



## LYTTLETON STREET – UMC –



Since 2007, churches in the South Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church have sought to provide and implement Safe Sanctuaries practices. Each local church must maintain a Safe Sanctuaries policy and review it annually. The 2016 General Conference of the United Methodist Church adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child sexual abuse in the church:

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 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 little ones, the children. The Social Principles of The United Methodist Church state that “children must be protected from economic, physical, emotional and sexual exploitation and abuse.”

Tragically, churches have not always been safe places for children. Child sexual abuse, exploitation, and ritual abuse (abusive acts committed as part of ceremonies or rites, often related to cults or pretend to be) occur in churches large and small, urban and rural. The problem cuts across all economic, cultural and racial lines. It is real, and it appears to be increasing. Most annual conferences can cite specific incidents of child sexual abuse and exploitation within churches. Virtually every congregation has among its members the adult survivors of early sexual trauma.

Such incidents are devastating to all who are involved: the child, the family, the local church and its leaders. Increasingly, churches are torn apart by the legal, emotional and monetary consequences of litigation following allegations of abuse.

God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong.

– *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church*

Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, Lyttleton Street United Methodist Church adopts this policy for the prevention of child abuse in our church:

# **Lyttleton Street United Methodist Church**

## **Safe Sanctuary Mission**

Lyttleton Street United Methodist Church is a spiritual community, which takes seriously its responsibility to provide a safe and nurturing environment for children, youth and vulnerable adults who participate in our ministries. In keeping with our covenant relationship with God, we honor our Lord and all who seek Him, by doing justice, loving kindness and walking humbly with Him. (Micah 6:8). All volunteers and employees who are in leadership roles in these ministries are living out the vows we take in baptism to nurture our children and youth in the Christian faith. Every church worker plays

a key role in fostering the spiritual development of individuals and families in our church community.

The disturbing and traumatic rise of physical and sexual abuse of children, youth and vulnerable adults has claimed the attention of our nation and society. The following statements reflect the commitment of Lyttleton Street United Methodist Church to provide a safe environment for all children, youth and vulnerable adults and church workers who participate in church sponsored ministries.

In an effort to provide a safe community, this church requires all church employees and volunteers to commit themselves to the Safe Sanctuary Policy for the Protection of Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults adopted by the Church Council. As members and participants in the programs and undertakings of this household of faith, we pledge to conduct ourselves in a manner consistent with the teachings of Christ and that we will guard our thoughts and tongues, will refrain from any behaviors which corrupt our witness for Christ, and that our actions and choices will reflect prudence, purity of heart, and an earnest love for the will of God.

Children and youth are defined as minors that are anyone under the age of 18. A vulnerable adult is an individual, age 18 or over, who, because of age, developmental disability, mental illness, or physical handicap requires supervision or personal care and lacks the personal and social skills required to live independently. Commitment to this policy will require church workers to provide personal information, review the church's Safe Sanctuary policy and understand that they will be under the supervision of their respective leaders.

The Safe Sanctuary Policy is a comprehensive effort for the benefit of the entire Lyttleton Street congregation and to all visitors and participants in our programs and events. Every staff member will be expected to conduct his/her duties with strict adherence to the guidelines outlined within this policy. The policy will be maintained and updated by the Director of Children and the Director of Youth. The Church Council will formally review this policy once a year, to verify that all materials have been appropriately updated. While verification of training will be the responsibility of the paid staff member of the designated activity, the recruitment of trainers and the oversight of the training function will be the responsibility of the NOW Council.

Definition: Abuse is defined as any misuse of power or authority that causes, or has potential to cause, emotional, physical, or verbal damage to a child, youth, or vulnerable adult.

The law recognizes that no minors can consent to sexual contact or physical abuse because of their age and vulnerability.

The church affirms this position and will not tolerate any abuse.

This policy does not preclude the reporting of suspected abuse occurring outside the parameters of this policy.

### **Purpose**

The purpose for establishing this Child Abuse Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our total and unwavering commitment to the physical, emotional and spiritual safety of all our children, youth and vulnerable adults.

### **Covenant Statement**

Lyttleton Street United Methodist Church hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all our children, youth and vulnerable adults – as well as all of our workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement appropriate operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse consistent with South Carolina state law.

### **Theological Reflection**

We adopt this policy in accordance with the statement we as a congregation make at each baptism – that we will “nurture children and youth in the Christian faith and life and include them in our care.” With this policy, we renew our baptismal pledge to “live according to the example of Christ” and surround children and youth with a “community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be thus confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Book of Worship).

### **Volunteer and Staff Recruitment and Selection Guidelines**

- A. **Age** – Volunteers and paid staff who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults in any position of authority. Volunteers working with youth and vulnerable adults must be at least 21\* years of age and at least 5 years older than the age of the persons they are working to serve when working with youth. Volunteers working with children must be at least 18\* years of age. \*Exceptions apply for Youth Volunteers in grades 8-12 who are working with at least one approved adult in Children’s Ministry areas (example- Sunday morning nursery volunteers).
- B. **Church affiliation** – Volunteers and paid staff who work with children, youth and vulnerable adults must be a current active participant in regular worship and must continue to be active participants while serving.

- C. **Application** – New Applicants must complete and sign an application form (staff) or information form (volunteers) and the related waivers giving permission to check references and background information.
- D. **Reference Checks** – Church leaders will check three references for each primary worker. The references will be performed by phone, by mail or in person.
- E. **Background Checks** – Criminal background checks will be made of all clergy, paid staff and volunteers over the age of 18, before they begin working with children, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- F. **Prior Convictions** – Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for children, youth and vulnerable adults. Individuals who have been convicted of financial crimes will not work with money. Individuals who have been convicted of DUI in the past 5 years will not drive persons of any age.
- G. **Confidentiality of Information** – The church will keep confidential all information received in the applicant selection process. Selection information will be marked as such and stored in a locked location with limited access only by church staff and others with a need to know.

### **Supervision Guidelines**

- A. Two non-related adults will be present whenever possible during classroom activities, activities away from church facilities, and when transporting children, youth and vulnerable adults. A designated person will monitor the halls and look in on activities when two non-related adults cannot be present. See Appendix A for adult to child ratios.
- B. All doors to any room in which an activity is conducted will remain open or all windows in doors will remain unobstructed to ensure full visibility by the designated hall monitor.
- C. One-on-one interactions with children, youth and vulnerable adults are sometimes necessary and appropriate, but care must be taken that they be conducted in an environment that provides visibility by other adults. All doors to any room in which such interactions are conducted will remain open and all windows will remain unobstructed.
- D. Legal guardians of children and youth, clergy and age-level volunteers and staff have the right to visit unannounced and observe any children or youth activity, classroom or church-sponsored program at any time.
- E. On outings away from church property:
  - a. Adults will always have access to a telephone or cell phone.
  - b. No youth will drive to or from church-related off-site events after arriving on church property.
  - c. Adults will not transport one individual child or youth.

- d. Anyone driving children, youth and vulnerable adults during a church-sponsored event must be an approved volunteer or paid staff and a licensed and insured driver. Anyone driving an LSUMC bus must be an approved volunteer or paid staff and an approved bus driver. The vehicle will be supervised by the driver and at least one additional, non-related, approved volunteer or paid staff.
  - e. See Appendix A for adult to child ratios.
- F. When an activity involves children, youth and vulnerable adults from another church or organization on LSUMC property:
  - a. Groups using the church facility will follow all Safe Sanctuaries policies and procedures.
  - b. Group leaders will read and be trained in all Safe Sanctuaries policies and sign an agreement to follow them.
- G. Rosters of those in attendance at any activity for children, youth and/or vulnerable adults, will be maintained and filed with the LSUMC office. Rosters should include the date, activity, and the first and last name of everyone in attendance, including adults.
- H. When the two adult rule is not feasible or practical, at the discretion of the Program Director or Lead Pastor, amendments may be made to protect everyone involved to the best of their abilities.
- I. No alcohol or non-prescribed controlled substances shall be consumed by any LSUMC participant at any LSUMC sponsored event for children, youth and/or vulnerable adults.
- J. Any one-on-one contact between volunteers or paid staff and children, youth or vulnerable adults should be done only with the knowledge and permission of the parent or legal guardian. Examples include texts, social media, car rides and gifts.

### **Response By Church Workers to Allegations of Abuse**

If a suspected incident of abuse or neglect occurs at the church or is revealed to a volunteer or paid staff member at a church-sponsored activity, the following steps will be taken:

- a. The safety and confidentiality of all parties involved will be maintained at all times.
- b. The paid staff or volunteer witness to the incident, along with the pastor or church council chairperson if the pastor is not available, will report the matter immediately to law enforcement and DSS.
- c. The pastor or church council chairperson if the pastor is not available, is the only person approved to and responsible for reporting the incident to:
  - i. District Superintendent
  - ii. Parents or Legal Guardians
  - iii. Congregation

iv. News Media

- d. The pastor or church council chairperson will ensure that all parties involved have access to care as needed.
- e. No other volunteer or staff member is authorized to discuss or make statements regarding the incident or involved parties, unless required by the force of a subpoena. Doing so will result in immediate dismissal.

If the pastor is suspected or accused of sexual misconduct or abuse, the following steps will be taken:

- B. Confidentiality for all parties will be maintained at all times.
- C. The safety of the victim of the alleged misconduct or abuse will be ensured, and his or her immediate needs will be tended to, as the situation dictates.
- D. The person who initially reported the alleged misconduct or abuse, or to whom the allegation was revealed, will:
  - a. Inform the Staff-Parish Relations Committee chairperson.
  - b. In cases involving alleged abuse, call the appropriate local law enforcement agency.
- E. The SPRC chairperson will inform the district superintendent.
- F. The district superintendent will inform the bishop and, in consultation with the SPRC chairperson, they will decide whether the pastor will be removed from the pulpit until the investigation is completed and resolved.
- G. The bishop may activate the Conference Response Team to help the church with next steps.
- H. No other volunteer or staff member is authorized to discuss or make statements regarding the incident or involved parties, unless required by the force of a subpoena. Doing so will result in immediate dismissal.

# Internet and Social Media Policy

Incredible ministry can take place using modern technology but, as with all forms of ministry, there are inherent risks involved with the use of electronic communications. Following these procedures can minimize those risks, and adults working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will be instructed in their use.

## Obtain permission from a parent or legal guardian

In addition to general permission to participate in a church ministry, adults working with children, youth, and vulnerable adults will obtain written parental permission in advance before:

- Posting photos and videos of participants on any church website and social media, or sharing photos and videos in any way, including but not limited to email, text message and messaging apps.
- Communicating directly with an individual child or youth (beyond overall group messaging) in any way, including but not limited to phone, email, text message and messaging apps.
- Sharing any participant's full name or contact information.

## Guidelines for communication with children and youth

- If communicating by email, place email addresses in the BCC (blind carbon copy) field so recipients see only their own address when a message is received, or use an approved church messaging system.
- All information will be delivered as a group or with a parent copied. There will be no one-on-one conversation between an adult and a youth. Youth volunteers may receive scheduling messages sent through approved church messaging systems.
- Conduct all communication in a professional manner.
- If a child, youth or vulnerable adult shares an individual communication with an adult, the adult should preserve the communication so it can be reviewed later, should the need arise.

## Safety measures for using social media

- Do not submit a "friend request" to an individual child, youth or vulnerable adult; use discretion when accepting a "friend request" from an individual child, youth or vulnerable adult.
- Do not post anything on social media that you would not publish in a church bulletin or newsletter.
- Educate the church and its leadership about these rules and make sure they know they are not optional.

## Safety measures for sharing photos electronically

- Obtain permission to use photos.
- Refrain from using names or identifiable information.
- On social media, tag only adults.

## Administration of official church social media

- Each social media account or group will have a minimum of two unrelated administrators. One should be paid staff or adult volunteers engaged in the ministry and the other should be the LSUMC Media Specialist.
- Social media will be monitored frequently to allow for quick responses in the event urgent or crisis concerns are posted.

- Examine photos for vulnerable/compromising situations and make sure they uphold the mission of LSUMC.
- Any inappropriate material posted to church social media or group will be deleted and addressed by the lead pastor and/or Staff Parish Relations Committee.

### **Conclusion**

In all our ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adults, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each child, youth and vulnerable adult will be “surrounded by steadfast love...established in the faith and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal.” (*Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Book of Worship*)



**Certification of Receipt**

I certify that I have been given a copy of the Child Abuse Prevention Policy of Lyttleton Street United Methodist Church.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Position: \_\_\_\_\_  
(please print) (please print)

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



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## Children and Youth Code of Conduct

All children and youth participating in any church ministry must:

- Respect church staff persons, adult volunteers, peers and property.
- Observe curfew and quiet hours.
- Inform a church staff person or adult volunteer of their location at all times.
- Always be in a group of at least three people and never pair off as a couple.
- Have a church staff person or adult volunteer present when girls and boys are together in a room, other than a common room.
- Show no public or private displays of affection.
- Not possess or use alcohol, illegal drugs, tobacco, firearms, weapons or flammable devices.
- Dress in an appropriate manner.
- Wear seatbelts when transported.

Children and youth who do not adhere to these expectations might suffer consequences to be determined by the church staff person or adult volunteer present at that time. Consequences can include calling parents, missing a free-time activity, remaining with a church staff person or adult volunteer, completing an assigned task, or being provided with optional clothes to wear (in the case of inappropriate dress).

If the offense is more serious, children and youth might be asked not to attend future events or trips, and parent or guardian might be called to take home the child/youth.

If called and so requested, parent(s) and/or guardian agree to come and pick up their youth.

My child and I have read the Children and Youth Code of Conduct, and we acknowledge these expectations. We agree with the Code of Conduct, and we are aware of the consequences if my child does not adhere to it. In addition, we do not hold church staff persons or adult volunteers personally responsible for any injuries that may occur while attending an event.

Parent/guardian signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Child/youth signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix A

### On Site Adult to Child Ratio

| Age                 | Adults | Children |
|---------------------|--------|----------|
| Infant to age 2     | 2      | 8        |
|                     | 3      | 12       |
|                     | 4      | 16       |
| Age 3 to 4K         | 2      | 16       |
|                     | 3      | 24       |
|                     | 4      | 32       |
| 5K to Grade 5       | 2      | 24       |
|                     | 3      | 36       |
|                     | 4      | 48       |
| Grade 6 to Grade 12 | 2      | 14       |

### Off Site Adult to Child Ratio (No Children under 3 Off Site)

| Age                 | Adults | Children |
|---------------------|--------|----------|
| Age 3 to 5K         | 2      | 10       |
|                     | 3      | 15       |
|                     | 4      | 20       |
| Grade 1 to Grade 5  | 2      | 16       |
|                     | 3      | 24       |
|                     | 4      | 32       |
| Grade 6 to Grade 12 | 2      | 14       |