

**ST PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**SAFE SANCTUARY / CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY**

The General Conference of the United Methodist Church, in April, 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of child and vulnerable adult abuse in the church. The adopted resolution calls all churches to welcome the children and also to make our churches safe places for children to grow and learn. It is our responsibility to be proactive in our recruiting and training to find people with a gift for caring for children and also to protect those volunteers from false accusations. It is also our responsibility to oversee all programs involving children to make sure there is a safe environment and to have a plan of response in place should an accusation arise. The General Conference resolution affirmed that every local church shall have in place a policy for protecting children and vulnerable adults.

**PURPOSE**

St. Paul's United Methodist Church purpose for establishing this Child Abuse and Vulnerable Adult Prevention Policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute and unwavering commitment to the physical safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth.

**REFERENCE**

California Nevada Conference of the United Methodist Church  
Church Mutual Insurance  
Health and Human Services, San Joaquin County  
California Child Abuse Reporting Laws, Penal Code 11165 -11174.3

**STATEMENT OF COVENANT**

As a Christian community of faith committed to ministry to and with children and vulnerable adults, we pledge to conduct all our activities and ministries in such a way that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all children and youth entrusted to us. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers and we will be responsible in overseeing our programs and events and in training our staff, so that they are able and equipped to minister to children in Jesus' name. We will report and respond to all suspected incidents of abuse as is required by state law and our moral conscience and we will be prepared to minister to the families of both the abused and the perpetrator.

**PROCEDURES:** We adopt these **minimum** standards for our ministries with children, youth and vulnerable adults.

**IMMEDIATE ACTION**

1. Anyone in the church community who witness an act an act of potential abuse shall immediately take action to protect the child or vulnerable adult and remove from harm. If it is evident that harm has occurred, call 911 for law enforcement assistance.
2. If anyone witnesses a child or vulnerable adult in a neglected state i.e. dirty clothing, unkempt hair, bruises in areas not typically bruised during play i.e. upper arms, abdomen, back etc. consider if the child is neglected.
3. Steps should be immediately taken to keep the child, youth, vulnerable adult in a safe condition until a safe environment can be arranged.

**ST PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**SAFE SANCTUARY / CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY**

4. The person identifying the abuse is responsible for reporting the incident to the senior pastor / delegate and assuring that the incident is thoroughly investigated.
5. After investigation, a report must be submitted to Child Protective Services or Adult protective Services.
6. Persons involved with the discovery, investigation and reporting of incidents of abuse shall be afforded the opportunity for debriefing and counseling following the incident.
7. Victims of abuse shall be protected and offered counseling opportunities after the alleged or actual event.

## **PREVENTION OF ABUSE**

### **1. Screening and recruiting**

- All workers with children and youth will have completed an application listing standard contact information, their gifts for children / youth ministry and at least 3 references (non relatives)
- All workers will be interviewed by the pastor or the associate pastor, Children's Ministry before beginning teaching. References will be contacted and information will be documented.
- All workers will demonstrate an active relationship with this church of at least 6 months before being allowed to supervise children.
- All new workers will be asked to complete a Criminal Background Check & Child Abuse History Clearance form and LiveScan finger printing.
- All forms and reference reports shall be kept as a part of an applicant's confidential personnel file in a secured area.

### **2. Supervision / Prevention**

- All staff and volunteers shall be provided with information about identification of child abuse and reporting requirements. (Is there a hand out about this in the new hire packet?)
- 2 adult rule. There will be 2 unrelated adults in each classroom. If this is not possible, there will be a roving teacher who moves amid the classroom during the program period.
- No person shall supervise an age group unless he/she is at least 5 years older than the oldest student.
- No person under 18 shall be considered as one of the 2 adults.

**ST PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**SAFE SANCTUARY / CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY**

- Each room will have a window or the door will be left open at all times.
- Training shall occur at least once a year and teachers shall be trained to recognize the signs of abuse.
- Registration materials for activities in which children are outside direct supervision of their parents/guardians shall require signed written permission forms that include pertinent health information in order to participate.
- If the participants are old enough to understand, they shall sign a covenant of participation listing rules for all trips, overnights, etc.
- An adequate number of screened and trained paid staff or volunteers shall be present at events involving minors. Supervision will increase in proportion to the risk of the activity.
- Minors will be released only to a parent or guardian. Attendance shall be maintained for all groups. There shall be a sign-in and sign-out sheets for trips off the church premises.
- There shall be an adequate number of screened and trained paid staff or volunteers present at events involving minors. Supervision will increase in proportion to the risk of the activity.
- Written parental permission, including a signed medical treatment form and emergency contacts, are required prior to taking minors on trips. Parents will be provided information regarding the trip prior to leaving.
- Two staff or volunteers will provide supervision when transporting minors in vehicles.
- Young children shall be accompanied to the restroom and staff or volunteer shall wait inside the facility to escort the child back to the activity. Whenever possible, the escort will be the same sex as the minor.
- Minors will be encouraged to use a "buddy system" when going on trips off of church property.
- All staff and volunteers accompanying children for overnight activities shall have prior approval from the church office.
- A signed medical treatment form with emergency contacts shall be completed prior to any trip.
- Avoid all inappropriate touching with minors. All touching shall be based on the needs of the individual being touched, not on the needs of the volunteer or paid staff. In the event a minor initiates physical contact and/or inappropriate touching, it is appropriate to inform the minor that such touching is inappropriate.

**ST PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**SAFE SANCTUARY / CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY**

- Physical discipline of a minor is not permitted. Volunteers and paid staff shall not abuse minors in any way, including but not limited to physical abuse, verbal/mental abuse, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse of any kind.
- If an inappropriate relationship is observed developing between a minor and adult, maintain clear professional boundaries and refer the minor to another individual with supervisory authority.
- If one-on-one pastoral care is necessary, avoid meeting in isolated environments.
- Alcoholic beverages, tobacco, drugs, contraband, or anything that is prohibited in any groups with minors.

**4. Protection**

- If abuse of a child is suspected, the child should be immediately protected from further abuse.
- If the abuse happened on church property by church volunteers or staff, they shall immediately be removed from contact with children until the incident reported has been resolved. This should be handled in a discreet manner. The suspect is not to be banned from other church ministries pending investigation.

**5. Reporting / Investigating**

Upon receiving information or suspecting abuse, the teacher / volunteer will report immediately to the pastor / designee. A call shall be placed immediately to San Joaquin County Child Protective Services and / or Manteca Police Department immediately. Pastoral staff will cooperate with investigating agencies as indicated.

- A completed Child Abuse Reporting form must be completed and submitted within 36 Hours of the alleged incident.
- A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse will be initiated. All allegations will be taken seriously, nothing will be covered up.
- The Delta District Superintendent or his/her designee is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the media. All requests for statements should be directed to the Senior Pastor.
- If the allegation is against a staff person or pastor, the District Superintendent will be contacted immediately.
- Pastoral support will be available to all persons involved in the incident as indicated.

**ST PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**SAFE SANCTUARY / CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY**

## **REPORTING ABUSE**

**Definitions:** The following situations are reportable conditions: physical abuse, sexual abuse, child exploitation, child pornography and child prostitution, severe or general neglect, extreme corporal punishment resulting in injury, willful cruelty or unjustifiable punishment, abuse or neglect in out-of-home care.

- *Sexual Abuse:* The employment, use, persuasion, inducement, enticement, or coercion of any minor or adult to engage in, or assist any other person to engage in, any sexually explicit conduct or any simulation of such conduct for the purpose of producing any visual depiction of such conduct or rape, and in cases of caretaker or inter-familial relationships, statutory rape, molestation, prostitution, or other form of sexual exploitation of minor or adult, or incest with a minor or adult, or as defined by federal and state law. This includes and is not limited to unwelcome sexual remarks, jokes, advances, leering, whistling, or sexual gestures; sexual touching, fondling, molestation, assault, or other intimate physical contact; compelling another person to engage in a sexual act by threats or fear or undue influence; and providing or displaying pornographic materials to another person.
- *Child Emotional Abuse:* Verbal or nonverbal conduct including mental exploitation, degrading communication, or humiliating or threatening conduct that may or may not include bullying or as defined by state law.
- *Paid Staff:* Any pastor, minister, preacher, cleric, or employee who is paid.
- *Children/Youth/Minor:* Any person who has not reached his/her 18th birthday or the age of majority as defined by state law.
- *Adult:* Any person who has reached his/her 18th birthday or as defined by state law.
- *Volunteer:* Means any unpaid person engaged in or involved in activities and who is entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors or adults.

### **Who Must Report**

The following individuals are legally mandated reporters:

- Child visitation monitors
- Health practitioners (nurses, physicians etc)
- Teachers, social workers, probation officers, etc.
- Police, sheriff, CPS etc)
- Clergy members
- Fire fighters (except volunteer firefighters). Animal control officers, Human society officers.

### **When to Report:**

A telephone report must be made immediately when the reporter observes a child in his / her professional capacity or within the scope of his / her employment and has knowledge of, or has reasonable suspicion that the child has been abused. A written report on a standard form, must be send within 36 hours after the telephone report has been made

**ST PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**  
**SAFE SANCTUARY / CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY**

**Where to Report:**

California Child Protective Services and Adult Protective Services.  
Manteca Police Department

**Individual Responsibility**

Any individual whose occupation is named in the reporting law must report abuse.

**Anonymous Reporting:** Mandated reporters are required to give their names. Non-mandated reports may report anonymously. Child Protective Agencies are required to keep the mandated reporter's name confidential, unless a court orders the information disclosed.

**Immunity:** Any legally mandated reporter has immunity when making a report. No individual can be dismissed, disciplined or harassed for making a report of suspected child abuse.

**Liability:** Legally mandated reporters can be criminally liable for failing to report suspected abuse. The penalty is up to six months in county jail, a fine of not more than \$1000 or both. Mandated reporters can also be civilly liable for failure to report

**Hiring / Volunteer Screening Process:** The following screening procedures are to be used with paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All information collected should be maintained in confidence.

- *Employment Application and Volunteer Application:* Any paid staff and volunteers who will work with a minor must complete the Employment Application and/or the Volunteer Application. The release statement attached to the Application must be signed by the individual completing the Application to apply for and qualify for service. Including but not limited to: current and previous residence addresses, current and previous employment, including addresses, dates, duties, titles, and reasons for leaving. Names and addresses of schools attended and degree(s) earned. References from previous employers and organizations that serve children. Pending criminal charges (where not prohibited by state law). Criminal history information.
- Volunteer Application includes questions regarding: current address, volunteer experience, criminal history information personal references.

Applications include a statement, which the applicant should acknowledge in writing, certifying that statements provided in the application are true and complete, and any misrepresentation or omission may be grounds for rejection of the applicant or for dismissal if he or she is employed. This statement authorizes St. Paul's United Methodist Church to contact any individual or organization listed in the application.

**ST PAUL'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH**

**SAFE SANCTUARY / CHILD AND VULNERABLE ADULT ABUSE PREVENTION POLICY**

Review all statements made in the application, paying specific attention to any gaps in time and irregular employment patterns or unexplained absence. Pursue these gaps with employers listed and in a subsequent interview. Conduct interviews with qualified applicants. If detrimental information is uncovered but the applicant remains desirable, discuss this information with the applicant. In the event the applicant is ultimately hired or accepted as a volunteer, document the reasons for overriding the prior information.

Contact all listed references for volunteers. Contact each of the volunteer applicant's references and ask for any information that might help determine the applicant's suitability for the position. If a response is not received within a reasonable period of time, follow up and keep notes if possible.

Contact all listed references and employers for paid staff. Inquire as to the reason the applicant left and ask for any information that might help determine the applicant's suitability for the position. If a response is not received within a reasonable period of time, follow up and keep notes if possible.

*Criminal Background Check:* St. Paul's United Methodist Church will conduct a criminal background check on all paid staff and volunteers who are entrusted with the care and supervision of minors or a person who directly oversees and/or exerts control or oversight over minors. All criminal background checks will be updated periodically.

**Disqualification**

If the volunteer / staff applicant fails the LiveScan fingerprinting, he / she may not be hired or work as a volunteer.

**Confidentiality**

Information obtained through the screening, application, reference check, interview, and criminal background check will be kept in confidence, unless otherwise required by law. All information discovered or obtained through the above referenced means will be kept in a secure location and access to it will be restricted if possible. These materials will be archived.

APPROVED: Preschool Director, Belinda Berry 5/12/09  
SPRC 4/09  
AD COUNCIL 8/09