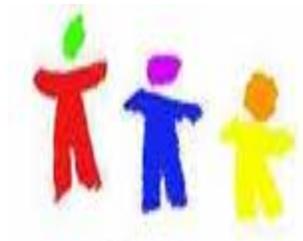




# ALDRSGATE

UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
NIXA, MISSOURI



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# **Aldersgate United Methodist Church**

## **Policy for Safe Ministry with Children and Youth**

### **Introduction**

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church, in June 1996, adopted a resolution aimed at reducing the risk of all forms of child abuse in the church. The Social Principles of the United Methodist Church state "...children must be protected from economic, physical, and sexual exploitation, and abuse." God calls us to make our churches safe sanctuaries, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from all forms of exploitation and abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children, youth and adults can participate in ministry in a safe and secure environment. Thus, in covenant with all United Methodist congregations, we adopt this policy for the protection and prevention of abuse for all persons in our church.

### **Purpose**

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this POLICY FOR SAFE MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS and the accompanying procedures is to demonstrate our absolute unwavering commitment to the physical safety, emotional integrity, and spiritual growth of all persons in our church.

### **Statement of Covenant**

As a Christian community of faith and a United Methodist congregation, we pledge to conduct the ministry of the gospel in ways that assure the safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth & adults. We will follow reasonable safety measures in the recruitment and selection of both staff and volunteer workers. We will implement prudent operational procedures in all programs and events. We will educate all of our workers with children and youth regarding the use of appropriate policies and procedures, including basic first aid and disciplinary measures. We will have a clearly defined procedure that conforms to the requirements of applicable state/federal law, for reporting a suspected or alleged incident of abuse. We will be prepared to respond to media inquiries if such incident occurs.

### **Conclusion**

In all our ministries with children, youth and adults, this congregation is committed to demonstrating the love of Jesus Christ so that each will be "...surrounded by steadfast love, established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to eternal life." (Baptismal Covenant II, United Methodist Hymnal, pg. 44)

The Staff Parish Relations Committee is charged with the review of this policy and accompanying procedures annually. Revision will be presented to the Administrative Council for approval.

The POLICY FOR SAFE MINISTRY WITH CHILDREN, YOUTH AND ADULTS shall be a part of the General Policies of Aldersgate United Methodist Church of Nixa, MO and shall be

placed in the church office and referred to at the first Administrative Church Council Meeting each year.

**Approved and adopted by the Administrative Council, Aldersgate United Methodist Church, Nixa, MO, October 19, 2003. Updates approved June 23, 2013.**

### **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE**

Aldersgate United Methodist Church (AUMC) desires to be a safe place for all children, youth and adults. Having adopted a Safe Sanctuary Policy in October 19, 2003, we fully realize that sexual abuse of children, youth and adults can happen anywhere, including the church; and thus we have a moral and legal obligation to reduce the possibility of sexual abuse occurring within the framework of our ministries and our activities.

The purpose of these procedures is to safeguard children and youth of our church from sexual abuse and to protect church staff and volunteer workers from false allegations of sexual abuse. Although no organization or individual can assure complete protection, this Safe Sanctuary Protection Manual reflects Aldersgate UMC's commitment to help to protect children and youth from harm. The procedures set down in this manual apply to all volunteer and paid workers of Aldersgate United Methodist Church of Nixa, MO.

This Safe Sanctuary Procedures Manual is a "living document", and as such, will need to be revised periodically to reflect the current circumstances and situations encompassed by the activities and ministries of Aldersgate United Methodist Church of Nixa. The Aldersgate Administrative Council (ACC) is responsible for the management of this Manual as a "living document". The Staff Parish Relations Committee will review this document annually, and notify the ACC of any necessary revisions.

## DEFINITIONS

In this manual the following definitions apply:

**Child** – any person infant through 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

**Youth** – any person in the seventh grade or higher not yet 18 years of age.

**Adult** – any person age 18 or older.

**Child Abuse** – physical or mental injury, sexual abuse, negligent treatment or maltreatment of a child or youth by a caregiver responsible for the person's welfare.

**Compensated Worker** – hourly, salaried, part-time or full-time who works with children, youth or adults at any church-sponsored activity.

**Volunteer Worker** – any non-compensated individual who works with children, youth or adults at any church-sponsored activity.

**Temporary Volunteer** – any occasional or “last-minute”, non-compensated individual recruited to help with a church-sponsored activity involving children, youth or adults who has not been fully certified as a Safe Sanctuary worker by completing proper paperwork and attending a training/orientation session.

**Program Staff** – consists of any compensated worker on staff who is responsible for an area of ministry which could involve children, youth or adults, i.e. the Pastor, Associate Pastors, Director of Children's Ministries, Director of Youth Ministries, Director of Worship Ministries and Nursery Coordinator. The Business Administrator and Office Administrator will also be considered as Program Staff because of their on-site availability.

## **PROCEDURES WHEN INTERVIEWING AND SCREENING COMPENSATED AND VOLUNTEER WORKERS WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

It will be the responsibility of members of the Program Staff to interview and screen each individual considered to work with children and youth and Aldersgate United Methodist Church of Nixa. The following procedures should be followed to provide protective care for all children and youth or adult workers who participate in any church-sponsored activity.

All compensated or volunteer workers should be an active member of AUMC for at least 6 months prior to the time they begin serving with children or youth in church activities. An exception to the 6-month waiting period could be made with the following two requirements:

- The person asked to serve has been in ministry with children or youth for at least 6 months in the church he or she attended prior to coming to Aldersgate UMC of Nixa.
- The person can provide a reference from a staff person with whom he or she worked at the previous church.

Compensated or volunteer workers must be 18 year of age or older and at least 4 years older than the oldest child or youth he or she will be supervising to be considered as the primary responsible supervisor for any activity involving children or youth.

Adults who have been convicted of either child sexual or physical abuse will not be considered as workers with children or youth. Convictions in any one of the following areas will permanently disqualify the applicant from service:

- Crime against a child, youth or vulnerable adult
- Crime involving a child, youth or vulnerable adult
- Any kind of abuse (i.e. physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, neglect, endangerment) regardless of the age of the victim
- Sexual intercourse with a child age 16 or older
- Sexual exploitation
- Crime resulting in the registration of the individual as a sex offender

- Indecent exposure
- Possession, production, distribution of child pornography
- Use of a computer to facilitate a sex crime
- Kidnapping and/or Abduction
- Stalking
- False imprisonment

Convictions in any one of the following areas will disqualify the applicant from service for a minimum of 10 years:

- Drug use, possession, manufacture, or distribution
- Assault
- Battery or Threat
- Causing injury, disability or death
- Causing property damage or injury while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol

All compensated or volunteer workers applying for any position involving the supervision of children or youth must complete the following documentation:

- Employment Application or Volunteer Application Form
- Background Check Form –Compensated and Volunteer Workers will be screened through ChristianBackgroundChecks.com, a service to which we subscribe. Aldersgate United Methodist Church will conduct a criminal background search as part of the application process and may again at any time during volunteer service, with additional searches being performed at least once every five years
- Results of the criminal background search will be used to evaluate the applicant's suitability for volunteer service with children, youth and/or vulnerable adults and may be used as reason for disqualification from said service.
- Participation Covenant Statement
- Personal References--A minimum of two personal references will be required, preferably one to be from a Pastor, and none to be accepted from immediate relatives or extended family (i.e. in-laws). All references will be contacted by AUMC and in the event contact cannot be made, we will ask for additional references. International criminal background searches will also be conducted on all immigrants to the United States.

- Release Form – allows Conference Office to release confidential information back to Aldersgate UMC of Nixa.
- Health Form—when required by law for compensated workers.

All compensated and volunteer workers are required to attend an orientation/training meeting. Each “temporary volunteer” asked to help in any activity involving children or youth must be under the direct supervision of a fully certified (by Aldersgate Staff or appointed SS trainer) Safe Sanctuary adult worker. Temporary volunteers need to be made aware of the Procedures set down in this Manual, and agree to abide by them.

All original documentation will be kept on file at the Aldersgate UMC office in Nixa unless specifically requested to be sent for processing to the United Methodist Church Conference Office. Applications and the results of all forms of screening will be kept strictly confidential by authorized staff. AUMC will adopt the LCA (Local Church Associate) policy and procedure as directed by the Missouri Conference. All training will be done on-line and in-house as directed by the Missouri Conference.

Local Churches now have access to online software to use for their own local church certification. The software is flexible and allows certification to be completed for local church, conference certification, or both.

The software includes 8 training chapters and background screening.

Every church will have a code to use in initiating volunteers access to the online system.

As of December, 2012:

- All volunteers must go through their local church to become conference or local church certified. Each volunteer will become certified for a period of four (4) years. After four (4) years, Safe Sanctuary certification training and a background check will need to be completed for the volunteer to continue serving at AUMC.
- Only online training will be accepted for conference certification.

- Since the new online local church software is available; local churches may no longer use conference certification as a substitute for their own local church certification.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH AT ANY CHURCH-SPONSORED ACTIVITY**

The following general guidelines should be followed to provide the best protective care for all children and youth and adult workers who participate in any church-sponsored activity.

A minimum of two adult workers should be present with each group of children or youth, regardless of how few people are in attendance. An exception to the “two-adult rule” is a signed Consent Form by the participant’s parent or legal guardian before any time is spent alone with the participant. The parent or legal guardian should also be encouraged to meet and speak with the supervising adult before the consent form is signed.

Situations where one adult could be present with signed consent form could include, but not be limited to, traveling in a vehicle together or being together anywhere which is out of immediate view of another adult. The Pastor or other member of the Program Staff must be notified of such situations in advance. As well, Pastors should notify program staff and/or document any one-on-one counseling outside of regular business hours.

The duration of the signed consent form should be fitted to the individual circumstances, i.e. 32 weeks of a Disciple Study could be covered by one signed consent form. The time frame or duration of the signed consent agreement must be noted on the form.

Each temporary volunteer should be under the direct visual supervision of a certified Safe Sanctuary worker at all times during any activity involving children or youth.

When the “two-adult rule” is not feasible, a “roamer” can be asked to check into rooms and situations where only one supervising adult is present with children or youth. An example of such a situation would be a Sunday morning when one of the elementary class teaching team members calls in ill and unavailable.

Each compensated or volunteer worker with the primary responsibility as the supervisor of children or youth should be fully certified as a Safe Sanctuary worker, having completed all required paperwork and screening, and be in compliance with the Procedures set down in this Manual.

Each room set aside for children and youth should have a door with a window, a half door, or another means of allowing visual access. The Trustees will be responsible for any architectural changes required to comply with this guideline.

When windows and half doors are not feasible, a door should be left partially open and a “roamer” should be asked to monitor activities where children and youth are involved.

When possible, children should be encouraged to take care of their own bathroom needs. Should assistance be required, the outer bathroom door must remain open, or ajar, while assistance is given. The person giving assistance should inform the other person present of their intention.

Children and youth should be released to a parent or authorized adult only. Under no circumstances, is a child or youth to be left alone to wait for someone to come and pick them up.

A member of Program Staff should be consulted to approve any off-church campus activities or events. Parental permission for any off-church campus activities or events is required. There should be a ratio of one adult for every ten (10) participants for off-church campus activities or events involving children and youth. A suggested ratio for younger children is one adult for every five (5) children.

## **GENERAL GUIDELINES FOR REPORTING ABUSE**

When it becomes necessary to report suspected child abuse, the protection of children and youth, must be the most immediate and important concern. It is the legal and moral obligation of any person with responsibility for the care of children and youth to report all cases of abuse they observe, and further, to report visible signs of alleged abuse. Failure to report could lead to liability on the part of the church, the observer or both. Aldersgate United Methodist Church of Nixa has determined that it is the responsibility of all compensated or volunteer workers to report all cases of suspected child abuse to the proper legal authorities. It is also recognized that while the confidentiality of the minister-parishioner relationship is very important, reporting reasonable suspicions of child abuse has the potential for helping individuals receive help for a problem beyond their control and may prevent further harm to that person or another.

Reasonable suspicion is defined for these Safe Sanctuary Procedures to mean that there is credible evidence or a discrepant or inconsistent history in explaining suspected abuse. A report based on reasonable suspicion does not require proof that abuse has actually occurred or that the reporter witnessed the incident in question. Reporting is not a determination that abuse has actually occurred; rather it is a request for an assessment of the condition of a child, or youth.

## **RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS/ACCUSATIONS**

Because we believe children and youth are a most important concern, Aldersgate United Methodist Church of Nixa has adopted the following guidelines for responding to abuse or suspected abuse:

Upon observing or suspecting abuse, the compensated or volunteer worker should immediately make certain the person's safety and comfort are secured and make certain the suspected abusive individual is safely isolated from the person.

Report the abuse or suspected abuse promptly to the Pastor or other member of the Program Staff.

Confidentiality is very important in reporting cases of abuse or suspected abuse and any incident is to be discussed with the appropriate Program Staff member and the Pastor ONLY. The exception would be if the Pastor is the accused – see Addendum for responding when a Pastor is accused of sexual misconduct.

Once the compensated or volunteer worker has reported an incident, or suspected incident to the delegated authority, together they should phone the Missouri Statewide Hotline number, 1-800-392-3738 and request an assessment of the situation. They should follow the guidance of the Hotline professional as to the subsequent steps to be taken.

## **MEDIA RESPONSE**

The Pastor or media relations spokesperson will be the only official spokesperson of Aldersgate United Methodist Church of Nixa in the event of an incident of child abuse or alleged child abuse. The media relations person will be appointed by the Safe Sanctuaries team comprised of a delegate from SPR, Church Council, Trustees and the Pastor to work in conjunction with the Pastor on all media relations. The Pastor or media relations person will provide all necessary information to the media, using the suggested response that follows. In the case of the Pastor being the accused, the media relations person will respond to the media in the same suggested manner.

### **SUGGESTED WRITTEN AND/OR VERBAL MEDIA RESPONSE**

“We here at Aldersgate United Methodist Church of Nixa are saddened by the allegations that have been brought. We have attempted to create an environment here that is welcoming and safe; to provide a place where all persons might learn of the Good News in Jesus Christ. We do this by ..... *List specific areas that relate to the allegations.*

We are cooperating fully with local officials who are investigating this incident. Our Bishop has been notified, and an investigation will also be conducted through that office. If you desire more information, we will help you get in touch with our Bishop.

As we learn more we will be forthcoming with all the information. Thank You.”

## **MAINTAINING SAFE SANCTUARY DOCUMENTATION**

The United Methodist Church Conference Office will process and keep on file a copy of all documentation as required by this Manual for each person screened and interviewed as workers with children and youth. The Conference Office is located at 3601 Amron Court, Columbia, MO 65203. All files will be securely and confidentially protected by that Office, and may be accessed by contacting The United Methodist Church Camp Office. No information will be given about any person without the proper release form.

## **IMPORTANT CONTACTS AND PHONE NUMBERS**

MISSOURI DIVISION OF FAMILY SERVICES TOLL-FREE HOTLINE – JEFF CITY  
1-800-392-3738

Division of Family Services	Christian County	417-581-7511
District Superintendent's Office	Springfield, MO	417-869-7878
Nixa Dept. Police	Nixa, MO	417-725-2510

## **COMPLIANCE WITH SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY AND PROCEDURES**

The Policy for Safe Ministry with Children, Youth and Adults for Aldersgate United Methodist Church will be kept on file in the church office. Copies of the Safe Sanctuary Procedures Manual will be available in the church office, upon request to any member or visitor of Aldersgate United Methodist Church of Nixa.

All compensated workers and volunteer workers involved in areas of ministry to children and youth will complete documentation and participate in a training/orientation session as required by the Procedures, no later than three (3) months from the date on which these Procedures were adopted by the Administrative Council of Aldersgate United Methodist of Nixa. Failure to complete initial documentation and training to maintain a current Safe Sanctuary credential will result in disqualification to serve and will place compensated workers on unpaid leave until all items are completed.

Safe Sanctuary Procedures will affect any individual desiring to work in church ministry areas that involve children and youth, regardless of the time in service already spent by said individual in these areas.