



Springfield United Methodist Church SAFE SANCTUARIES POLICY

Safe Sanctuaries is the name commonly given by United Methodist Annual Conferences and local churches to their individual efforts to make conference, district, and local church programs welcoming and safe for Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults.

Child abuse is a well documented fact in our society. Hardly a week goes by that each of us does not read or hear a horror story of how a young person or vulnerable adult has been violated by some trusted person in authority. Most of this abuse happens outside the church setting, but some of it does occur while persons are engaged in ministries of the church.

Both the Conference and local church must make every reasonable effort to protect the Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults who are in its care so that nothing damages their life. This is part of what it means to “so order our lives after the example of Christ that, surrounded by steadfast love, [each person] may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (UMC, Baptismal Covenant III).

While a church cannot guarantee the safety of every person, every church can be responsible for reducing and eliminating circumstances that can lead to harm or injury. Developing and implementing a Safe Sanctuaries policy is a first-step in protecting our young and most vulnerable.

The South Georgia Conference proposed a Safe Sanctuaries policy during the 2007 Annual Conference session. The policy was approved and became effective with full compliance expected by July 1, 2008 for Conference and District events and activities. Further, the policy presented to the Annual Conference recommended that each local church develop and implement a Safe Sanctuaries policy that is appropriate to their particular ministry setting by January 1, 2009.

As a result, the Springfield United Methodist Church appointed a committee to develop, propose, and implement a Safe Sanctuaries Policy for our local church ministries, programs, activities, and events that involve children and youth. All members of this committee are either representatives of the Administrative Board or members of the Council on Ministries who are committed to protecting Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults, protecting Staff Persons, Supervisors, and Volunteers, as well as protecting the assets of the church for the making of disciples.

Safe Sanctuaries Committee Members:

Mr. Lamar Allen, Lay Delegate to Annual Conference
Mrs. Staci Ambrose, Nursery Coordinator
Dr. Paul “Mac” Brinson, Chair, Staff Parish Relations Committee
Mrs. Jan Davis, Prayer Ministry Coordinator
Mrs. Melanie Freeman, Children’s Coordinator
Mr. Scott Hendrix, Children’s Coordinator
Mrs. Sandra Hendrix, Children’s Coordinator
Mr. Ty LaValley, Director of Student Ministries/Youth Pastor
Mr. Rickey Neidlinger, Youth Coordinator
Mrs. Sheri Neidlinger, Youth Coordinator
Dr. Ben C. Martin, Senior Pastor
Mrs. Amber Pace, Nursery Coordinator
Mr. Jim Simmons, Lay Leader
Mr. Pratt Summers, Chair, Administrative Board
Rev. Chance S. Ward, Associate Pastor/Director of Children’s Ministries
Mrs. Elizabeth Zipperer, Vice-Chair, Administrative Board

**Springfield United Methodist Church
Safe Sanctuaries - Proposed Policy**

I. Preamble

Children hold a special place in God’s family. Jesus taught that Children were to be included and provided for within the community of faith. When the crowd tried to devalue children and keep them away from Jesus, he was quick to respond, “Let the children come to me for to such belongs the Kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:14; Mark 10:14; Luke 18:16).

Children hold a special place in our Church’s family. In the Baptismal Covenant, professing members assume a holy responsibility “to so order our lives after the example of Christ, that this child, surrounded by steadfast love, may be established in the faith, and confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal” (*The United Methodist Hymnal*, page 44). Our promise places solemn responsibility on each person to help children grow in the knowledge of God’s love and as whole persons.

As Christians, we take our responsibility to nurture Children very seriously. We acknowledge the “sacred trust to maintain an environment that is safe for people to live and grow in God’s love. Sexual misconduct in the church and ministry settings impedes the mission of Jesus Christ. Leaders have the responsibility not only to avoid actions and words that hurt others, but also to protect the vulnerable against actions or words which cause harm” (Resolution 36, *The Book of Resolutions*, 2004).

The spiritual consequences of doing harm are significant. The victim’s physical and emotional pain and suffering as well as a loss of trust and faith are barriers to the abundant life Christ desires to give. Jesus took these negative consequences so seriously that he warned against impeding the faith of others by saying, “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).

Neglecting to take adequate precautions against child abuse in our churches is one of the ways we fail in our nurturing responsibilities. While it is unlikely that we can completely prevent child abuse in every situation, it is possible for us to greatly reduce the risk by following a thorough, practical policy of prevention and supervision. This Policy attempts to do just that for the Conference and District entities that offer ministry with children, youth and vulnerable adults (see definitions Section III).

It is the purpose of this Policy to:

- A. protect the Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults that participate in the ministries of the church;
- B. protect our Staff Persons, Supervisors, and Volunteers from potential false allegations of abuse; and
- C. protect all the various ministry assets of the Church for making disciples of Jesus Christ.

This Policy presents a comprehensive plan that includes the areas of: Screening, Supervision, Reporting, and Response. This Policy has been developed to provide the **MINIMUM** necessary precautions for protecting Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults.

II. Scope of the Policy

- A. This Policy and its provisions shall apply to all Adults: Supervisors, Volunteer or Staff Persons, whether laity or clergy, who have any direct or indirect contact with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults who participate in any activities or events sponsored by Springfield United Methodist Church and in conjunction with South Georgia Conference and/or District events.
- B. This Policy will be implemented immediately following its adoption, with full compliance required by January 1, 2009, for all SUMC, South Georgia Conference and District activities and events.
 - 1. SUMC activities and events are those sponsored or financially supported by the Springfield United Methodist Church, the South Georgia Conference, and Districts.
 - 2. Activities or events include those that are co-sponsored and/or co-supervised by SUMC and another church or organization.
- C. This Policy, an alternate policy or waiver of liability approved by the Safe Sanctuaries Committee, shall be applicable to any group or organization outside SUMC seeking to use SUMC facilities.

1 **III. Definitions**

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3 ***The following terms are defined for the specific purpose of this document***

- 4 A. "Adult Monitor" is a Certified Adult who frequently moves in and out of rooms or activity areas
5 adding additional supervision.
- 6 B. "Assistant Who is a Minor" are persons under 18 years of age who help with activities (e.g., crafts
7 or recreation) but is not in a supervisory role.
- 8 C. "Certified Adult"... definition used to define an adult as it relates to supervision, screening,
9 reporting and responding within this Policy. "Certified Adult" means a person 18 years of age or
10 older, who engages in supervisory responsibility as Staff Person, Leader, or Volunteer certified
11 and trained under this Policy. The term does not apply to program participants.
- 12 D. "Certifying Officer" is the individual who receives applications, conducts background checks,
13 assesses results, verifies requirements are met, and certifies a person for supervision of Children,
14 Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults. For Springfield United Methodist Church (SUMC), the Certifying
15 Officer shall be appointed annually in January of each year by the Administrative Board and shall
16 be a member in good standing who is currently certified through the Policy itself.
- 17 E. "Child Abuse" is a harmful act against any Child, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adult that presents
18 themselves in the following forms or types:
- 19 1. **Verbal Abuse** – Any verbal act that humiliates, degrades, or threatens.
- 20
- 21 2. **Physical Abuse** – Any act of omission or an act that endangers a person's physical and
22 mental health. In the case of Child, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adult physical abuse, this definition
23 includes any intentional physical injury caused by the individual's caretaker. Physical abuse may
24 result from punishment that is overly punitive or inappropriate to the individual's age or condition.
25 In addition, physical abuse may result from purposeful acts that pose serious danger to the
26 physical health of a Child, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adult.
- 27
- 28 3. **Sexual Abuse** – Child, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adult sexual abuse is the sexual
29 exploitation or use of said individuals for satisfaction of sexual drives. This includes, but is not
30 limited to:
- 31 a) incest,
32 b) rape,
33 c) prostitution,
34 d) romantic involvement with any participant,
35 e) any sexual intercourse, or sexual conduct with, or fondling of an individual enrolled as
36 a Child, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adult in any church; in addition to any Conference
37 or District sponsored activities or events,
38 f) sexualized behavior that communicates sexual interest and/or content. Examples of
39 sexualized behavior include, but are not limited to: "displaying sexually suggestive
40 visual materials, making sexual comments or innuendo about one's own or another
41 person's body, touching another person's body, hair or clothing, touching or rubbing
42 oneself in the presence of another person, kissing, and sexual intercourse"
43 (Resolution 36, *The Book of Resolutions 2004*).
- 44
- 45 4. **Ritual Abuse** – Any act of physical, sexual, psychological violence or manipulation inflicted
46 on a minor, intentionally and in a stylized way, by someone or multiple people that appeal to
47 a higher authority or power to justify the abuse.
- 48 **NOTE:** Child Abuse includes any acts utilizing electronic means that could be construed as
49 verbal, physical, sexual, or ritual abuse.
- 50
- 51 F. "Child" or "Children" or "Minor" means any person(s) under the age of 18.
- 52 G. "Children's Activities" means **any** activity or program sponsored by SUMC in which persons under
53 the age of 18 are under supervision of Certified Adult.
- 54 H. "Church" or "SUMC" shall mean the Springfield United Methodist Church
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- I. "Church Crisis Team" is composed of the Senior Pastor, Administrative Board Chairperson, Staff Parish Relations Committee Chairperson, Certifying Officer, and appropriate Staff Person. Other individuals may be asked to join the consultation process depending on the situation as deemed necessary by the Church Crisis Team.
- J. "Conference" means the South Georgia Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church.
- K. "Conference Crisis Team" as defined by the South Georgia Annual Conference. Others will join the consultation process depending on the situation (i.e., the Conference Chancellor, the District Superintendent in whose district the incident occurred, the Conference Pastoral Counselor, etc.). The Conference Crisis Team will assist in determining and implementing a comprehensive response to a crisis.
- L. "Leader(s)" shall refer to any Certified Adult designated to direct, counsel, teach, mentor, chaperone, transport, or assist in activities for Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults.
- M. "Safe Sanctuaries Policy" or "Policy" is the name given by SUMC in regards to its individual efforts to make local programs, ministries, activities, and events; as well as conference and district activities, events, and programs welcoming and safe for Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults.
- N. "Staff Person" means any person employed by the Springfield United Methodist Church or is serving under an appointment to the Springfield United Methodist Church through the South Georgia Annual Conference.
- O. "Staff person in Charge" means the SUMC employee responsible for the coordination, directing, and overall supervision of programs, activities and events.
- P. "Volunteer" means a person 18 years of age or older who assists in conducting activities related to Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults.
- Q. "Vulnerable adult" means any person 18 years of age or older identified by a caregiver, staff person in charge or him/herself as an individual unable to take care of him/herself, or unable to protect him/herself against significant harm or exploitation due to diagnosed diminished physical, mental or emotional capacities.
- R. "We" means the Springfield United Methodist Church (SUMC).
- S. "Youth" means persons 18 years of age or younger who are strictly participants, holding no supervisory responsibility, in a Church, Conference, or District sponsored activity.

IV. Screening Procedures

Careful screening is one way to prevent the abuse of children, youth and/or vulnerable adults. While screening will consume time, raise questions of trust, and cost money to implement, screening is well worth the effort. Parents, congregational leaders and participants can rest assured that the most reliable, committed and experienced staff and volunteers are in place for every program that involves Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults. **Leaders who willingly submit to the screening process demonstrate the high value they place on the protection of children, the protection of all who offer supervision, and the protection of ministry assets for disciple-making.**

The following is a framework for the screening process that will be utilized by SUMC in regards to paid staff positions and volunteer positions alike:

- A. The Staff Parish Relations Committee and the Certifying Officer of SUMC will conduct the screening process for paid Staff Persons. The Director of Student Ministries and/or the Director of Children's Ministries, along with the Certifying Officer of SUMC will conduct the screening process for Leader or Volunteer positions relating to Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults.
- B. An agency approved by the Administrative Board will be utilized to conduct criminal background checks and personal information verification on potential Staff Persons, Leaders, or Volunteers. The cost for the background checks will be a SUMC budgeted item.

1 C. The **MINIMUM** screening standards are:

2 All individuals being considered for Staff Person, Leader, or Volunteer Positions, whether laity or
3 clergy, who have any direct or indirect contact with Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable
4 Adults who participate in any activities or events sponsored by SUMC, the South Georgia
5 Conference and/or its Districts shall be required to submit an application that includes:

- 6 1. Standard contact information.
7 *(Name, address, phone numbers, place of employment, etc.)*
- 8 2. Experience and qualifications for the position if requested.
- 9 3. Signed voluntary disclosure of past criminal history and allegations of criminal history.
- 10 4. A listing of 3 non-related personal references is required for all paid Staff Person
11 positions and may be requested for Volunteer positions (*previous employers are to*
12 *be excluded as personal references*). This list shall have complete contact
13 information for all references. This portion of the application process is considered
14 incomplete if full contact information for the references is not provided.
- 15 5. Waiver of confidentiality allowing the criminal background checks necessary for the
16 position. The criminal background check will include a local, state and national
17 search of the applicant's criminal record. The criminal background check will be
18 conducted and reviewed by the Certifying Officer of SUMC.

19 **** Additional considerations for Volunteer Positions:**

- 20 • Have an active relationship with SUMC of at least six months before being allowed to be in a
21 supervisory role in activities for Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults. **Persons not meeting**
22 **this minimum requirement may serve only as an assistant with another adult who meets**
23 **the requirements of the SUMC Safe Sanctuaries Policy.**

24
25 D. Persons having a criminal history of any of the following types of offenses shall not be allowed to
26 serve in any ministry with Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults:

- 27 1. If the applicant (paid or unpaid) is found to have been involved in any activity in which the
28 applicant abused or exploited Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults, the applicant shall
29 not be approved. Any conviction of a crime against Children, Youth, or Vulnerable Adults
30 shall disqualify any applicant.
- 31 2. Child Abuse, whether physical, emotional, sexual, neglectful or ritual shall disqualify any
32 applicant.
- 33 3. Violent offenses, including murder, rape, assault, domestic violence, etc., shall disqualify
34 any applicant.
- 35 4. Persons having a criminal history of a drug related conviction within the five (5) years
36 immediately prior to the application shall not be allowed to directly or indirectly supervise
37 Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults

38 **** Additional considerations relating to transportation:**

- 39 • Persons having a criminal history of DUI or DWI conviction within the five (5) years immediately
40 prior to the application shall not be allowed to act as a driver.
- 41 • A driving record check will be requested on persons who transport Children, Youth, and/or
42 Vulnerable Adults for programs, activities, and events supported or sponsored by SUMC.

43
44 E. Additional information may be requested for conducting and/or reviewing criminal background
45 checks as needed at the discretion of the Certifying Officer of SUMC.

46 F. After January 1, 2009 **no** person will be allowed to supervise children without being completely
47 screened, trained and having agreed to follow the minimum supervisory standards. The following
48 persons will submit to screening: any potential Staff Person, Leader, or Volunteer; any Certified
49 Adult with a break in service of one year or more; and any Certified Adult for whom it has been
50 five (5) or more years since their last criminal background check.

51 G. Great care shall be taken in establishing the protocols for conducting the review of the
52 application, the reference checks, reviewing the criminal background check, verifying the required
53 training, and maintaining the personnel records for each applicant. The background check
54 authorization form and results will be kept under lock and key in a filing cabinet in the fire room of
55 the Church. An additional key for the filing cabinet is located in the Church safe deposit box
56 located at the Springfield branch of Citizens Bank of Effingham.

- 1 H. A list of Certified Adults will be updated periodically by the Certifying Officer of SUMC and given
2 to the appropriate Staff Person(s) and/or Leaders responsible for Children, Youth, and/or
3 Vulnerable Adults.
4 I. When the South Georgia Conference or any District is hosting an event for which the SUMC is
5 responsible for chaperones, SUMC will certify that all their chaperones and counselors
6 supervising their Children meet or exceed these minimum requirements and will follow the
7 preventive practices outlined in this Policy.
8

9 **V. Training**

- 10 A. All Certified Adults working with Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults at SUMC activities or
11 events must participate in an annual Safe Sanctuaries training session. This training session will
12 include, but is not limited to, information regarding the Safe Sanctuaries Policy, the minimum
13 standards of supervision, the signs of possible abuse, and the process of reporting suspected
14 child abuse. This training may be received at one of the Conference-sponsored training events
15 held across the Annual Conference or at SUMC.
16 B. First Aid and CPR training classes will be offered on an annual basis through SUMC. Certified
17 Adults are encouraged to participate in the training classes and to be certified in basic first aid
18 and CPR.
19

20 **VI. Minimum Supervisory Standards**

21 Conscientious and intentional supervision of participants and adults is the second step for providing a
22 holy place of safety for children, youth and vulnerable adults. These supervisory procedures are
23 designed to reduce the possibility of abuse to the Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults and to
24 protect Staff Persons, Supervisors, and/or Volunteers from unwarranted accusations.
25

26 ***Staff Persons or Leaders conducting activities for Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable***
27 ***Adults may adopt more stringent requirements as deemed necessary in regards to***
28 ***the activity or event that is being supported or sponsored***
29

30 **MINIMUM** Supervisory Standards require:

- 31 A. To achieve compliance with the Safe Sanctuaries policy it may be necessary to combine groups;
32 recruit or train additional volunteers; **or cancel an event.**
33 B. All activities for Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults will utilize the "Two-Adult rule" when
34 supervising children. The Two-Adult rule requires that no matter the size of the group, there will
35 always be two Certified Adults (not spouses) present. It is expected that there will be at least
36 one male and at least one female adult supervisor when there are male and female participants.
37 This may include the presence of an Adult Monitor who frequently moves in and out of rooms
38 providing additional supervision. An Assistant Who is a Minor shall not supervise other children
39 regardless of age differentiation and therefore would not satisfy the Two-Adult rule.
40 C. No Adult (age 18 or older) shall supervise an age group unless he/she is **AT LEAST 5 years older**
41 than the Children or Youth with whom he/she is working.
42 D. Each room or space where Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults are being cared for shall
43 have a window in the door or the door shall be left open. All indoor activities should occur in open
44 view. Should the activity be an outdoor program or occur in a setting which makes it difficult to
45 comply with this policy, the Leader in charge of the activity shall take appropriate measures to
46 adapt practices and procedures to the setting so all are properly supervised.
47 E. Registration materials for activities in which Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults are outside
48 of the direct supervision of their parents/guardians shall require signed permission forms, which
49 include pertinent health information, in order to participate. These forms must be readily
50 accessible at each activity or event that Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults are
51 participating in. It is suggested that new registration forms containing personal, emergency,
52 medical, and waiver & release of liability information on Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults
53 be completed and updated yearly.
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- 1 F. At events that require overnight accommodations and co-ed off-campus day trips, participants will
 2 be supervised by a minimum of two Certified Adults (one male and one female); as well as
 3 prescribing to the adult to child ratios specified in this Policy. If necessary for participants to
 4 share a room with a Certified Adult, the Certified Adult(s) shall sleep in separate beds from
 5 participants except if they are sleeping with their own child who is the same gender as the parent,
 6 so long as any one Certified Adult shall not be alone with any one participant. Recognizing
 7 lodging accommodations may be restricted in some situations; one Certified Adult is adequate so
 8 long as any one Certified Adult shall **NOT** be alone with any one participant
- 9 G. Recognizing that there is safety in numbers, Children and Youth will be instructed to use the
 10 "buddy system" wherein Children and/or Youth are required to remain with at least one other
 11 partner at all times for help and protection. ***In the case of middle school age children and***
 12 ***younger, Children and/or Youth should remain in groups of three whenever possible.***
- 13 H. All participants who can understand a covenant shall sign a participation covenant wherein each
 14 person states their understanding of the rules and their agreement to follow the rules. All SUMC
 15 Certified Adults will have a covenant that includes a reminder of the Safe Sanctuaries minimum
 16 supervisory requirements that serve as a protection for all involved.
- 17 I. Any one-to-one mentoring, consulting, or counseling involving Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable
 18 Adults shall be conducted in sight of another Certified Adult.
- 19 J. It is also strongly encouraged that there be present at least one Certified Adult who is trained and
 20 certified in First Aid and CPR at all SUMC activities and events.
- 21 K. The screening and supervisory requirements outlined in this Policy shall be followed at all SUMC
 22 events.

23
 24 ***Adult to Child Ratios for Weekly Programs and Other Activities or Events***

25 Guidelines are listed for Adult to Child/Youth ratios for activities and events involving SUMC
 26 Children/Youth (or other Children/Youth) who are under the direct or indirect supervision of a
 27 SUMC Staff Person or Supervisor. When at all possible this Policy suggests that these
 28 guidelines be utilized to in an effort to ensure that the most appropriate supervision and care is
 29 provided. In cases where mixed age children are in one room or in one group, the age of the
 30 youngest Child/Youth shall determine the Adult to Child/Youth ratio necessary for the activity,
 31 program, or event.

32
 33 ***Each Staff Person or Supervisor conducting activities or events for Children, Youth, and/or***
 34 ***Vulnerable Adults may adopt more stringent requirements if necessary with regards to the***
 35 ***activity or event being conducted***

36
 37 **Nursery, Sunday School, and all Weekly Programs**

<i>Ratio (Adult/Child)</i>	<i>Age of Children/Youth</i>
1 – 4	Infants
1 – 6	Toddlers
1 – 8	2 – 3 years of age
1 – 12	4 – 5 years of age (Pre K – Kindergarten)
1 – 16	6 years of age and above (1 st – 12 th Grade)

44
 45 **Ministry Activities and Events**

<i>Ratio (Adult/Child)</i>	<i>Age of Children/Youth</i>
1 – 4	Infants
1 – 5	Toddlers
1 – 6	2 – 3 years of age
1 – 8	Pre K – Kindergarten
1 – 10	1 st – 4 th Grade
1 – 10	5 th – 8 th Grade
1 – 12	9 th – 12 th Grade

1 **VII. Reporting**
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- 3 A. Once an incident of child abuse occurs or allegation of an incident is made, it is crucial that it
4 be dealt with promptly and in a clearly outlined manner. We will take seriously all allegations
5 received. The Certified Adult or Church member who observes alleged abuse or to whom
6 such alleged abuse is reported shall report the incident immediately to the Staff Person in
7 Charge of the activity. The Staff Person in Charge shall provide immediate care to ensure
8 the safety and well-being of the victim. Further, the Staff Person in Charge will obtain
9 necessary information such as, the name of the alleged victim, his or her address and family
10 contact information, the nature of the allegation, and the name of the alleged perpetrator.
11 Also, the Staff Person in Charge will contact the Senior Pastor. (In the case of a Conference-
12 sponsored event the Director of Connectional Ministries would be contacted. In the case of a
13 District-sponsored/supported event, the District Superintendent would be contacted.)
14 B. The Staff Person in Charge of the activity or event and the Senior Pastor will consult to
15 determine the appropriate response to the alleged incident. If deemed appropriate, the
16 SUMC Crisis Team will be contacted to join in the consultation to support a comprehensive
17 response to the incident.
18 C. Following the consultation, the Staff Person in Charge of the activity or event will implement a
19 response plan formulated in the consultation. If the allegations fall within the list of Child
20 Abuse offenses found in this Policy or in the Georgia code 19-7-5, which require mandatory
21 reporting, the Staff Person in Charge and/or Senior Pastor shall make a report to the proper
22 authorities. All SUMC Staff Persons, Leaders, Volunteers, and Members will cooperate fully
23 with the investigation. The parents of the Child, Youth, or Vulnerable Adult shall be contacted
24 and informed of the alleged incident and appropriately assisted by the Staff Person in Charge
25 and/or Senior Pastor.
26 D. The person allegedly suspected of abuse (Respondent) shall, for the safety and well-being of
27 all involved, be removed with dignity from further contact with Children, Youth, or Vulnerable
28 Adults until an appropriate investigation has taken place. In the event that the Respondent is
29 the Staff Person in Charge of the children's activity, the Senior Pastor will place the Staff
30 Person in Charge on leave of absence during the investigation, ensure the safety of activity
31 participants and Certified Adults, and if practical provide continued administration of event.
32 E. If the allegation concerns persons outside of any supervisory relationship with the SUMC
33 related event or activity, the Staff Person in Charge of the activity will consult with the Senior
34 Pastor immediately. If the allegations fall within the list of child abuse offenses found in this
35 Policy or in the Georgia code 19-7-5, which require mandatory reporting, the Staff Person in
36 Charge or Senior Pastor will contact the Department of Family and Children's Services in a
37 timely manner. For example, if a child tells a SUMC Certified Adult about being abused by a
38 relative during the prior year, the Certified Adult receiving the statement will make a report to
39 the Staff Person in Charge of the activity or event.
40 F. The Staff Person in charge will then report this incident to the Senior Pastor and a report will
41 be filed with the proper authorities as the situation dictates.
42 G. The Staff Person in Charge of the activity will carefully and contemporaneously document all
43 information received and all actions taken in follow-up of the allegation.
44

45 **VIII. Response Plan**
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- 47 A. A quick, compassionate and unified response to an alleged incident of child abuse is
48 expected. All allegations will be taken seriously. In all cases of reported or observed Child
49 Abuse in an activity for Children, Youth, and/or Vulnerable Adults, all Staff Persons, Leaders,
50 and Volunteers of that activity shall cooperate with all official investigating agencies and
51 appropriate church, conference, and/or district officials.
52 B. The Staff Person in Charge of the activity will immediately contact one of the members of the
53 SUMC Crisis Team, beginning with the Senior Pastor. The SUMC Crisis team will consult to
54 assess the incident, offer support to the Staff Person, Leader and/or Volunteer involved and
55 determine the appropriate comprehensive response to this situation. This consultation will
56 continue as the response is implemented.

- 1 C. The SUMC Crisis Team will designate the official spokesperson for this incident. This
2 designated person is the only person authorized to make statements to representatives of the
3 media. All requests for statements should be directed to the SUMC Communications
4 Director, who will provide access to the spokesperson. Those answering phones or receiving
5 in-person inquiries for information will politely refer all those seeking information to the SUMC
6 Director of Communications.
- 7 D. Pastoral care and support will be available to all persons involved with the incident. The
8 Senior Pastor and/or the Conference Pastoral Counselor may be called to assist in providing
9 care. The Church may seek assistance from the Conference Crisis Team and/or the
10 Conference Sexual Response Team if it is determined that their service is needed or would
11 be helpful.

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13 **IX. Accountability**

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15 Because we highly value protecting the Children, Youth and Vulnerable Adults that participate in
16 the ministries of the Church, protecting our Staff Persons, Leaders, and Volunteers from potential
17 false allegations of abuse, and protecting all the various ministry assets of the Church for making
18 disciples of Jesus Christ, we expect full implementation of this policy.

19 The Springfield United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuaries Committee will continue to offer
20 periodic Safe Sanctuaries training for Volunteers, Leaders, Staff Persons, and the Certifying
21 Officer.

22
23 **X. Amendments**

24
25 Following adoption of this policy by the Administrative Board:

- 26 A. Editorial changes that clarify the Policy without changing its requirements may only be made
27 by the Safe Sanctuaries Committee.
- 28 B. Substantiative changes that alter the requirements outlined in this Policy must be presented
29 to the Administrative Board for approval.

30
31 Note: The policy was developed utilizing the resources developed by the Reverend Joy Thornburg Melton
32 available through Cokesbury or Discipleship Resources.

33 *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church*

34 *Safe Sanctuaries for Youth: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries*

35 Other resources utilized were:

36 *South Georgia Annual Conference Safe Sanctuaries Policy*

37 *First United Methodist Church, Clermont, FL – Child/Youth Protection Policy*

38 *Safe Sanctuaries Policy, St. Luke's UMC, Memphis, TN*