of the church and its individual members, churches and conferences have a responsibility to define social media policies that uphold the covenant to create Safe Sanctuaries for children, youth and vulnerable adults. To this end, St. James United Methodist Church affirms the following and asks all volunteers to sign a Media Use Covenant.

- A. We will utilize technology, the internet and all social media tools to promote Christian community and the building up of authentic relationships.
- B. We will protect the privacy and identity of all persons under the age of 18 years of age and all vulnerable adults in online writings, postings, and discussions.
 - 1. Adult employees and volunteers must not post photos or videos that identify protected persons on any online site or printed publication without written consent from a parent or legal guardian.
 - 2. All church-related social media groups and pages (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) must have at least two administrators. One of the administrators must be the Director of Social Media. If an administrator is no longer associated with the ministry, that individual's administrative status must be revoked.
 - 3. At this time, Snap Chat or any other form of social media in which information can not be retained is not an acceptable form of communication. No adult will initiate or respond to Snap Chat communications involving minors and will report any Snap Chat communications from a minor to the minor's parent(s) or guardian.
 - 4. Photos of minors may only be published or posted after a photo release has been signed by their parent/guardian. Photos used in other mediums, such as church newsletters, websites, blogs, twitpics, etc., must not include any identifying information of minors.
 - 5. Photos may only be posted on social media pages by page administrators. Adults (staff, volunteers, parents, etc.) should not identify minors in photographs posted online or in print. Individuals (including minors) are welcome to identify (i.e. "tag") themselves.
 - 6. When checking in on Foursquare, Facebook, or any location tagging social media, only "check-in" yourself. Never check in minors or groups of minors. Be sensitive to tagging or revealing other participants' location without their expressed permission. Rather, create a hashtag to facilitate conversation.
 - 7. In the case of clergy and staff online connections with minors, Friend Requests, Follow Request, etc. should be initiated by the minor.
- C. We will maintain appropriate relational boundaries with minors.

1. No adult shall initiate Facebook, Snap Chat, Instagram, or other social media “friend” status with a minor. An accepting the “friend” requests of minors is up to the discretion of the adult in charge of the ministry area. Regardless of the decision that is reached, this practice should be uniformly practiced by all adult staff and volunteers. Any conversations with minors shall occur in open channels.
2. When emailing, texting, tweeting, or Facebook messaging a minor, adults should copy another adult (ideally a parent or guardian) on the message, or post it in a public venue (i.e. Facebook wall as opposed to private message). This will allow adults to maintain the “two adults present” Safe Sanctuaries standard when using social media. If necessary in the judgment of the person receiving the communication, then parents/guardians will be notified of the communication. Notwithstanding the foregoing, if the communication involves information that leads the person receiving the communication to believe that the minor may be in danger or about to commit an act that will harm the minor or others, the details of the communication shall be communicated to the parent.
3. Social media, even though it offers convenient and private channels is not an appropriate medium for counseling – especially with minors. Begin or transition a pastoral conversation into an approved Safe Sanctuary model.

D. Online Gatherings and Meetings with Protected Persons

1. Continue to apply the two-adult rule. Use platforms that allow multiple adults to be logged in at the same time preferably. If it is a single-user platform, or if more than one adult cannot be present at the same time, allow another user to have adult administrative privileges to go in and monitor accounts on a regular basis. This helps meet the “window in a door” or “open door” policies familiar for in-person meetings. If this is a one-on-one conference, an adult (like a parent) on the youth side of the call or video should simply appear and wave, acknowledging that the adult knows this conversation is taking place.
2. Use “ministry-based” accounts instead of personal accounts. This helps everyone understand that the conversations are part of ministry and outreach. It also allows for multiple administrators. If your church or youth ministry does not yet have an official account, create one and coordinate your messaging and gatherings from those accounts. This also allows you to easily create and share links as well as use password protection features, to avoid unwanted guests crashing your online gathering.
3. Use platforms that allow for some kind of record to be created. Save chats or texts. Save or record videos. Create an activity log for which an adult is logged into an account and using a ministry-based platform (day, time, basic notes about who conversations were with) and keep it current.
4. Create a basic schedule and communicate that with youth and parents, so that they know when a ministry-based account is being monitored or in use. Anything on that schedule, or that comes from a person logged in to the ministry-based account should be considered as a representative for the church and conversations

should follow covenants and guidelines that would be used for in-person gatherings.

5. If/when a personal account is used:

Adults should never send connection requests from a personal account. If a youth reaches out, the adult can connect, but the adult should also inform the church/staff of that connection.

If an adult ends up in a one-on-one conversation with a youth, it is VERY important for that adult to have a written record if possible. At minimum, document the time, date, and topic; save the actual text of the conversation if possible. Consult existing Safe Sanctuaries® materials for the definitions of confidentiality versus secrecy. Informing a parent about the occurrence of a one-on-one interaction or conversation can be done either before (if scheduled in advance) or after the conversation (if the conversation is spur of the moment) takes place is responsible and honors confidentiality regarding the topics of conversation.

6. Ensure that everyone, staff and volunteers, in conversation with youth and their families from a ministry-based account is familiar with your local Mandatory Reporting Procedures. These should already be covered in your standard Safe Sanctuaries® trainings, and this is an excellent time to review those!

7. Maintain the five-year age gap. Leaders of virtual groups should be five years (or more) older than the group they are leading, just as for in-person meetings.

8. Clearly have staff and volunteers use their real names when possible, and have a log of “handles” or “usernames” used by people guiding conversations. It is important for people to know whom they are talking to. This is similar to the name tags and i.d. suggestions for in-person gatherings.

9. Make notes about attendance and plan group chats/online activities when possible. Document who is there, just as you would take attendance in person.

- E. We shall not engage in the creation, viewing, or distribution of pornography.
- F. We shall not engage in, encourage, or condone cyberbullying
- G. We shall educate young people in effective ways of using social media and technology to live out their Christian witness in what they write, post, share, and view.

11. RESPONSE BY CHURCH WORKERS TO ALLEGATIONS OF ABUSE

- A. Leaders should use common sense when there is a suspicion that abuse is taking or has taken place. If abuse is suspected by, observed by or disclosed to a Volunteer and/or Employee, that person will report the incident immediately to a Supervisor. (If the accused is a Pastor, see information below.) Be prepared to do the following:
- B. Reporting

1. Reporting by Volunteers or Leaders who are not employees:

a. When a Leader or Volunteer has reasonable cause to suspect that a Protected Person has been abused or neglected, he/she should immediately contact the appropriate Director or a Pastor. The initial verbal report should be followed up with a written report to the appropriate Director or a Pastor. If the volunteer is a mandated reporter under Arkansas State Law, the volunteer shall follow procedures for mandated reporters and immediately contact a Director of Pastor.

b. If there is reasonable cause to suspect that abuse or neglect of a Protected Person has occurred, the appropriate Director or notified Pastor will immediately report the incident to the Church Administrator and together they shall immediately reporting the incident to the child abuse hotline (1.800.482.5964).

2. Reporting by Employees:

a. When an Employee has reasonable cause to suspect that abuse or neglect of a Protected Person has occurred, he/she will immediately report the incident to the child abuse hotline (1.800.482.5964) as required by Act 1056 of 2015.

b. In addition to reporting the suspected abuse or neglect to the child abuse hotline, the Employee will immediately notify the Pastor and Church Administrator verbally. The initial verbal report should be followed up with a written report to the Pastor and Church Administrator.

3. All persons with any information related to the alleged abuse/neglect incident shall maintain the confidentiality of such information, communicating about the incident with no one except the appropriate regulatory or law enforcement authorities, the appropriate Director, the Pastors, Executive Director of Ministries, and/or other persons deemed appropriate by the Church Administrator.

C. Response

1. Should allegations of abuse or neglect of a Protected Person occur:

a. The person suspected of abuse shall be removed with dignity from further contact with any Protected Persons until an appropriate investigation has taken place and the issue is resolved.

b. All persons involved on behalf of the Church will treat each allegation seriously with confidentiality and respect for the privacy of all involved persons.

c. All Employees and Volunteers will cooperate fully with civil authorities.

d. All Employees and Volunteers will extend genuine care to all victims of abuse/neglect.

e. In the presence of the Church Administrator, a Pastor or Director shall notify the parents or guardians of the Protected Person of the allegations. He/she should lovingly and carefully reach out to the victim and the victim's family, extending all pastoral

resources that are available. He/she should never respond in a negative or non-supportive manner to the alleged victim.

2. After determining there is reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect of a Protected Person, the appropriate Director or a Pastor, together with the Church Administrator will:
 - a. Make certain that all efforts at handling the incident are documented in writing, including dates and times.
 - b. The Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) in cooperation with the Senior Pastor, the Church Administrator, and any civil authorities shall assemble a response team that will investigate the allegation and develop specific recommendations that are appropriate for each case as it applies to Employees.
 - c. Resolve allegations of abuse and or neglect within the shortest time needed to conduct a thorough investigation as it relates to Church functions and Employees.
 - d. The confidences and sensitivities of all persons involved in the incident will be respected.

B. Non-retaliation

1. This policy prohibits retaliation against anyone who, in good faith, reports allegations of sexual abuse or neglect or assists in investigating charges.
2. Anyone found to have participated in retaliatory actions will be subject to disciplinary action which may include termination as a Volunteer or Employee.

C. Media Contact

The Senior Pastor and Church Administrator shall be informed of all investigations or allegations of abuse or neglect and be kept up to date at all time with all relevant information. If investigations of abuse or neglect should come to the attention of the media, a response, if any, shall come from the Senior Pastor or his/her designee only. All inquiries must be referred to the Senior Pastor or his/her designee. No other Employee or Volunteer should give out any information. Simply state that all inquiries will be answered by the church spokesperson.

12. St. James United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Committee

- A. The St. James United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Committee (the “Committee”) shall be comprised of the Director of Children’s Ministry, Director of Youth Ministry, and the Nursery Coordinator and four (4) members of the congregation. The congregation members shall be elected by the Church Conference each year. The Church Chancellor, Church Administrator (or her designated representative), Executive Director of Ministries and the Senior Pastor (or his designated representative) shall serve as ex-officio members with vote.
- B. The Committee will be responsible for reviewing this policy at least annually and

updating with editorial changes as needed. All substantive changes shall be submitted first to the Senior Pastor for preliminary approval and then to the Trustees for final approval. The Committee shall also be responsible for ensuring that any on-line training materials are updated and maintained on a yearly basis.

The Church Administrator and Executive Director of Ministries shall ensure that all new staff hired receives Safe Sanctuary training within ten (10) days of their start date.

- C. The Family Ministries Administrative Assistant is responsible for receiving the applications, conducting background checks, and references. After processing the reports/forms (including applications, reference checks, background checks, and any other related items) every attempt will be made to keep all information secure and confidential.

- D. It is the responsibility of the Executive Director of Ministries or the person he/she designates to ensure that a complete and up-to-date list of Qualified Adult Volunteer and Volunteers is maintained and accessible at all times. This list will not contain confidential information, just notification of who is currently a Qualified Adult Volunteer or Volunteer.

Appendix A – Definitions of Abuse

Child abuse" means any non-accidental physical injury, mental injury, sexual abuse, or sexual exploitation inflicted by those legally responsible for the care and maintenance of the child, or an injury that is at variance with the history given. The term encompasses both acts and omissions.

"Neglect" means:

(A) Failure to provide, by those legally responsible for:

(i) The care and maintenance of the child and the proper or necessary support;

(ii) Education, as required by law; or

(iii) Medical, surgical, or any other care necessary for his or her well-being; or

(B) Any maltreatment of the child. The term includes both acts and omissions.

Nothing in this chapter shall be construed to mean a child is neglected or abused for the sole reason he or she is being provided treatment by spiritual means through prayer alone in accordance with the tenets or practices of a recognized church or religious denomination by a duly accredited practitioner thereof in lieu of medical or surgical treatment.

These are general definitions. If any volunteer or staff member has any specific questions about whether or not an act or omission is abuse or neglect, more comprehensive definitions will be provided.

APPENDIX B – Guiding Principles of Safe Sanctuary

Leadership by Example

All individuals assuming any position of leadership within Children’s Ministries, including Weekday Ministries, must be Safe Sanctuary trained.

Two by Two

There should be two leaders present when children are present.

Line of Sight

If for some reason you find yourself in a situation where you are alone with a group of children, make sure that you are visible to others. For instance, open the door to your room, alert the teacher next door, alert the staff monitoring the hall, etc.

Safety in Numbers

Recognizing that there is safety in numbers, avoid situations which you are alone with a child. If for some reason there is no other adult available, make sure there are numerous children in attendance rather than a one-on-one situation.

Roving Superintendent/Extra Helper

Staff and lay individuals who are Safe Sanctuary certified shall monitor classroom hallways. These individuals are available to assist with situations in the classrooms and to watch for the safety of the children in the hallways.

Health Emergencies

First-aid kits are located in the children’s ministry supply closet, Welcome Center Desk, Kitchen, Youth Area, Christian Life Center, Miles Building kitchen, Director of Learning Center office and Director of Elementary Weekday Ministries.

If you call 911, please try to get word to a staff member or adult volunteer who can go to the parking lot to guide the emergency personnel to the correct location. It is imperative to alert the office as soon as possible so that the necessary support can be given to the situation. Once the situation has been handled appropriately, please write a report of the incident and submit the report to the appropriate Program Director or Church Administrator.

Beginning and Ending of Programs

Children ages 5 years and younger must be registered or signed-in by a parent or guardian at the beginning of a program. Information should include the child’s name, parent’s name, and contact information, location of parent during a program, and any allergies or special needs the child may have. If children will be regularly participating in church programs, then each child should have a consent/emergency health release form on file.

Restroom Assistance

All children requiring a diaper change should be taken to the childcare wing where a childcare employee or safe sanctuary certified person will change the diaper following church procedures. Parents may change the diapers of their own children.

Most of the Miles Building classrooms are equipped with a restroom in the classroom. If a child

should need toilet assistance, please leave the door ajar while you assist the child.

For classrooms without restrooms, children in 1st grade and up may be sent to the restroom in pairs. If an adult needs to accompany the child, please remain outside the restroom in the hallway while the child is in the restroom. Should a situation arise in which an older child needs assistance, enlist the help of another adult so that two adults are present with the child. If this is a situation which is likely to be “on-going”, (such as a child with special needs), please make sure that the appropriate Program Director is alerted so that a more permanent system can be put into place.

Fire Alarms

In the case of an alarm, evacuation must take place immediately if Sunday School or other events involving children are in session. Evacuate the building and stay outside until an all-clear signal has been given (usually this will come from a staff member). A fire evacuation map is located in each classroom.

Appropriate Discipline

Children should be made aware that appropriate behavior is expected at all local, district, and conference events. Ensuring that children, youth, and parents are aware of the rules is vital. Gentle reminders are always necessary when dealing with children. When these reminders don't work, then discipline needs to move to the next step. In cases where behavior has to be addressed, it is best if persons who know the child (such as the child's Sunday School teacher, choir leader, etc.) are called in to help handle the situation. In no case is physical discipline an appropriate measure to deal with problems except in the rare situation of having to reasonably restrain a child who is threatening harm to him/herself or to others. A reasonable response might include a period of “time-out” for the child. This should be done with necessary supervision keeping safe sanctuary guidelines in mind. Keeping parents involved is important. They need to be kept up-to-date on their child's behavior. For serious offenses, the appropriate response will be to send the child home immediately. Parents and the Program Director or his/her designee will make the proper arrangements.

Appropriate Physical and Emotional Boundaries

Physical boundaries are most important in dealing with children and youth. Those working with children and youth have to understand and respect those boundaries. Obviously these boundaries change, as children grow older. A young child sitting on the lap of a caregiver is most appropriate whereas an older child or youth sitting on a leader's lap would not be acceptable. Hugs and kisses from a toddler to a leader are very appropriate. However, hugs and kisses between youth and adults may not be appropriate.

Emotional boundaries are most important also. As a child grows older it is important for the leader to maintain appropriate boundaries in relationships. It is important that those working with children and youth not step outside of those lines and allow the younger person to become too attached to them. It is important that the older person be careful where conversations might lead and to steer clear of inappropriate talk. When a leader recognizes that there might be an issue with these boundaries, they should allow space to come between them and the child in question. If that does not solve the problem then contact the appropriate Program Director for assistance.