

## **Safe Sanctuaries Policy**

### **St. Andrew United Methodist Church**

St. Andrew UMC is committed to providing a safe and nurturing environment for our children and youth. We know that intentional processes and guidelines are essential for safe sanctuaries. This policy outlines the steps that St. Andrew UMC will take to create a safe environment.

**Six-month waiting period for volunteers:** Newcomers to St. Andrew UMC must wait at least six months before volunteering in positions directly serving children and youth.

**Criminal background screening:** All adults 18 and over, employed and volunteer, who work with minors must be screened prior to beginning service. The screening process will include a limited criminal history check. See Appendix A.

**The “triangle rule”:** Employees and volunteers who work with children and youth shall observe the “triangle rule” and, when necessary, the “open-door policy.” Whenever possible, there shall be at least two adults in the room at all times, or at least two children present with one adult leader. Should there be a teacher in a room with one child, the door should be open and the adult should be visible to anyone walking by until more children or another adult arrives. If only one child arrives, a class with only one adult leader should be combined with another class for that day. If one visualizes a triangle, this helps to understand that at least two children and an adult, or two adults and child, should be present. In rooms where one adult is present, the door should remain open. A door with a clear panel, even if it is closed, is considered an “open door” because people walking by can look inside.

In situations when groups meet and other people are not nearby (e.g. a church classroom outside of Sunday morning), two-deep adult leadership is required. If the group is meeting in a public setting (e.g. a restaurant), one adult is sufficient as long as two or more youth are present (satisfying the triangle rule).

**Transportation:** Volunteers and church staff can provide transportation for children and youth if parents or guardians have signed a permission form and waiver. The triangle rule applies to transportation – at least two minors must be present with one adult.

**Training:** All new volunteers and employees serving children and youth will be required to attend a face-to-face safe sanctuaries training covering these policies. Volunteers and employees will sign an agreement statement upon completion of training (see Appendix B). Volunteers and staff who continue to serve minors will receive an annual reminder of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and will be required on an annual basis to confirm that they have read the policy, they understand the policy, and they will abide by the policy.

**Youth as volunteers:** Mature youth who are ready to work with younger children may volunteer when an adult is present. Youth are also required to receive Safe Sanctuaries training.

**Known sex offenders in church:** If we become aware that someone with a sex offense history is attending St. Andrew, we will respond in a way that respects the individual and also creates a safe environment. It is important to note that “sex crimes” is an umbrella classification that includes offenses of differing severity: For example, public indecency is a sex crime in some states. An 18-year-old in a sexual relationship with a minor close in age may face rape charges in some states. At St. Andrew, we will look at the severity of the crime, how long ago it occurred, and how the person’s life has been lived since. Less-offensive crimes may not keep someone from serving minors in ministry.

People who have a propensity toward intimate relationships with children and youth should be loved and affirmed, but St. Andrew will not allow such people to have contact with minors. These individuals will not volunteer in ministries that serve minors.

Additionally, we will implement restorative practices if a registered sex offender or a known pedophile begins attending St. Andrew. Our Vision Leadership Team and our Partners in Hope ministry will identify individuals who will serve as mentors for the individual. A mentor will accompany the individual when he/she is in attendance at church in order to provide support for the individual and ensure the safety of minors in the congregation. The individual will use our gender-neutral, single-user restroom. Our goal will be to offer grace that enables reconciliation between the individual and our church and community while ensuring a safe church environment.

### **Reporting Procedures for Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect**

Indiana law requires all citizens to immediately report suspected child abuse to the authorities. A person who fails to do so can be prosecuted for a Class B misdemeanor or, in extreme circumstances, may be subject to civil liability for money damages. Indiana state law requires the Department of Child Services to protect the identity of those reporting neglect or abuse allegations. Information concerning how to identify signs of possible child abuse and neglect are included in Appendix C.

All employees and volunteers at St. Andrew United Methodist Church must adhere to the following procedures:

1. In the event of suspected child abuse, the employee or volunteer will immediately notify one of the pastors. The employee or volunteer will not discuss the matter with the child’s parents/family, the media, or anyone else. Upon notification of one of the pastors, the employee or volunteer will make a report to local child protection services or law enforcement agency.
2. Reports shall be documented in writing and will include the name of the individual reporting the suspected or reported abuse, the date of the report, the agency receiving the report, and a brief synopsis of the report. If at all possible, oral reporting will be done in the presence of a report witness, whose name will be recorded on the form. (See Appendix D)
3. The official spokesperson for St. Andrew United Methodist Church will be the Lead Pastor, or in the absence of the Lead Pastor, one of the Associate Pastors.

4. Any further inquiries from child protective services should be referred to the Lead Pastor, or in the Lead Pastor's absence, to one of the Associate Pastors. Any other inquiries should be directed to child protective services.
5. The care and safety of the victim is our first priority. We will not approach the accused without the approval of child protective services or law enforcement authorities.
4. We will not prejudge any person accused, but we will take any allegation of child abuse seriously and will reach out in Christian love and support to the accused, the victim and the victim's family, extending whatever pastoral care resources are needed. We will fully cooperate with any authorities investigating an allegation of child abuse.
5. We will treat the accused with dignity and respect. If the accused is a church worker, that person shall be temporarily relieved of his or her duties until the investigation is finished and the person has been cleared by the authorities. If the accused is a paid employee of our church, his or her income will be maintained until the allegations are cleared by the authorities or until criminal charges are filed.
6. All communication by the official spokesperson to the media, congregation, and public will protect the privacy and confidentiality of all involved.
7. All efforts in responding to the alleged incident of child abuse shall be documented by the Lead Pastor or, in the absence of the Lead Pastor, by the previously designated spokesperson, and maintained in a secure and confidential file.

## Appendix A

### Authorization for Criminal History Records Check for Adults 18 and Over St. Andrew UMC

It is the policy of St. Andrew United Methodist Church that all adult volunteers who work with minors are required to undergo a criminal background check. This is performed through a third-party company. The results and this form are kept confidential and in a locked drawer in the church office. You will be notified if any results of the check are of concern.

I, \_\_\_\_\_,  
**Please print:      first name              middle name              last name**  
**(We cannot run the check without your middle name.)**

am applying as a volunteer with St. Andrew United Methodist Church. I give authorization for a criminal history records check.

I sign this authorization as my own free act. This is a legally binding agreement, which I have read and understand.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, ZIP

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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 (After we've run this check, the bottom portion of this form with the SS# will be shredded.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Social Security Number

Envelopes are available in Desire's mailbox in the church office for confidential submission of this form. Leave sealed envelopes in either of these mailboxes. Please email Desire' ([desire@andrew-umc.org](mailto:desire@andrew-umc.org)) or call the church office if you prefer to hand deliver this to her.

## Appendix B

### Signed Agreement: Staff & Volunteers Working With Minors St. Andrew UMC

By signing below, I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have received, read, and will abide by the Safe Sanctuaries policy adopted by St. Andrew United Methodist Church.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Guardian (if volunteer is a minor)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Director of Family Ministries

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix C

### Recognizing Signs of Possible Child Neglect and Abuse

Source: Child Welfare Information Gateway

<https://www.childwelfare.gov/pubpdfs/whatiscan.pdf>

#### General Signs of Abuse or Neglect

- shows sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- has not received help for physical or medical problems brought to the parents' attention
- has learning problems (or difficulty concentrating) that cannot be attributed to specific physical or psychological causes
- is always watchful, as though preparing for something bad to happen
- lacks adult supervision
- is overly compliant, passive, or withdrawn
- comes to school or other activities early, stays late, and does not want to go home
- is reluctant to be around a particular person
- discloses maltreatment

#### Signs of Physical Abuse

- has unexplained burns, bites, bruises, broken bones, or black eyes
- has fading bruises or other marks noticeable after an absence from school
- seems frightened of the parents and protests or cries when it is time to go home
- shrinks at the approach of adults
- reports injury by a parent or another adult caregiver
- abuses animals or pets

#### Signs of Neglect

- begs or steals food or money
- lacks needed medical or dental care, immunizations, or glasses
- is consistently dirty and has severe body odor
- lacks sufficient clothing for the weather
- abuses alcohol or other drugs
- states that there is no one at home to provide care

#### Signs of Emotional Maltreatment

- shows extremes in behavior, such as overly compliant or demanding behavior, extreme passivity, or aggression
- is either inappropriately adult (parenting other children, for example) or inappropriately infantile (frequently rocking or head-banging, for example)
- is delayed in physical or emotional development
- has attempted suicide
- reports a lack of attachment to the parent

#### Signs of Sexual Abuse

- has difficulty walking or sitting
- reports nightmares or bedwetting
- experiences a sudden change in appetite
- demonstrates bizarre, sophisticated, or unusual sexual knowledge or behavior
- reports sexual abuse by a parent or another adult caregiver
- attaches very quickly to strangers or new adults in their environment

### Appendix D

#### Form for Reporting Suspected Child Neglect or Abuse St. Andrew UMC

In response to my legal, moral and ethical responsibility to the children of St. Andrew United Methodist Church, it is my duty to report my suspicion of child neglect or abuse. To the best of my ability, the circumstances are recorded here.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of person making report: \_\_\_\_\_

Name and telephone number of agency to which report was made:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of person at agency receiving report: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of St. Andrew staff person witnessing report, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of child or youth: \_\_\_\_\_

Place of suspected abuse, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

Suspected abuser, if applicable: \_\_\_\_\_

Details of abuse incident or signs of inappropriate activity observed by person making allegation (include location, date, persons involved, witnesses and description of incident):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature of person making report) (date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(signature of St. Andrew staff witnessing report, if applicable) (date)