

Auburn United Methodist Church

Safe Sanctuary Policy

for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults

Established & Adopted 6/9/2014

Preface

“...Jesus called the children to him and said, “Let the children come to me, and do not stop them: for it is such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. I tell you solemnly, anyone who does not welcome the kingdom of God like a child will never enter it.” Luke 18:16-17

The innocence of children is what best enables them to seek out God with fearless enthusiasm. That innocence is also what leaves them most vulnerable to abuse or neglect. The Auburn United Methodist Church (or AUMC) recognizes that any abuse – physical, sexual or mental – is destructive to the development and well-being of any person. Therefore, AUMC is determined to minimize the risk of abuse or neglect and to protect all participants in programs and activities of AUMC. AUMC will not tolerate and prohibits abuse and bullying at the programs and activities of AUMC. Retaliation or false accusation against a target, witness or another person with reliable information about these matters is prohibited.

AUMC embraces its calling to provide functions, activities and events which are spiritually and developmentally appropriate and free from abuse or neglect. This policy is intended to guide the selection of leaders and caregivers for events and activities at AUMC.

Preamble

Through baptism we renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness and reject evil powers of this world. We will surround all God’s children with a community of love and forgiveness that they may grow in their trust of God. The faith community lays the foundation for them to grow to be true disciples who walk the way that leads to life. The occurrence of abuse or neglect within the household of God breaks this covenant. Sadly, abuse or neglect remains a reality in today’s society both outside and within the church. AUMC accepts its biblical and moral responsibility to address this issue.

Therefore, this policy is intended to promote the health, welfare and safety of children, youth and vulnerable persons during AUMC functions, activities or events. This document shall be referred to as the Protection Policy, or Policy.

The goals of this policy include:

1. Promoting a safe and nurturing environment for all children, youth and vulnerable persons who participate in events sponsored by AUMC.
2. Protecting children, youth and vulnerable persons from abuse and neglect.
3. Protecting our care providers from false accusations.
4. Minimalizing AUMC liability.

Introduction

Auburn United Methodist Church, hereby referred to as “AUMC”, is expected to uphold this policy as its minimum standards in the establishment of the Safe Sanctuary policy and procedures.

Auburn United Methodist Church seeks to create a safe environment for children, youth and vulnerable adults in which opportunities for abuse are minimized by the provision of proper enlistment and supervision of those persons working with them. This document contains theological foundations, definitions of child abuse, policies and procedures related to prevention, response and reporting.

Purpose 1 – Protect by reducing the risk of injury or abuse of children, youth and vulnerable persons in our care.

Purpose 2 – To protect staff and volunteers at AUMC from false accusations of abuse or neglect.

Purpose 3 – Limit the extent of legal liability for AUMC.

Theological Foundation

Our Biblical Mandate

Jesus 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 Commitment in Baptism

The Church, above all institutions, is called to welcome and nurture the child. Our goal is to maintain a safe, secure, loving place where children, youth and vulnerable adults may grow and where those who care for them may administer to their needs in responsible ways.

Our Mandate

The 1996 General Conference approved a resolution that called upon local churches and annual conferences to institute policies and procedures to reduce the risk of child sexual abuse in our churches and church related activities. AUMC accepts the nature of this call and seeks to expand it to include all forms of abuse or neglect that could be possible in these settings or that could come to our attention regarding those in our care.

Statement of Covenant

We uphold the idea that to report abuse is to be a witness to the world of the love and justice of God and fully recognize that reporting abuse is a form of ministering to the needs of those crying out for help. Simply, to report abuse can help to stop existing and prevent further abuse.

As caring Christians, we are also committed to protect and advocate for children, youth and vulnerable adults participating in the life of the church. The Church, at all levels of its organization, is entrusted with the responsibility of providing an emotionally and physically safe, spiritually grounded, healthy environment for children, youth and adults in which they are protected from abuse. (See Addendum A).

Additionally, we care for the abused and their families by offering resources that will contribute to healing. Further, we will recognize the grace that God gives us in upholding Christian community; and we will look for grace filled ways of dealing with both the victim and the accused.

Definitions

Volunteer – a person 14 years of age or older who assists in conducting children’s activities under the supervision of an adult leader or staff person

Child abuse – harm or threatened harm to a child’s health or welfare by a person responsible for the child’s health or welfare or by a person in a position of trust, which harm occurs or is threatened through a non-accidental physical or mental injury or sexual abuse

Sexual abuse – any touching of the sexual or other intimate parts of a child or any other conduct or action done for the purpose of gratifying the sexual desire of either party either 1) through physical force that overcomes earnest resistance or a threat, express or implied, that places a child in fear of immediate death or serious physical injury to himself or another person or 2) by a person 18 years or older against another who is less than 18 years old, or by a person four or more years older than the victim

Neglect – harm to a child’s health or welfare by a person responsible for the child’s health or welfare which occurs through negligent treatment, including the failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter or medical care

Verbal abuse – spoken or unspoken or emotional cruelty against a child

Ritual abuse – regular intentional physical, sexual or psychological violations of a child to appeal to a higher authority of power

Supervision - means to oversee or direct a ministry or activity.

Vulnerable Adult- a person eighteen (18) years of age or older who, because of a mental or physical dysfunction, is unable to manage his/her own resources, carry out the activity of daily living, or protect himself/herself from neglect, exploitation, or a hazardous or abusive situation without assistance from others.

Known Sexual Offender - a person known to the Church who has been convicted of a sexual offense against a child, youth, or adult or who, through their own confession, has admitted to committing a sexual offense against a child, youth or adult, including but not limited to those persons who are going through the legal process, but have not been legally charged or convicted of committing a sexual offense.

Screening Procedures

All persons who intend to work with children, youth or vulnerable adults at AUMC sponsored events, including overnight or longer events, must be properly screened and attend a Safe Sanctuary training session conducted on child protection and abuse and have a background check completed every three years. *Documentation of this training will be kept in a confidential file maintained by the Administrative Assistant in a locked file cabinet in the office.*

Screening and Supervisory Procedures and Policies

- Must complete a volunteer or staff Safe Sanctuary Certification application form. (Appendix C)
 - Must complete and sign consent for background criminal check and/or drug and alcohol screen. *Background checks must be renewed every three years.*
 - Personal interview.
 - Provide two references of non-related adults that will be verified.

All staff and volunteer files will be maintained in a locked cabinet in the church office.

Coverage

The Policy will be in effect for all AUMC sponsored and advertised events. An event is considered any activity promoted and/or sponsored by AUMC that takes place on church property or at a designated location where the sponsored activity is being held. For an offsite activity, the event begins in the AUMC parking lot if there is transportation or carpooling arranged and continues until the end of the event.

Guidelines for Volunteer and Paid Staff working with Children and Youth and AUMC

- Person should be at least 5 (five) years older than the age group with whom they are working
- Persons leading a group of children or youth should be 18 years of age or older
 - Assistants to the leaders may be 14 – 18 years of age and have completed the application process, including Safe Sanctuary training and background checks and must be approved by the Pastor.
- 6 month rule: Any volunteer working with children must be a member or attend regularly in the local church for at least 6 months or work with a member who has been.
- Two Adult rule: Two non-related adults must always be present in groups of children except in emergency situations and where not reasonably feasible
- When the two adult rule is not feasible, the adult supervisor will be required to spot check or make unannounced visits as necessary.
- Doors are never to be locked and are to remain open unless equipped with windows. Staff and volunteers will avoid being alone with a child without being visible to others in the immediate surroundings.

Additional Guidelines

Open Door Counseling

At any counseling sessions with a child or youth, the door of the room used should remain open for the entire session, if the door has no window in it. The sessions will be conducted at a time when others are nearby (office hours) even if they are not within listening distance.

Restroom Procedure

Children should be escorted to the bathroom with the adult remaining outside the bathroom door. The exception is if the child needs assistance, then the 2 adult rule applies.

Nursery Care – A sign in/sign out procedure will be in place.

Using Photos and Videos – Do not post any photos or videos of children or youth from AUMC sponsored events without a photo release form.

Overnight Trips/Events

- Adult chaperones with children/youth must be the same gender, must never share a bed with a child/youth or be alone in the room with them at any time. Large room multiple bunk settings allow two same gender adults to sleep in the same room with children/youth.
- No males shall sleep in the same area as unrelated female persons.
- No females shall sleep in the same area as unrelated male persons.
- Male participants shall have a male supervisor. Female participants shall have a female supervisor.
- If there is an overnigher with both males and females, there must be both a male and female chaperone.
- All parents/leaders should have documented contact information exchanged in permission forms and all event information disclosed.

Transportation recommendations

- All drivers should be screened including a review of their motor vehicle record.
- If using a church bus, guidelines for use of church owned vehicles should be followed.
- When using private vehicles for church-related events, adult must provide updated insurance and follow the two-adult rule in each vehicle.
- All children/youth must provide a permission/liability form with emergency information signed by their parent/guardian. These are kept with the leader at all times during the travel event.



Reporting Procedures

Being mindful of the complex nature of Child Abuse Reporting, training and consultation will be available to both clergy and laypersons to prepare them for a faithful response by AUMC.

Incidents of known or suspected abuse/neglect will be reported to the State of Michigan, DHS department. In the case of an emergency, call 911.

Response Procedures

- All allegations against a staff person or volunteer or if it occurred in the course of a children's or youth activity, the person in charge of the activity shall immediately report the incident to the Pastor.
- A Suspected Instances of Abuse Report Form (Appendix B) must be completed and returned to the Pastor, Youth Pastor or Education Ministry Team Leader.
- A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse is expected.
- All allegations will be taken seriously.
- AUMC staff or volunteers are not to undertake any investigation of the incident.

NOTE: The Bishop and/or his/her designee are the only persons allowed to make statements to the representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Director of Communications in the Bishop's office. Training in how to handle media requests will be offered as part of the training. A spirit of cooperation in helping the media find the "official spokesperson" is crucial.

Our Christian Response

While the vast majority of those who work with our programs are of the highest moral character and are deeply committed to the needs of those to whom they minister, the realities of a society where awareness for the potential for abuse or neglect has been heightened makes a consistent screening policy and abuse prevention training necessary. We understand that those with clean backgrounds and records might find this process burdensome or offensive. Yet, if we are to take seriously our responsibility for children, youth and vulnerable adults, all applications for workers and volunteers must be treated in the same manner. We take seriously the need to be careful and thorough in our screening. Further, we live in a litigious society, where the potential exposure of AUMC mandates a need for church-wide policy that is clear and consistently enforced. Thank you for understanding and cooperating as we endeavor to make our programs safe and secure for all who participate.

Addendum A

Disclosure of Presence of a Convicted Sex Offender

Secrecy about situations within the church encourage abuse; transparency makes everyone safer. Members and visitors will be regularly screened through the Michigan State Police Sex Offender Registry list. Therefore, immediately after the Pastor learns of the presence of a possible convicted sex offender in the congregation, they will gather pertinent public records from the government agencies who arrested and prosecuted the individual.

If the individual is a convicted sex offender, the pastor will with a representative of the Advisory Team or other trusted church member, create a covenant of behavior (see appendix A). The pastor will inform members of the church's program staff that the person is a convicted sex offender; whether he/she has satisfied the court's requirements related to his/her conviction by contacting parole officers; and that a covenant of behavior has been established and is being fulfilled by the individual. The pastor and the program staff will then initiate a process to educate and inform the Advisory Team and/or volunteers who work with AUMC's children and youth about AUMC's policies and procedures and about the basic facts related to said offender's status as a convicted sex offender.

At the conclusion, the covenant between AUMC and the offender will be reviewed and amended if necessary.



Appendix A

A Covenant between AUMC congregation and Convicted Sex Offender

This document will be altered to fit the individual in question.

Auburn United Methodist Church is committed to being a religious community open to those who are in need of worshiping with us, especially in times of serious personal troubles. We believe in redemption through God's grace in Jesus Christ and trust that all persons are of sacred worth and loved by God.

However, based on the serious nature of sex offenses and the high rate of recidivism of those convicted of such crimes, we have concerns about anyone convicted of such a crime having contact with children, youth and vulnerable adults in our congregation. The following guidelines are designed to reduce the risk to you and others of an incident or accusation. We welcome you to our congregation but participation will be limited because our first priority is to ensure the safety of our children, youth and vulnerable adults. Further, we also want to assure that you will not be subject to future accusations. This information will be shared in a process outlined in Addendum A.

The ministerial leadership of the church will be responsible for the following duties:

- Church leadership will identify "covenant partners" for you. They will be adults of the same gender as yours. They will not be related to you.
- Designated covenant partners shall be lay members of the church and act as chaperones to facilitate attendance by the sex offender. There must be more than one person willing and trained to act as chaperone to facilitate attendance by the sex offender. Training shall include hospitality, the rules the sex offender must follow, and procedures for questions and emergencies. Such training will be provided by the clergy.
- Information regarding known sex offenders will be kept in the church office in a locked file cabinet.
- The leadership of the church will require a signed covenantal agreement limiting the involvement of a known sex offender.
- Request for leadership within the church in ministries not involving children and youth will be reviewed after one year of regular participation, within the guidelines below, and allowed on a case by case basis.
- When staff members join the church, they will be informed of any signed active covenants within the congregation.
- The leadership of the church may seek recommendations outside the church body from professional counsel as deemed necessary.

You are responsible for following the guidelines below:

- Scheduling of covenant partner(s) to accompany you during AUMC sponsored events. If your assigned partner is not available please contact the pastor. The pastor will help put you in contact with an alternate covenant partner.
- If no covenant partners are available to accompany you during an AUMC sponsored event, you cannot attend.



- You are to avoid all contact with children on congregation property or congregation sponsored events.
- Do not approach or initiate conversation with children.
- If a child in the congregation approaches you, either at church or in a community place, politely and immediately excuse yourself from the situation.
- Do not volunteer or agree to lead, chaperone or participate in events for children and youth including such things as Sunday school classes, V.B.S., youth group events, or children events, driving or otherwise transporting children or youth.
- Avoid being in the building unaccompanied when activities involving children and youth are in session such as Moms' Day Out, Parents' Night Out, Sunday school or youth group activities.
- You are not allowed to be in any non-lit area of the church property.
- At no time shall you deliberately place yourself in or remain in any location in or around the church facilities that would cause undue distress to others. (This prohibits you from being in or near the child care, preschool, elementary, junior high or high school area of the church facilities.)
- If you should decide to relocate to another congregation the membership secretary will seek to inform the leadership of that congregation of the condition of these guidelines.
- You may participate in worship in the sanctuary and adult Sunday school classes.
- At church sponsored functions for families, you may attend with, but at no time leave the immediate proximity of your family or designated covenant partner.

I have reviewed this covenant and agree to abide by its provisions. I understand and agree that if I violate this agreement, I will be denied access to future church functions and church property. We also understand and agree that you will be restricted from access to the church or barred from congregational activities if you refuse to sign this covenant or fail to comply with the stipulations or if behavior threatens the safety of any member of the AUMC congregation.

I understand this contract will be reviewed regularly, every six months, and will remain for an indefinite period.

Offender date

Parole Officer (if applicable) date

Pastor date

Education Ministry Team Leader date

Youth Pastor date

Advisory Team Leader date

APPENDIX B

Report Form for Suspected Instances of Abuse

Reporters Name _____ Contact Phone _____

Alleged Victims Name _____ Age/DOB _____

If minor, parent's names: _____

Parent's phone, if available: _____

Incident Information:

Date of Incident: _____ Time of Incident: _____

Place of Incident: _____

Behavior Witnessed or Statement from Victim:

Name of the Accused: _____

I certify that the report given above is accurate to my knowledge.

I will make myself available to any entity needed to investigate this claim.

Signature of Reporter _____ Date _____

Signature of Pastor _____ Date Received _____

In the event the accused is the Pastor, this form should be submitted to Advisory Board Chair person who will report to the District Superintendent.



Appendix C

SAFE SANCTUARY CERTIFICATION APPLICATION

Print Name _____ Date of Application _____

Present Address _____

Home Phone (____) ____ - ____ Cell Phone (____) ____ - ____

Emergency Contact _____ Phone (____) ____ - ____

Position applying for _____

PERSONAL STATEMENT – Why do you want to serve in this position?

SPECIAL GIFTS – List any gifts, callings, training, education or other factors that have prepared you for children/ youth work:

I am 21 (twenty one) years of age or older. Yes ☐ No ☐

I am 14 – 21 years of age. Yes ☐ No ☐

Previous residences for the past 5 years:

Address _____

Address _____

Address _____

Previous volunteer experience:



SAFE SANCTUARY
CERTIFICATION APPLICATION
Disclosure Form

Our church care about the children and youth in our programs, and desires to ensure their safety while they are in the church's supervision. All volunteers and hired staff are required to complete this disclosure for. Please complete the following questions. Please attach an explanation for any "yes" answer.

1. Have you ever been convicted of any against¹ children or other persons? ☐Yes ☐No
2. Have you ever been found in any dependency action to have sexually assaulted or exploited any minor or to have physically abused any minor? ☐Yes ☐No
3. Have you ever been found by a court in a domestic relations proceeding to have sexually abused or exploited any minor or to have physically abused a minor? ☐Yes ☐No
4. a. Have you been convicted of the possession, use, or sale of drugs within the last 7 years? ☐Yes ☐No
b. Have you been released from incarceration for a conviction of the possession, use, or sale of drugs within the past 7 years? ☐Yes ☐No
5. Within the past 30 days have you abused alcohol, legal or illegal drugs? ☐Yes ☐No
6. Has your driver's license been suspended or revoked within the last 7 years? ☐Yes ☐No
7. Have you ever been convicted of crimes relating to financial exploitation where the victim was a vulnerable adult? ☐Yes ☐No
8. Have you ever been found by a court in a protection proceeding to have abused or financially exploited a vulnerable adult? ☐Yes ☐No
9. a. Have you ever been licensed by a licensing board that licenses businesses/professions? (If yes, please answer b & c) ☐Yes ☐No
b. Have you ever been found by that licensing board, or any other disciplinary board, to have sexually or physically abused or exploited any minor or developmentally disabled person? ☐Yes ☐No
c. Have you ever been found by that licensing board, or any other disciplinary board, to have abused or financially exploited a vulnerable adult? ☐Yes ☐No
10. Other than the above matters, is there any fact or circumstance involving you and your background that would call into question you being entrusted with the supervision, guidance and care of young people, vulnerable adults or developmentally disabled persons? ☐Yes ☐No

¹against persons are defined by as aggravated murder; first or second degree murder; first or second degree kidnapping; first, second, or third degree assault; first degree burglary or second degree manslaughter; first or second degree exploitation; indecent liberties; incest; vehicular homicide; first degree promoting prostitution; communication with a minor; unlawful imprisonment simple assault; sexual exploitation of minors; first or second degree custodial interference; malicious harassment; first, second, or third degree child molestation; first or second degree sexual misconduct with a minor; first or second degree rape; of a child; patronizing a juvenile prostitute; child abandonment; promoting pornography; selling or distributing erotic material to a minor; custodial assault; violation of child abuse restraining order; child buying or selling; prostitution; or any of these crimes as they may be renamed in the future.



SAFE SANCTUARY
CERTIFICATION APPLICATION
Consent for Background Check

Please provide us with 2 references on your behalf.

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

Name _____ Relationship _____

Address _____

Home Phone _____ Cell Phone _____

I do hereby give consent for Auburn United Methodist Church of Auburn, Michigan to obtain copies of my driving record and background information from the applicable organizations.

State Identification Number _____ State Issued _____

Date of Birth _____ Social Security Number _____

Full Name (PLEASE PRINT) _____

Current Address _____

Other Names Used _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Witness _____ Date _____



SAFE SANCTUARY
CERTIFICATION APPLICATION
Applicant's Statement

My signature below indicates that:

- A. The information contained in this application is correct to the best of my knowledge.
- B. I authorize any references, churches, or other organizations listed in this application to give any information, including opinions, that they may have regarding my character and fitness for church, children and/or youth work.
- C. I release all such references from any liability for furnishing such evaluations to you, provided they do so in good faith and without malice.
- D. Should my application be accepted, I agree to be bound by the bylaws and polies of Auburn United Methodist Church of Auburn, Michigan and refrain from immoral, illegal or unethical conduct in the performance of my services on behalf of the church.
- E. Upon acceptance of my application, I will:
 - 1. Complete the Safe Sanctuary Training as required by Auburn United Methodist Church and submit to background checks every 3 years as required according to the church policy.
 - 2. Report to the Pastor if I am accused of any criminal wrong doing involving minors or vulnerable adults.
 - 3. I agree to live by the understanding that, as a person in authority, it is my responsibility to avoid sexual contact with children, youth, vulnerable adults, and developmentally disabled persons in my care, even if one attempts to initiate the contact.
 - 4. I will find alternative ways to discipline, agreeing that under no circumstances will I use spanking, neck or choke holds, ear or hair pulling or any other corporal punishment as a means of discipline.

I certify that the information I have provided is true and correct; if it is found that the answers given are untrue, I understand it may be cause for dismissal.

Signature _____ Date _____

SAFE SANCTUARY
ORIENTATION
Statement of Support

Statement of Support of the Safe Sanctuary Policy
for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults

Facilitator's Statement:

We have reviewed each paragraph of the Safe Sanctuary Policy Statement for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults with _____, and have explained how important it is for him or her to comply with and support this policy. We have explained that he or she must agree to comply with and support this policy in order to supervise any activity involving minors at Auburn United Methodist Church.

Facilitator's Signature _____ Date: _____

Applicant's Statement:

I have read the Safe Sanctuary Policy Statement for the Protection of Minors and Vulnerable Adults. The above facilitator has reviewed each paragraph with me. I understand the policy statement and agree to comply with it and support it.

Printed Name _____

Applicant's Signature _____ Date: _____

