**SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY**

**3/14/2023**

Jesus welcomed little children so the church must be made a safe place for them. In order to keep our children safe and protect our church, staff, and volunteers the following policies are in effect:

**ALL VOLUNTEERS (18 years old and over) AND EMPLOYEES INVOLVED IN THE SUPERVISION OR CUSTODY OF MINORS OR WHO HAVE UNSUPERVISED ACCESS TO MINORS (under 18) MUST COMPLY WITH THE FOLLOWING:**

1. Provide a completed confidential application and, for compensated positions, an employment application. Continued employment or volunteer service is contingent upon approval of all applications and background checks.
2. Provide the church with a background check to be sent directly to St. Paul United Church of Christ to be reviewed by the pastor(s) and to be updated every five years.
3. Attend a yearly review of Safe Sanctuary Policy.

**All background checks reports shall be maintained in a secured file with access limited to pastor(s).**

1. Adult volunteers should observe the “two adults” rule. This requires that adults are never alone with children or youth without an unrelated adult partner. Youth under the age of 18 may assist an unrelated adult in supervising children and youth activities; however, such assistance does not alter the requirement that at least two unrelated adults be present.
2. Adequate supervision for all programs involving children or youth must be maintained from the time the children arrive until they are picked up by parents or guardians.
3. **Parental Consent:** Written consent of one parent or guardian of a minor will be required for all activities off the church property, and any overnight activities.
4. **Virtual/Online Meetings**: All virtual online meetings involving children and youth are subject to the same requirements as in person activities: no fewer than two unrelated adults will be online with children and consent of a parent will be required for participation. Additionally, parents will be provided with attendance credentials and invited to attend if they choose. Youth and adult attendees at a virtual event shall conduct themselves in a matter befitting a church event and be attentive to their backgrounds and what is visible to others. Persons behaving inappropriately will immediately be excluded from the meeting.
5. **Communications with Youth:** No adult will communicate with any child one-on-one via email, social media, text, or phone call.
	1. If a child /youth initiates the communication, the adult must immediately add another adult to the communication and inform the child/youth of the policy.
	2. In the event that a one-on-one situation occurs between an adult and youth, the adult will report the event to clergy, Christian Education directors or a member of the oversight committee as soon as possible and complete a situation report.
	3. A pastor or the Director of Christian Education must approve any youth activity and the chaperone/child ratio (by number and gender).
	4. All chaperones and drivers must be on the approved volunteer list.
	5. Parents can be members of any social media group maintained on behalf of St. Paul United Church of Christ of which child/youth are members.

**Procedures for Reporting to Appropriate Leaders and Agencies**

 **Abuse on Premises or at Church Activity**

1. Any inappropriate conduct between an adult employee/volunteer and a child should be confronted immediately and reported promptly to senior minister or appropriate person in charge. Where appropriate, such as with signs of abuse or neglect, it shall be promptly reported to police and Illinois Department of Children and Family Services.

2. A claim of abuse shall be reviewed promptly by a committee of three individuals

selected by the pastor(s). This Misconduct Response Committee will include a pastor and at least one consistory representative. The committee will, in good faith, collect all readily available data. A designated member of the committee will report allegations of abuse to:

a. the victim’s family (except when the alleged perpetrator is a family member).

1. church attorney and insurance company.
2. Consistory, i.e., the suspension of the alleged perpetrator.
3. as appropriate to the Illinois South Conference and the Congregation

Strict confidentiality will be observed, limiting dissemination to those individuals who must be informed.

1. If an ordained, commissioned, or licensed minister is the accused, the Illinois South Conference Minister will be notified and invited to investigate the professional standing of the said clergy.
2. Any volunteer charged with a criminal offense or any offense that could lead to suspension of his/her driver’s license shall report such charge, within ten days, to pastor(s).

**Procedures for Responding After Allegations of Abuse**

1. The senior minister or other designated person will be the spokesperson in dealing with the authorities and the media and will prepare a position statement about the Safe Sanctuary Policy for use if approached by media.
2. The church shall utilize an attorney during the investigation.
3. The Misconduct Response Committee shall temporarily relieve the accused of duties involving children until investigation is completed. If the accused is a paid member of the church staff, pay and benefits will continue during the investigation.
4. The Misconduct Response Committee shall attempt to provide appropriate referrals for pastoral and psychological care for both the victim and the accused.