

GULF SHORES UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
1900 Gulf Shores Parkway
Gulf Shores, AL 36542

SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY

FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILDREN, YOUTH AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

REVISED SEPTEMBER 29, 2020

WE ARE A SAFE SANCTUARIES CHURCH



COMMITTED TO PROTECTING
OUR CHILDREN, YOUTH
AND VULNERABLE ADULTS

Approved by: Gary Pitts

Trustees Chairperson

Approved by: Larry Walker

Church Council Chairperson

Submitted to Charge Conference: November 19, 2020

OUR MANDATE

Children are important! Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me..." Mark 9:37. We ought to offer hospitality and protect children. Jesus said, "If any of you put a stumbling block before one of these little ones who believe in me, 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. Today, the church may be the only place where not only some children, but also some youth and at-risk or vulnerable adults find the unconditional love and care they so desperately need to grow and thrive. Therefore, as Christians, we take our responsibilities to them very seriously by implementing this Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

POLICY STATEMENT AND PURPOSE

The Gulf Shores United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy is made in covenant with the Alabama/West Florida Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, and all United Methodist congregations. **The Safe Sanctuaries Policy of the Gulf Shores United Methodist Church, developed by the permanent Safe Sanctuaries Committee, shall apply to all individuals and groups using church facilities.** We endeavor as follows:

1. We shall strive to provide for physical safety and spiritual growth for all our children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults.
2. We shall strive to demonstrate the love of Jesus Christ so that each person 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, The United Methodist Hymnal*, p. 44).
3. We shall strive to prevent physical, emotional, or sexual abuse of children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults involved in any ministry sponsored by our Annual Conference or our local congregation.
4. We shall strive to provide and facilitate the use of reasonable care and effort in caring for the children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults involved in any ministry sponsored by our Annual Conference or our local congregation.
5. We shall strive to minister to and act in the best interests of persons who are experiencing abuse or who have been victims of abuse in the past.
6. We shall strive to be aware of and comply with our legal responsibilities regarding the types of abuse addressed in this document.
7. We shall strive to background screen all current and future staff, and all volunteers for every program that involves children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults.
8. We shall strive to acknowledge, respond to, and investigate all questions or reports regarding alleged abuse.
9. We shall strive to adhere to biblical church discipline, particularly as recognized in Paragraph 2702 of *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church 2016*, which names child abuse, sexual abuse, sexual misconduct, and sexual harassment as chargeable offenses for clergy and lay members.
10. We shall commit to observe the Safe Sanctuaries Policy.

**SAFE SANCTUARIES COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP
AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE POLICY**

Responsibility for implementation of the GSUMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy is the responsibility of the Pastor in Charge, the Church Council and the permanent Safe Sanctuaries Committee.

The Safe Sanctuaries Committee shall be responsible for developing the policy, for communicating with and educating the congregation concerning the policy and procedures, recruiting, screening, and training paid staff and volunteers; conducting site inspections and making recommendations; retaining records; and regularly reviewing conference policies and procedures, applicable state laws, and the insurance policy provisions and insurer requirements. Periodic training and education on Safe Sanctuaries Policy and Minimum Standards and procedures provided by the Alabama/West Florida Conference shall be attended each quadrennium (4 years) by the local Pastor in Charge, the Safe Sanctuaries chairperson or other Safe Sanctuaries designated member/s, preferably those who will personally coordinate and conduct training for employees and staff within the local church.

Membership of the Safe Sanctuaries Committee, in addition to the chairperson, shall include, but not be limited to, the Pastor in Charge, the Church Council chairperson, a Lay Delegate to the AWF Annual Conference, the Lay Leader, the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relationships Committee chairperson, the Board of Trustees chairperson, the Minister of Youth/Youth Director, a Youth Leadership Team representative, the Children's Director, a Children's Ministry Team representative and the Mother's Day Out Preschool and Program Director.

Records from the screening process including Application/Covenant forms and information from prior employment, references, and background checks shall be maintained in personnel and application files for each staff member/volunteer. Both paper and electronic media records shall be kept safe and secure by the Gulf Shores UMC Safe Sanctuaries Record Holder/s.

Covered activities or events for the purposes of this document include all church programming for children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults.

The Mother's Day Out Program and Preschool are required to strictly follow the Gulf Shores United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy, including background screening and annual training. Background screen records will be kept on file with the GSUMC Safe Sanctuaries Record Holder/s.

ACCOUNTABILITY AND REPORTING

Congregational Accountability: The Safe Sanctuaries Committee shall report to the Church Council annually and at such interim times as circumstances relating to its responsibilities may require. In addition, the Safe Sanctuaries Committee shall regularly inform the Church Council and congregation concerning its efforts to recruit volunteers and inform them of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy, the Standards, Qualifications, and Screening requirements that are applicable to employment of paid staff and to granting permission for service by volunteer workers. The Safe Sanctuaries Committee shall publicize that a church member may at any time upon request to the Pastor in Charge or their designee review and/or obtain a personal written copy of the policy.

Infractions/Incidents Accountability: Actions or conduct concerning any personnel and covered activities as defined in this Safe Sanctuaries Policy document that are observed by or otherwise

brought to the attention of a person (paid staff member; volunteer worker; parent or other relative of a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult; church member, church visitor, or guest, etc.) which is reasonably believed to be an infraction or incident in violation of this Safe Sanctuaries Policy should be promptly reported to the Pastor in Charge and to the Safe Sanctuaries Committee chairperson, or in the absence of either or both to their designated staff member. Resources and instructions for reporting suspected infractions or incidents constituting abuse (whether of child, youth, at-risk or vulnerable adult) proscribed by this policy document should be conspicuously posted in and about the Gulf Shores UMC buildings and campus.

**QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED for SERVING CHILDREN, YOUTH,
and AT-RISK OR VULNERABLE ADULTS FOR VOLUNTEER PERSONNEL**

The qualifications for volunteer service at the Gulf Shores UMC with duties and responsibilities that include serving children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults shall be as follows:

1. Must have demonstrated an active relationship in the Gulf Shores UMC for a minimum of three (3) months prior to being permitted to serve as an authority figure.
2. **Must be competent to work effectively in the served activity** as an **assistant** in the judgment of the supervising staff member or supervising authority figure.

TRAINING PROCEDURES

The Gulf Shores UMC shall conduct **ANNUAL** training covering the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and it shall be required of *all church staff, paid employees, Mother's Day Out Program and Preschool staff, and adult volunteers who work with children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults (new and old)*. **Within fourteen (14) days of employment or the beginning of volunteer service**, the church and Mothers' Day Out and Preschool shall provide training regarding the Safe Sanctuaries Policy to new workers who will work with children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults. Attendance at all training shall be documented and retained in personnel files of the attendees. Upon completion of the training, attendees will sign an acknowledgement they have received training and understand the Gulf Shores UMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy. The training shall include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. The definitions and signs of child abuse and reporting of child abuse.
2. The Gulf Shores UMC policy and procedures on child abuse and reasons for having them (see all Rules and also Procedures to follow if an accident occurs, procedures to follow for reporting an alleged incident of child abuse, information on state abuse laws).
3. The need to maintain a positive classroom environment, including appropriate discipline and age-level characteristics (see Discipline Policy).
4. Appropriate behavior for teachers and leaders of child, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults' events, including definitions of appropriate interpersonal boundaries, appropriate demonstrations of affection and encouragement - (i.e., adults should never initiate a hug, but rather ask permission to offer a hug, and should always be the one to end the hug), appropriate language, and appropriate dress.
5. All forms used by Gulf Shores UMC for application, background checks, reporting, and teacher files.
6. The Gulf Shores United Methodist Church alcohol/drug and tobacco free policy for the church campus and all children and youth events shall be followed at all times.

DEFINITIONS

- **Physical abuse** = abuse in which a person intentionally causes bodily harm to a child, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adult
- **Emotional abuse** = abuse in which a person speaks violently or cruelly to a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult, or otherwise exposes a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult to violence or emotional cruelty
- **Neglect** = abuse in which a person endangers the health, safety, or welfare of a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult by failing to act in a reasonable manner
- **Sexual abuse** = abuse in which an adult or another older or more powerful youth has sexual contact with a child, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult

PERSONNEL DEFINITIONS

- **Adult** is a person nineteen (19) years of age or older in the state of Alabama
- **Authority figure** is a person who is the primary leader of any children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adult activity and such person is required to be twenty-one (21) year of age or older
- **Assistant** is a person who gives help to and is directed by an **authority figure** in the course of any children, youth, or at-risk or vulnerable adult activity including, but not limited to, volunteers, interns, camp counselors, and Vacation Bible School workers. Such an assistant must be at least twelve (12) years of age and at least (4) years older than the children or youth they will serve. However, in order to count for satisfying requirements of the **Two Adult Rule**, such assistant must be **adult** as herein defined.
- **Floater** is an **adult** who acts as an **assistant** to an **authority figure** to monitor covered activities or events in order to comply with the **Two Adult Rule**, when achieving such compliance by use of two non-related adults is unfeasible
- **Children** are all persons from infants through the sixth grade
- **Youth** are all persons in the seventh grade through the twelfth grade
- **At-risk or vulnerable adults** are adults with physical, mental, and/or developmental impairment or disability

RULES GOVERNING ACTIVITIES

1. **The TWO ADULT RULE is a core principle regarding the supervision required for covered activities and overnight events.** A minimum of *two non-related adults* will be utilized in all programming with children, youth and at-risk or vulnerable adults: however, when unfeasible to staff with two non-related adults, there shall be additional adults serving as **floaters** with visual and physical access to all areas where the programming occurs. Visual and physical access means either an open door or door with a window that provides a line of sight enabling the **floaters** to see into a room or other building space and to see fully outdoor sites where covered activities or events take place.
2. **RELEASE FORM RULE:** An annual, signed, registration/release form shall be required for each child and youth participating in children's or youth ministry and will be kept on file with the appropriate pastor in charge.
3. **SIGN-IN/SIGN-OUT RULE:** Sign-in and sign-out procedures shall be used for all ministries for and with children. In addition, each child shall be delivered to their classroom or meeting area by an authorized adult. No child will be released to anyone other than the adult who dropped them off unless previously authorized by the parent. Parents are to

remain at the door outside the classroom during sign-out and satisfactory identification shall be shown upon request.

4. **OPEN DOOR RULE:** All classroom doors will remain open unless windows are on the doors. **No child, children, youth, at-risk or vulnerable adult shall ever be left alone without an adult present.**
5. **REST ROOM RULE:** An adult shall escort each child to the restroom but may not enter. The adult shall check to make sure the rest room is safe and then remain at the main (open) restroom door to escort the child back to the activity. For toddlers through pre-school, an adult may enter the rest room to either offer assistance or assure safety; however, the **restroom door must be open.**
6. **COUNSELING RULE:** At any counseling session with children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults, any non-windowed door of the room used shall remain open for the entire session. The session shall be at a time when other adults are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance. A counseling session shall never be held in secret, even if the person being counseled makes that request.
7. **PLAYGROUND RULE:** No child shall be on the playground at any time without parental or adult supervision and posted rules shall be followed.
8. **HOME VISITATION RULE:** When visiting a child or youth in their home, the two non-related adult rule shall apply. If a parent is not present, the visit should be conducted in the front yard or moved to highly visible public place (i.e., a local restaurant). The Safe Sanctuaries Policy applies both at church and also in a home visit.

DISCIPLINE PROCEDURE for CHILDREN

Positive reinforcement will be used as a management technique and ***NO physical or harsh verbal correction shall be allowed.***

1. A child will receive two (2) verbal warnings for misbehavior.
2. If the problem persists, the child may be moved to another appropriate supervised area until they are ready to return to the activity.
3. If the behavior continues to be disruptive, the Children's Minister shall be consulted for additional resources and acceptable options.
4. If necessary, parents will be invited to a conference to reshape the child's behavior by developing a joint plan of action.

OVERNIGHT EVENTS and TRANSPORTATION PROCEDURES

OVERNIGHT EVENTS are a type of covered activity or event which extends through the evening and which may include summer camps, retreats, mission trips and lock-ins. **Room sharing limits** means that adults staying with young people during overnight events must be the same gender as the young people and that such adults must not be alone in a lodging room with a young person at any time and must not share a bed with a young person unless he/she is an immediate family member or guardian of such young person and of the same gender. **Immediate** family member or guardian room sharing **exception** means that an immediate family member or guardian of such young person who is chaperoning an overnight event is permitted to share a room and bed with his/her child no matter the gender as long as no other young people are sharing the room.

1. Children (1st - 6th grade) = 1 Adult to 7 Children (same gender).
2. Youth (7th - 12th grade) = 1 Adult to 7 Youth (same gender).
3. In hotel/motel settings, this policy will be followed in so far as possible.
4. A hotel shall be selected that has rooms opening to the interior (i.e., closed hallway) of the building. Where possible adjoining rooms on a single hallway will be selected.
5. Where two adults cannot be assigned to a room housing children or youth, the youth shall be roomed separately from the adults. If adjoining rooms are available with doors that can be left in the open position, a single adult in each of the adjoining rooms is acceptable.
6. An adult shall not share a bed with a young person. (*Exception in paragraph above)
7. Where adults are assigned to separate rooms, one adult room will be located between every two youth rooms on the hall.
8. If room checks are needed, they shall involve two adults of the same gender as the room residents.

TRANSPORTATION is a covered activity whenever such transportation is provided by motor vehicle for any church-sponsored or church-hosted activity or program, including Mother's Day Out activities, after-school care programs, tutoring programs, mission trip or any other youth/children's activities. This includes such transportation (a) in a church-owned or leased vehicle (car, SUV, van, bus, *etc.*); (b) in any vehicle in which a church staff member is the driver of or present in the vehicle; and (c) in any private vehicle driven by a non-church staff member and used for such transportation. With respect to covered transportation activities, the following shall apply:

1. Church owned motor vehicles may only be used for church-sponsored or church-hosted activities or programs. No personal use of motor vehicles is allowed nor will be approved.
2. All drivers must be a minimum of twenty-one (21) years of age;
3. All drivers must comply with all traffic laws, speed limits, rules and regulations at all times.
4. All drivers must possess a valid, current drivers license and provide a copy to the church leader in charge of the activity;
5. All drivers must possess current insurance coverage on their vehicle which meets the requirements of the state in which their license was issued, and provide a copy to the church leader in charge of the activity;
6. All drivers and other adult occupants of any vehicle must undergo a background check which includes a check of their driving record;
7. All drivers must meet the driving record standards required by the church and the church's insurance. This includes but is not limited to the following: No major driving violations (*e.g.*, DUI, racing, hit & run, speeding in excess of 20 mph over posted speed limit, manslaughter, reckless driving, *etc.*); no more than 2 moving violations within the past 3 years; and no more than 1 at-fault accident within the past 3 years.
8. Drivers of any vehicle (church owned or otherwise) with a capacity of 12 passengers or greater must possess a current, valid CDL (Commercial Drivers License) suitable for operating such vehicle.
9. Drivers must not operate any cell phone or other electronic device while driving.
10. All drivers and passengers in vehicles equipped with seat belts/straps must wear them at all times that the vehicle is moving.
11. At least two (2) adults (can include the driver) must be placed in each vehicle transporting children or youth on any trip which exceeds 3 hours of travel time (one way) to and from the destination. It is recommended that two (2) adults be placed in all vehicles for all trips, regardless of the length of the trip.

12. The requesting driver must fully complete the vehicle use request form before vehicle use is authorized. This must include approval by the Senior Pastor, Business Administrator, or Board of Trustee Chairman.
13. Upon return, the vehicle must be thoroughly cleaned including sweeping and removal of all trash.
14. Upon return, any new damage (both internal and external) must be reported to the senior pastor or administrative assistant. It is advised that any existing damage be recorded and noted by the Senior Pastor, Business Administrator, or Board of Trustee Chairman prior to departure.
15. Any and all safety policies and guidelines established by the Trustees or by the church's insurance carrier applicable to transportation shall be strictly followed and shall be considered a part of this section of the Safe Sanctuary policy.

ALL OUTREACH PROGRAMS:
BREAD MINISTRY, COMMUNITY YOUTH CHOIR/MUSIC,
DRAMA/THEATER PROGRAMS and MUSIC LESSONS,
HISPANIC MINISTRY, RESPITE CARE,
SCOUTING, TUTORING,
and any ONE ADULT/ONE CHILD or YOUTH PAIRING PROGRAMS

Outreach program efforts that pair children, youth or vulnerable adults with caring adults are often credited with being the key to a person's success in life. **ALL** outreach programs, including but not limited to the **Bread Ministry, Community Youth Choir/Music, Drama/Theater and Music Lessons, Hispanic Ministry, Respite Care, Scouting, Tutoring and all such future ministries** are required to strictly follow the Gulf Shores United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Policy, including the following:

1. **All such programs, events, or music lessons shall be scheduled through the Church Office and noted and/or APPROVED BY the church staff IN ADVANCE of the scheduled event or the meeting/s.**
2. **An appropriate setting on the campus of GSUMC is required.** The setting shall allow visual and physical access to others. Visual and physical access means either an open door or a door with a window that provides a line of sight to other adults.
3. **Outreach programs shall take place in a group setting in one large room** – rather than individual or isolated rooms throughout the building and campus, specifically one-to-one situations.
4. A basic **BACKGROUND SCREEN for all adults working with children, youth and at-risk or vulnerable adults shall be REQUIRED** and repeated **every 2 years**.
5. **NOTE re: SCOUTING:** The Lead Girl or Boy Scout Leader is required to submit a letter **annually** stating all their volunteers have been background screened. The name of every screened volunteer is to be listed, the date they were screened and "Clear" or "Not Clear" to indicate the results. **This letter is to be given to and kept on file by the GSUMC Safe Sanctuaries Record Holder/s.**
6. **Training for all adults and assistants working with children, youth and at-risk or vulnerable adults** that covers the Gulf Shores UMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy shall be provided by a designated Safe Sanctuaries Committee member **prior to the volunteer participating** in the specific program.
7. **A GSUMC Children/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Volunteer Application Form and The Gulf Shores UMC Participation Covenant Form** shall be completed, signed by the volunteer and trainer, and then given to the Safe Sanctuaries Record Holder/s.

8. All outings shall be in public places with routes and time frames agreed upon in advance, and known to all, with **several adult mentors** and young people being the preference.
9. The **TWO ADULT RULE shall apply at all times**. This means that a minimum of two adults (**persons who have attained the age of 19 years in Alabama**) who are not related to each other shall be present in all settings with children, youth, at-risk or vulnerable adults; however, when unfeasible to staff with two non-related adults, there shall be additional adults serving as **floaters** with visual and physical access to all areas where the programming occurs. Visual and physical access means either an open door or door with a window that provides a line of sight enabling the **floaters** to see into a room or other building space and to see fully outdoor sites where covered activities or events take place.
10. **OPEN DOOR RULE:** All classroom doors will remain open unless windows are on the doors. **No child, children, youth, at-risk or vulnerable adult shall ever be left alone without an adult present.** Visual and physical access means either an open door or door with a window that provides a line of sight enabling the **floater** to see into a room or other building space and to see fully outdoor sites where covered activities or events take place.
11. **REST ROOM RULE:** An adult shall escort each child to the restroom but may not enter. The adult shall check to make sure the rest room is safe and then remain at the main (open) restroom door to escort the child back to the activity. For toddlers through pre-school, an adult may enter the rest room to either offer assistance or assure safety; however, the **restroom door must be open.**
12. **APPROPRIATE INTERPERSONAL BOUNDARIES** shall be followed by all such areas of outreach as named above and all other such future ministries. (i.e., adults should never initiate a hug, but rather ask permission to offer a hug, and should always be the one to end the hug.) Appropriate demonstrations of affection and encouragement, use of appropriate language, and appropriate dress is required at all times.
13. **COUNSELING RULE:** At any counseling session with children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults, any non-windowed door of the room used shall remain open for the entire session. The session shall be at a time when other adults are nearby, even if they are not within listening distance. A counseling session shall never be held in secret, even if the person being counseled makes that request.
14. **PLAYGROUND RULE:** No child shall be on the playground at any time without parental or adult supervision and posted rules shall be followed.
15. The Gulf Shores UMC **ALCOHOL/DRUG and TOBACCO FREE policy** for the entire church campus and all children and youth events **shall be followed at all times.**
16. **HOME VISITATION RULE:** When visiting a child or youth in their home, the two non-related adult rule shall apply. If a parent is not present, the visit should be conducted in the front yard or moved to highly visible public place (i.e., a local restaurant). The Safe Sanctuaries Policy applies both at church and also in a home visit.
17. All **FIELD TRIPS** shall be in public places with routes and time frames agreed upon in advance and known to all, with **several adult mentors** and young people being the preference.
18. **NOTE re: MUSIC LESSONS: All persons offering music lessons shall complete the Music Lesson/Safe Sanctuaries Policy Verification Form at the completion of each lesson and return it to the designated box in the church office by close of the next work day.**

OTHER GROUPS and ACTIVITIES INVOLVING USAGE OF GSUMC FACILITIES POLICY

For the purpose of the Safe Sanctuaries Policy, when any other **outside group contacts the Gulf Shores United Methodist Church** about possible usage of space for children, youth and at-risk or

vulnerable adults, **they shall be notified of and receive a copy of the Gulf Shores UMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy and requirements.** They shall **also be made aware of what specific room/s or areas are available for their use and cautioned to be mindful of other people and/or groups who will be using the church property during that same time.**

All such groups must:

1. **PROVIDE THE NAMES of TWO (2) BACKGROUND SCREENED ADULTS** who are deemed "CLEAR" and will be onsite for the duration of the event. **A letter of verification of a "CLEAR" background screen is required to be given to the Safe Sanctuaries Record Holder prior to the event.**
2. **SIGN the Gulf Shores UMC Safe Sanctuaries Event Verification Form** to confirm:
 - a) they have trained and informed their volunteers of the Gulf Shores UMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy and their agreement to abide by it as found in this document and,
 - b) their commitment to be mindful of other people and groups present during that same time.
3. The **TWO ADULT RULE shall apply at all times.** This means that a minimum of two adults (**persons who have attained the age of 19 years in Alabama**) who are not related to each other shall be present/utilized in all settings with children, youth, at-risk or vulnerable adults; however, when unfeasible to staff with two non-related adults, there shall be additional adults serving as **floaters** with visual and physical access to all areas where the programming occurs. Visual and physical access means either an open door or door with a window that provides a line of sight enabling the **floaters** to see into a room or other building space and to see fully outdoor sites where covered activities or events take place.
4. **OPEN DOOR RULE:** All classroom doors will remain open unless windows are on the doors. **No child, children, youth, at-risk or vulnerable adult shall ever be left alone without an adult present.** Visual and physical access means either an open door or door with a window that provides a line of sight enabling the **floater** to see into a room or other building space and to see fully outdoor sites where covered activities or events take place.
5. **REST ROOM RULE:** An adult shall escort each child to the restroom but may not enter. The adult shall check to make sure the rest room is safe and then remain at the main (open) restroom door to escort the child back to the activity. For toddlers through pre-school, an adult may enter the rest room to either offer assistance or assure safety; however, the **restroom door must be open.**
6. **APPROPRIATE INTERPERSONAL BOUNDARIES** shall be followed by all such areas of outreach as named above and all other such future ministries. (i.e., adults should never initiate a hug, but rather ask permission to offer a hug, and should always be the one to end the hug.) Appropriate demonstrations of affection and encouragement, use of appropriate language, and appropriate dress is required at all times.
7. **PLAYGROUND RULE:** No child shall be on the playground at any time without parental or adult supervision and posted rules shall be followed.
8. The Gulf Shores UMC **ALCOHOL/DRUG and TOBACCO FREE policy** for the entire church campus and all children and youth events **shall be followed at all times.**

CYBER POLICY

The internet and portable technology allow people to stay in contact with each other more easily than at any other time in the history of civilization. Some meaningful ministry can take place using modern technology, but as with all forms of ministry there are some inherent risks involved with the use of electronic communications. ***There is no such thing as privacy in cyberspace and/or all***

social media. Anything and everything on the internet shall be considered as public information.

1. Firewalls and pornography filters on computer systems at church shall be in place and kept current.
2. All paid employees and volunteers shall maintain Christian principles when using cyber communications (all social media), most especially when referencing Gulf Shores United Methodist Church events.
3. A designated member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee may periodically monitor the computer usage of the church staff and paid employees for appropriateness.
4. Those who are volunteer authority figures and assistants are accountable to the appropriate staff person directing their area of volunteer work, the pastors and the Staff Parish Relations Committee for their cyber communications. The appropriate staff person in charge of each ministry, the Senior Pastor and/or a designated member of the Staff Parish Relations Committee may periodically monitor cyber communications for appropriateness.
5. Emailing, Instant Messaging, Calling, Texting, or the sending of data to a child, youth and at-risk or vulnerable adult by computer, any mode of social media, or cell phone is considered high risk and may require parental permission in some situations. Discernment is expected.
6. All cyber communications will be conducted in a professional manner and communications with children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults shall be limited.
7. If made uneasy about any topic addressed in an email or an email in general, a blind carbon copy shall be sent to the parent/guardian or another trusted adult. Privacy shall be honored, but not secrecy.
8. If abuse is divulged electronically, standard reporting procedures as outlined in this policy shall be followed.
9. Easily identifiable information shall not be posted online.
10. The following shall be followed for the safety of sharing photos electronically:
 - Photos and/or videos from the Gulf Shores United Methodist Church events shall not post names for those under nineteen (19) years of age
 - A last name shall never be posted when posting photos with identifiable information
 - Photos shall be checked for vulnerable/compromising situations and to make sure the photos uphold the mission and ministry appropriately
 - Name tags shall not be distinguishable.
11. The following safety measures shall be in place for all social media sites:
 - Privacy limits are required to be set to limit who can see the profile. Restrict who can be a friend. Passwords to accounts shall not be divulged
 - Use of higher level security features shall be used when offered by the network
 - Nothing shall be posted via social media that one would not want on their resume or printed in the church bulletin or newsletter. All inappropriate comments, photos, etc. shall be removed.
 - The Gulf Shores United Methodist Church children and youth shall be encouraged to follow these same safety measures.

SCREENING RULES and PROCEDURES

All persons employed by and/or volunteering at the Gulf Shores United Methodist Church in programs for children, youth or with at-risk or vulnerable adults shall:

1. Demonstrate an active relationship with the Gulf Shores UMC. (minimum 3 months)

2. Complete the Gulf Shores UMC Children/Youth/Vulnerable Adult Volunteer Application (or the Employment application supplied by the Staff Parish Relations Committee).
3. Be interviewed by the director of the ministry or program to be served (or the Staff Parish Relations Committee if applying for employment).
4. Have the experience and qualifications necessary for the staff position or volunteer service sought.
5. Attend training by the Gulf Shores UMC or the Alabama/West Florida Annual Conference in maintaining the Safe Sanctuaries Policy and upon completion, sign the Gulf Shores UMC Safe Sanctuaries Covenant.
6. In the event of an unforeseen circumstance requiring use of a substitute worker who has not had such training, that substitute worker must be briefed on the Safe Sanctuaries Policy by the director or other supervisor before beginning volunteer work.
7. Consent to initiation by the Gulf Shores UMC of a background screen for the multi-state criminal and sexual offender check based on social security number and a motor vehicle records check.
8. Background checks shall be run through Trak-1 and are valid for two (2) years. If the individual changes physical addresses, the background screen must be run again.
9. Authority to initiate requests for criminal/sexual offender and motor vehicle background screens shall be limited to the Pastor in Charge or to his/her designated senior staff (non-cleric) employee and/or the Safe Sanctuaries Record Holder/s.
10. Upon receipt of background screen checks documents/data, whether favorable or unfavorable, its confidentiality shall be maintained. For such background screens reports concerning a staff member, secure distribution will be made only to the Pastor in Charge, the Safe Sanctuaries Committee chairperson, and the Staff-Parish Relations Committee chairperson. For such background check reports concerning a volunteer, secure distribution will be made only to the Pastor in Charge and the Safe Sanctuaries Committee chairperson. For both categories of persons further actions shall be taken in accordance with provisions found below.

NOTE: All background screens and Safe Sanctuaries forms are kept secure by the Safe Sanctuaries Record Holder/s.

UNFAVORABLE BACKGROUND SCREEN PROCEDURE

- The individual who has been the subject of a background screen, the results of which are unfavorable, shall be so informed in writing with a Notice of Unfavorable Background Check form.
- If an unfavorable report concerns a volunteer applicant, the Pastor in Charge and another leader (laity or staff) chosen by the Pastor in Charge shall meet with the volunteer applicant to review and discuss the report.
- If the unfavorable report concerns a staff applicant, the Pastor in Charge and Staff Parish Relations Committee chairperson shall meet with the staff applicant to discuss the report and shall thereafter take such personnel action as shall be deemed appropriate.
- Review of unfavorable reports containing any history of criminal charges or convictions or of any reported non-criminal conduct nevertheless suggesting potential unfitness for employment or volunteer status may take into consideration the following factors: the nature and seriousness of the crime or conduct, the relationship of the crime or conduct to the purpose and nature of the church job or program for which employment or volunteer status is sought, the age of the person at the time of the commission of the crime or conduct, the time elapsed since the person's crime or conduct.

- **Any background screen reported charge, conviction, or conduct that deals with sexual abuse or child abuse shall bar the person from working as an employee or volunteer with children, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults.**
- Documentation of the employment or volunteer decision made shall be placed in the person's application or employee personnel file.

REPORTING ABUSE PROCEDURE

Alabama's mandatory child abuse and neglect reporting law states that all school teachers, social workers, day care workers or employees, mental health professionals, and members of the clergy (as defined in Rule 505 of the Alabama Rules of Evidence), or any other person called upon to render aid or medical assistance to any child, when the child is known or suspected to be a victim of child abuse or neglect, **shall be required to report**, or cause a report to be made of the same, orally, either by telephone or direct communication **immediately**, followed by a written report, to a duly constituted authority. When an initial report is made to a law enforcement official, the official subsequently shall inform the Department of Human Resources of the report so that the department can carry out its responsibility to provide protective services when deemed appropriate to the respective child or children.

The Gulf Shores United Methodist Church shall respond to all alleged or suspected incidences of child, youth or elder abuse in an effort to protect the child, youth, and at-risk or vulnerable adults and any individuals involved in the incident. It is not the policy of the church to prove whether the alleged or suspected abuse has or has not occurred, as this is the responsibility of the proper legal authorities. Upon suspecting or learning of an allegation of abuse, employees and volunteers **shall use discretion**. The reporting procedure is as follows:

1. Employees and volunteers shall report the information immediately to the employee in charge of the ministry involved (i.e., Mother's Day Out – Lana Crawford, Music - Director of Worship Arts – Cody Johnson, Children's Ministry – _____, Youth Ministry – Josh Williams, Vulnerable Adult – Rev. Sara Shaver).
2. The employee in charge shall immediately suspend and remove the individual from duties involving children or youth pending internal and external investigation.
3. The employee in charge shall meet with the Senior Pastor and the Gulf Shores Police Department shall be notified. The Gulf Shores Police Department will subsequently notify the Department of Human Resources as required by the law.
4. All such matters shall be dealt with **in the strictest confidence and all persons involved shall refrain from any discussion about the alleged incident with anyone other than the Pastors and those in authority.**
5. In situations of minor to minor abuse, individuals shall be separated and responsive actions shall be taken to protect both parties.

PHYSICAL SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR CHILDREN'S MINISTRY PROCEDURE

Physical safety responsibilities shall be followed by all employees and volunteers serving in children's and youth ministries, including all Out-Reach Programs and One adult/One child or Youth Pairing Programs. All organizations serving minors on the Gulf Shores United Methodist Church campus shall follow the Evacuation Procedure in the event of a dangerous situation.

BASICS:

1. For safety purposes, you must have the following phone numbers in your cell phone:

- Gulf Shores Police Department: 251-968-2431
 - Children's Director's cell phone:
2. Arrive at church with two items – your cell phone and wearing your specific Children's Leader name tag. (*Nursery Staff make sure strollers and safety vests are in place by the door.*)
 3. Take the time to discover and make a mental note of at least two exits from your room and *make sure you have a line of rope (if younger age class) to use in event of an evacuation.*
 4. In the event of a dangerous situation, remember to: **RUN, HIDE, FIGHT!**
 5. Take the time to determine where you might hide children in your room if necessary.
 6. Follow the Evacuation Procedures as stated in this policy.

WEEKLY – Children's Small Group Leaders:

1. At all times outside your classroom there should be an attendance binder and a class count sheet.
2. Note the location and name of the Safety Team member. If at any time you are aware of a person who is inappropriate or who makes you uncomfortable, report it to the Safety Team member to be handled.
3. Immediately take a head count for your class – then write the head count number on the class count sheet located outside the door of your room. The Safety Team member will stop by and do a recount in case of a late arrival – then adjust the number as needed.
4. Be aware of the number of children in your class and where they are at all times.

EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR EMERGENCY (968-2431 OR FIRE 911)

1. If there is a dangerous situation, the Safety Team member will call GSPD 968-2431 or 911 and give the specific location.
2. *The Safety Team member will alert the nursery and children's classes telling you to "Evacuate" and which direction to exit. They will assist either the nursery or an individual class as needed.*
3. If there is a dangerous situation or fire on the Main Campus, evacuate the children to Thee Coffee Shop on the South Campus –entering through the first available door. (Opposite Campus)
4. If there is a dangerous situation or fire on the South Campus, evacuate the children to the Sanctuary. (Opposite Campus)
5. *Quickly take your attendance binder and leave immediately using the best "smart" route.*
6. **STAY OFF YOUR PHONE AND REMAIN CALMLY FOCUSED ON THE CHILDREN.**
7. If a parent arrives during your evacuation process wanting to get their child, ask them to accompany and assist you for the sake of an orderly and accurate release of children.
8. When you arrive at the evacuation site, use the attendance binder to make sure you have every child. *If you could not bring the attendance binder with you, ask the Safety Team member for a head count card and immediately write the children's names on the back. As parents arrive for pick-up, you will need to very carefully note the child was picked up and who picked them up.*
9. Nursery staff and Children's leaders need to keep their class grouped together in either space – as separated and defined as possible - and be a calm, reassuring presence.
10. The Safety Team leader will control the doors to make sure the children are safely contained.

IN CASE OF TORNADO OR INCLEMENT WEATHER

If a tornado, severe thunderstorm, or other inclement weather warning is issued that threatens to affect the building in which you are meeting in the immediate future:

1. DO NOT leave the building and DO NOT allow students to leave the building.
2. Instruct students to gather at the safest, most interior room, as indicated on the K.E.Y.S. plans posted in each room at Gulf Shores UMC.
3. Remain there with students until the threat of inclement weather has passed.

PHYSICAL SAFETY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR YOUTH MINISTRY PROCEDURE

1. For safety purposes, you must have the following phone numbers in your cell phone:
 - Gulf Shores Police Department: 251-968-2431
 - Youth Minister's cell phone: 205-533-2393
2. Arrive for youth programs/events with your cell phone and your GSUMC nametag.
3. Locate the first aid kit (in Crossroads it is attached to the kitchen wall underneath the cabinets).
4. Make a mental note of all exits to the building in case an evacuation is necessary.
5. If at any time a person enters a youth ministry meeting space and is being inappropriate or who is making you feel uncomfortable, notify another adult leader and/or the youth minister. Any time you feel you or the teenagers are in danger in such a situation, immediately call GSPD 968-2431.
6. In the event of a dangerous situation, remember: **RUN, HIDE, FIGHT.**
7. Follow the Evacuation Procedures as stated in this policy.

EVACUATION PROCEDURES FOR EMERGENCY (968-2431 OR FIRE 911)

If there is a dangerous situation requiring evacuation, follow this procedure:

1. Call GSPD 968-2431 or 911 and give the specific location.
2. In case of fire or any other emergency requiring evacuation, instruct students to exit the building and gather with adults and other group members at the main campus of GSUMC. If you are meeting at the main campus and there is a fire or emergency, evacuate students to the South Campus.

REPORTING ACCIDENT/SICKNESS PROCEDURE

In the event of an accident or sickness involving a minor (child or youth), employees and/or volunteers are to ***notify the parent and the employee in charge of the ministry involved immediately***. The Gulf Shores United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Accident/Sickness Incident Report Form shall be completed within an hour of the incident and submitted to the employee in charge of the ministry involved.