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**St. Mark's**  
**United Methodist Church**  
**Safe Sanctuary Policy**

Sexual Abuse Prevention

&

Student Protection Guidelines

Responsibilities:

- It is the responsibility of the St. Mark's Staff Parish Relations Committee to ensure that staff and volunteers are in full compliance with the policy.
- It is the responsibility of the St. Mark's Trustees to ensure that the physical property of the church is in full compliance with this policy.
- It is the responsibility of the St. Mark's Administrative Council to authorize the funding necessary to fully comply with this policy.

By signing below, you confirm that you have received, read, and agree to the terms and conditions of the Safe Sanctuary Policy. You commit to strictly abide by and enforce the guidelines listed herein. Failure to comply may result in immediate removal or termination.

Name (Please Print)

Signature

Date

Please detach this page and return to church office.

## **St. Mark's United Methodist Church**

### **Sexual Abuse Prevention And Student Protection Guidelines**

Since children are gifts from God for us to love and care for, the St. Mark's United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe ministry environment for all ages. This policy was created and is being maintained by the St. Mark's United Methodist Church staff and volunteers while protecting our infants, children, and youth. These are our guidelines:

1. Serving – No one may serve in ministry with children or youth who has been convicted of crimes against youth or children. Any person wishing to serve in the Children's or Youth ministry must have been a member of St. Marks UMC for six months or have been known by the staff for a year.
2. Background Checks – No individual may work with the youth or children who has not submitted to a background check for criminal, sexual abuse, and identity verification. The results of these background checks will be reviewed by the Pastor, SPR Chair, and the Children's and Youth Directors on a "need to know" basis. Reinvestigations of each individual will be performed every 5 years.
3. Training – The Children's and Youth Directors will maintain a current CPR/First Aid certification. All workers with children and youth will undergo on an annual basis Basic First Aid/CPR Training as well as a Safe Sanctuaries Policies review.
4. Supervision – Adult supervision is required on all activities involving children and youth. A Staff member or volunteer must remain until all children and youth are picked up. If assisting a child in the restroom, the door shall be partially open. Volunteers must be 21 to minister with Senior High Youth, 18 to minister with Junior High Youth, and 13 to minister with an Adult volunteer in the Nursery.
5. Windows – The doors to all rooms in the church, with the exception of restrooms, will have a window; this includes the pastor's office or study.
6. Responsibilities – It is the responsibility of the staff member or volunteer, not the child or youth, to keep all relationships pure. It is possible that a child or youth might have a crush on a leader, and even if this seems harmless, it is the staff member's or volunteer's responsibility to deal with this in a responsible manner. Words, hugs, and jokes can be taken in the wrong way and need to be monitored. Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from dating.
7. Never Alone – Another staff person or volunteer needs to be present in a classroom, home, or vehicle. When dropping off, or picking up children or youth, the volunteer should make contact with a parent or another volunteer prior to taking the child to the next stop. This is to prevent a staff member or volunteer from being alone with a child without a parent's knowledge or approval.
8. Off-Site Contacts – Off-site contact represents a potential danger for inappropriate or the perception of inappropriate behavior for staff members and volunteers. Potential danger sites can be swimming pools, locker rooms, or motel rooms. Watch carefully how you wrestle with a child or youth in a pool. A staff person or volunteer should not undress in the presence of a student. Staff members and volunteers are prohibited from sleeping in the same bed with a student.
9. Sleeping Arrangements – On overnight trips with youth, the youth and adults will be assigned different rooms if at all possible. Ideally the adults should be located between the male and female students. Hotels/motels where the rooms open to the interior of the building are preferred.
10. Advanced Notice – Parents of children and youth will always be given advanced notice with full information regarding the event(s) in which their children will be participating. Before the event, the parents must give written permission which will include medical and emergency contact information on the church's standard authorization form.
11. Transportation – When transporting children and youth, be aware that your car insurance is the primary coverage. Persons without insurance are not allowed to transport children and youth. Youth are not allowed to transport other youth on church related activities. A copy of your current proof of

insurance must be given to the director of the event prior to leaving. Any trip must not exceed a ratio of 6 students per chaperone. There must be an appropriate number of male and female chaperones in any co-ed group.

12. Open Door Counseling – At any 1-on-1 counseling session with children or youth, the door of the room used must remain open for the entire session. Ideally, the session will be held when other people are present even if they cannot hear what is being said.
13. Counseling – Conversations regarding abuse, neglect, or suicide are legally reportable; local Law Enforcement or the Department of Children’s Services must be informed with 24 hours of having the conversation.
14. Reporting Abuse – Reporting helps to end the cycle of abuse and ensures the safety of children. Report possible inappropriate behavior to the Pastor or a staff person. The pastor or staff person will interview the victim and determine if local Law Enforcement or the Department of Children’s Services should be contacted. The alleged abuser will be treated with dignity but will immediately be removed from working with all children and youth until the matter is resolved.
  - Law Enforcement – 911
  - Department of Children’s Services (toll free 24 hr) – 1-877-237-0004
15. Spokesperson – The Chairperson of the Administrative Board will be the official spokesperson for the church and will respond to the news media. He or She is the only person who is authorized to give any statements to the news media.
16. Cooperation – As a church we will cooperate fully with any investigation conducted by law enforcement or child protection services.

Revised January 2015