

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

06/22/21

The Centreville United Methodist Church in discharging its Christian and ethical responsibilities of providing a safe and secure environment for children, youth and adults with specific needs, hereby effects the following Safe Sanctuary policy. The policy is intended to provide a safe, secure environment for ministry to all of God's people, especially children and youth. Please contact Rev. Karen Handy if you have questions concerning this policy and how it may affect you or your group.

Throughout the Gospels, Jesus provides teachings on providing a peaceable kingdom for all of God's people, including our most precious gifts, our children and youth, as example, Luke 18:15-17.

Centreville United Methodist Church welcomes children and youth. 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.

The church continues to welcome children, knowing that for some it may be the only place where they will experience God's unconditional love and grace. As Christians, we take our responsibilities to children and youth very seriously. When we neglect to take adequate precautions to protect them from abuse while in our care, we fail in our responsibilities as Christians. We are committed to providing a safe and secure environment for all children and those who participate in the ministries and activities sponsored by Centreville United Methodist Church. The Safe Sanctuary Policy will be posted and available in the Church Office, Nursery, Fellowship Hall, the Sunday School wing, and the CUMC website (www.centreville-umc.com)

The following procedures will be addressed in this document.

Screening and Procedures Process

- A background check will be performed on all paid staff and volunteers who have direct contact with children and youth and any individual who possesses a key to any church building **and will be repeated every 4 years**. The background check must be completed before the volunteer or paid staff member begins the position or the key holder takes possession of the key.
- An impartial party, not directly involved in the children or youth ministry, will conduct all background checks.
- Volunteers working with children and youth are expected to attend Centreville United Methodist Church **6 months** before they are eligible to work in an area where they will have direct contact with children.
- No one shall serve as a paid staff member or volunteer if he/she is known previously to have been convicted of, pled guilty or no contest to, any act or conduct involving sexual abuse or any act or guilty conduct which of a sexual, molesting, seductive, or criminally deviant nature whether or not such conduct involved a child. This includes but is not limited to, crimes involving pedophilic behavior, molestation of a pre-adolescent child, incest, rape, assaults involving adults with special needs, murder, kidnapping, pornography, and the physical abuse of an adult with special needs.

- The Pastor and/or a representative of the Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) will be responsible for screening all paid staff employees, Sunday School, Children and Youth program volunteers and Vacation Bible School volunteers.
- All **Church** groups meeting at Centreville United Methodist Church will be asked to sign this statement acknowledging receipt of, and intent to comply with the Centreville United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy. This signed copy will be kept in the office. Further, it is the responsibility of all outside groups using the Centreville United Methodist Church facilities to determine the adequacy of the Centreville United Methodist Safe Sanctuary Policy and adopt their additional Safe Sanctuary policies should they consider the Centreville United Methodist Church policies inadequate. A copy of additional amendments must be submitted to the Centreville United Methodist Church.
- **The Church's Wi-Fi signal will not be used by outside organizations. Furthermore, the internet password will not be shared by Church staff or volunteers. (We do have a Guest Login for member use)**
- All paid staff and **volunteers** will complete an application, be interviewed and will give written permission for a background check prior to the person assuming the position. Should the background check reveal information that precludes a person from being a volunteer or staff member, then appropriate persons should be made aware of such.
- References will be requested on all paid staff and **volunteer** positions and it will be left to the screeners (noted above) to follow up on specific references listed.
- The maintenance of such documents shall reside in a locked file or cabinet in the vault in the church office.

Supervision

- Safe Sanctuary Orientation/Training is a requirement **every 4 years** for all staff and volunteers in charge of children and youth activities. The training will cover church policies to prevent child abuse, appropriate steps to report an incident of abuse, and details of state law regarding child abuse.
- Basic CPR and First Aid training will be made available to all volunteers and staff. Paid staff is required to complete this training **every two years**.
- Whenever reasonable, minimum supervisory standards will include “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 supervising adults present. When this is not possible, an adult roamer will visit the room(s) periodically. Helpers under the age of 18 will be partnered with an adult and not supervised only by a roamer.
- An adult in a leadership role with youth must: 1) be over 18 years of age 2) be five years older than the youth with whom he/she is working 3) be **25** or older to drive with youth and passengers, unless in an emergency.
- Each room or space where children or youth are being cared for shall have an eye-level window(s) in the door or shall be left open. All activities should occur in open view.

- Registration materials for activities in which children are outside of the direct supervision of their parents/guardians shall require written permission forms that include general health and emergency contact information in order to participate. All information will be kept confidential.
- The church nursery will require all parents to sign their child in for events, according to the church nursery policy.
- Open-Door Counseling is required for all youth. Any counseling need of any youth or the youth's family shall be reported to the Pastor.
- Windows in all classroom and office doors remove the opportunity for secrecy and isolation and are recommended.

Youth Activities “Outside” the Church

With an active Youth Ministries program, Centreville United Methodist Church acknowledges that some activities by our Youth Ministries will occur outside of the church itself. For that reason, the following procedures are in place to assure the safety of our children.

- **Two-Adult Rule** - There is more than just one adult present with youth. We recommend 1 adult for every 10 youth. The ratio of youth per adult shall not exceed 10:1. The two adults should be unrelated by marriage.
- **Five-Years Older Rule** - Adult leaders should be five years older than the people with whom they work and never younger than eighteen years of age.
- **Sleeping Arrangements** - Adults will not sleep in the same bed as youth. In a hotel-type setting, it is recommended that if possible, an adult room is between two youth rooms. This is also recommended for dormitory settings. Adult rooms house only adults. Youth rooms house only youth. When circumstances necessitate that adults and youth share a sleeping space (i.e. floor of a room) there will be identifiable space between youth and adults, when possible.

Adults should arrange themselves to check on the youth rooms on a random schedule during the night minimizing the possibility of danger from within the group as well as from strangers, if possible choose a hotel where the rooms open to the interior of the building rather than to the outside. The consent form should detail specific planned activities for which consent is being sought.

- **Physical Safety Issues** - Youth workers should be conscious of safety concerns when leading activities and games. Proper equipment and adequate supervision of the activity should always be in place. No drugs, alcoholic beverages, weapons, or fireworks will be allowed. All youth must have signed a parental consent - medical information form.
- **Interpersonal Boundaries in Relationships:**
 1. Everyone is expected to be present with the group for all activities going on.
 2. Adults will provide great leadership by modeling appropriate behaviors.

3. No profane language.
 4. No permission for boys to enter the room where girls are sleeping, and no permission for girls to enter the room where boys are sleeping.
 5. No permission or opportunity for two youth or one adult and one youth to separate themselves from the group.
 6. No inappropriate touching, creating the perception that the personal space and privacy of the individual is being violated.
- **Transportation Plans:**
 1. Whenever possible drivers aged 25 or older should be used to transport youth.
 2. All drivers to be covered by adequate insurance.
 3. All drivers who transport youth should have a valid license with a good driving record.
 4. Each passenger must have a seat belt and the use of them must always be enforced.
 5. Where possible, use caravans of cars traveling in sight of one another as the youth travel.
 6. If only one adult is taking a carload of youth, they should all meet at the church, travel together and return to the church to be picked up by a parent or guardian.
 7. If possible, there should be a cell phone or some other way to communicate in an emergency.
 8. There should be enough space for the passengers to be reasonably comfortable and for all the luggage and equipment.

Reporting

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

The person who observes the alleged abuse or to whom such alleged abuse is reported shall report the incident immediately to the person in charge of the children's activity, who shall notify law enforcement or Children's Protective Service (CPS) (410) 758-8000 and the Pastor of Centreville United Methodist Church or the Pastor's designee as soon as possible. Upon receiving such information, the Pastor, or the person designated by and accountable to the Staff Parish Relations Committee, will notify law enforcement or CPS. A reporting form will be made available to document alleged abuse.

If abuse is alleged to have occurred at a CUMC event or on church property the following steps should be taken by the Pastor and/or Safe Team:

1. Assure that alleged abuse has been reported to local CPS or Maryland State Police
2. Notify legal guardians of alleged victims and assure alleged victim's safety.
3. Treat the alleged abuser with dignity, not anger and remove him/her from further involvement with youth.

4. Notify the District Superintendent, the Conference attorney, and the church's insurance company.
 5. Statements to the representatives of the media will be made at the discretion of the Pastor or his/her designee.
 6. Keep a written record of the steps taken by the church in response to allegations of abuse.
 7. The Pastor shall handle notification of the congregation as appropriate.
 8. Pending results of the investigative process, the Pastor and/or Safe Team must render a decision regarding the target of the investigation. That decision needs to clearly determine if the person may continue to work with children, youth, or adults with special needs on church property or at church sponsored events or if that person is determined unsuitable to do so.
- If the allegation concerns activities of 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.
 - Persons who are objects of the report will be required to refrain from all children's activities until an administrative decision is reached by CPS. 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.
 - 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 activity, all volunteers or staff involved in that activity shall be at the service of all official investigating agencies.
 - 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 be termination as a volunteer or employee of Centreville United Methodist Church. Likewise, anyone found to have made a malicious false report of the allegations will be confronted by the SPRC and appropriate legal actions will be taken, which may include termination as a volunteer or employee.
 - The Pastor, or his/her designee, is the only person(s) authorized to make statements to representatives of the media.
 - If allegations are made against the Pastor, the Chairperson of the SPRC shall be contacted immediately and shall act as the Pastor's designee until CPS reaches an administrative decision.

Review and Revision

This policy will be reviewed by the SPRC and Trustees annually. Proposed revisions shall be submitted in writing to the chairperson of one of these committees, and any revisions must be approved by the Board of Trustees, the Church Council in accordance with the Book of Discipline.

Definitions

Abuse means harm or threatened harm to the health and welfare of an adult with special needs, a child, or youth by any person responsible for the health and welfare of an adult with special needs, a child or youth, that occurs through non-accidental physical or mental injury;

sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, or mistreatment, sexual harassment, sexual contact, sexual molestation; disseminating exhibiting, or displaying sexually explicit materials via social media

Adult means any person at least 18 years of age.

Appropriate means the conduct that one would reasonably assume would be acceptable and permissible.

Child, Children or Youth refer to a person under 18 years of age.

Leader means anyone directly responsible for supervising and overseeing the specific church related function, event or activity.

Parent or guardian means any parent, stepparent, foster parent, grandparent or appointed guardian with the legal responsibility for the health, education, or welfare of a child or adult with special needs.

Response team means all persons, individually or collectively, who are appointed by the SPRC chairperson to serve for the purpose of investigating and responding to allegations or misconduct.

Safe Team shall consist of the Pastor or designee, the chairperson of the SPRC, Sunday School Superintendent, Youth Director, and a representative of the Board of Trustees.

Sexual abuse means engaging in any sexual contact, sexual penetrations, sexual exploitations, sexual harassment of an adult with special needs, or child, or youth; or the dissemination, exhibiting, or displaying of sexually explicit material to an adult with special needs, or child, or youth, regardless of whether such conduct is with or without the knowledge or consent of the adult with special needs, or child, or youth. This abuse may be violent or nonviolent. It includes any conduct that involves adults with special needs or children in sexual behavior for which they are not personally, socially, emotionally or developmentally ready.

Sexual contact means the intentional touching of the intimate parts of the clothing covering the immediate area of the intimate parts of a youth, child or adult with special needs.

Sexual exploitation means allowing, permitting or encouraging an adult with special needs or child or youth to engage in prostitution or in the photographing, filming, creating electronic or computer-generated images or other forms of depicting a child, youth or adult with special needs engaged in actual or suggestive sexual conduct.

Sexual harassment means any advance or demand, either communicating orally, written, personal contact, or any social media device by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive.

Updates:

On August 26, 2008, the Centreville United Methodist Church Board of Trustees and Church Council approved our Safe Sanctuary policy.

On November 19, 2013 the Board of Trustees and the Church Council approved the updates for our Safe Sanctuary Policy.

On November 11, 2014 Pastor Mark, Pastor Robyn and Tammi Clark added a line under Screening and Procedures Process, explaining the Church's Wi-Fi policy.

On September 4, 2019, Pastor Chris updated name of Senior Pastor.

On May 3, 2021, the Board of Trustees approved the updates for our Safe Sanctuary Policy.

On June 22, 2021, the Administrative council approved updates for our Safe Sanctuary Policy.