

SAFE SANCTUARY POLICY

Alexandria United Methodist Church

The Alexandria United Methodist Church, as a Christian community of faith, upholds the resolution adopted by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church in April 1996 which states "Children are our present and our future, our hope, our teachers, our inspiration. They are full participants in the life of our church and in the realm of God." In affirmation of this statement and the teachings of Jesus Christ, we adopt the following Safe Sanctuary Policy with unwavering commitment to the physical and spiritual safety of our children and youth.

Policy Regarding Program Staff

1. As a church we will follow reasonable safety measures in the selection and recruitment of workers with children and youth. Workers are defined as any adult, either volunteers or paid, who is involved in programs with persons under age 18. Including but not limited to teachers, classroom helpers, nursery workers, youth leaders, choir/music leaders or helpers, drivers, chaperones and all paid church staff.
2. Two adults shall be present at all times when working with children and youth. An adult is defined as a person 21 years of age or older and at least 5 years older than the oldest youth being supervised.
3. Helpers younger than 21 years of age may be present in the classroom, crib nursery or at other youth related events. They may not be counted as the second adult. They must be at least 5 years older than the oldest child or youth in attendance.
4. Husband and wife volunteer teams are desirable and encouraged within the programs of our church. In the Youth Group setting, married couples count as a single unit and another adult should be present at all times. In the Sunday school setting, married couples count as the two adults required for children's activities.
5. When one on one counselling is required for a child or youth it should be done with open doors and preferably in view of at least one other adult.
6. Adults who have attended the Alexandria United Methodist Church for less than 6 months may not act as leader or teacher within our programs. They may however provide a helper role and be counted as the second adult. After the 6-month waiting period, these adults may assume the teacher/leader role at the beginning of the next school year (September).

7. State of NH Criminal Background Record Checks (CR) shall be done on all Lay Staff, all church volunteers who are expected to have contact with children and youth more than four times per year and on any person accompanying youth on an overnight trip or event. The Pastor and any one of the following individuals shall confidentially review Criminal Records information: Chairperson of the Pastor Parish Committee or Christian Education Coordinator. Each of these individuals must sign an Individual Agreement of Non-Disclosure and maintain confidentiality of all information obtained from the State of NH. If the information disclosed raises any cause for concern, the individual in question shall be afforded the opportunity to meet privately with the Pastor and appropriate member of the above board for purpose of discussion, review and/or clarification before a final decision is made regarding approval for participation in the church programs listed above. All notes from this meeting as well as a written record of the decision shall be attached to the file. All CR information shall be retained in a locked file for a period of seven years. After seven years, the files will be destroyed and if the individual is still involved with the program a new CR will be done. It will be the responsibility of the leader of each program area to insure that people working in our church programs are in compliance with our CR procedures. A CR will also be completed every seven years on the Pastor through the New England Annual Conference.

8. No person convicted of a crime involving child abuse of any type shall be allowed to work with children or youth in our church programs.

9. Volunteer workers will be provided with an updated copy of this policy and must sign a statement each year that they understand and agree to abide by these policies. Volunteer workers must attend a yearly training session on these policies.

Policy Regarding Facilities

10. The facility shall be kept in an orderly manner and all safety equipment shall be maintained in working order. Exits shall be clearly marked and unobstructed egress shall be maintained.

Policy Regarding Parental Responsibilities

12. Individual registration forms must be filled out by a parent or guardian for each child registering in any program. A copy of these forms shall be available through the Christian Education Director. The teachers/leaders of a group may reference information by request. Visitor registration forms will be available from teachers/leaders and must be filled out before an unregistered child can be left in the care of the church program staff.

13. Registration forms must list a phone number or location within the church where the parent or guardian may be reached in the event of an emergency. Parents or guardians are responsible for being available at that number or location during the program hours. A

written note must be given to the teacher/leader if that information changes during any given event.

14. Children in sixth grade or younger must be accompanied by a parent or guardian to their classroom or in-church event location. Parents or guardians must stay with children until both supervisory adults are present.

15. Parents or guardians must pick up children in third grade or younger, from their classroom or in-church location. If an adult other than parent or guardian has permission to pick up a child, it must be in writing and signed by the parent or guardian.

16. During evening events, youth in grade eight or younger must be picked up inside the church building.

17. It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to provide or arrange for safe transportation to and from all church programs.

Policies for Outside of Church Events

18. Permission slips must be signed by a parent or guardian for each outside church youth event. Outside events are defined as those where children and youth leave from the church premises as a group and return to the premises after the event.

19. Only adults (21 years or older) are allowed to drive youth or children to outside youth events. All drivers must be properly licensed and insured and must execute reasonable caution while driving.

20. All overnight youth events must have a minimum of four adult chaperones, two must be male and two must be female. Overnight youth events must provide for separate sleeping quarters for males and females. When adult chaperones share sleeping quarters with youth, there must be minimum of two female adults in female rooms and two male adults in male rooms. (In this case married couples will count as two individuals, one male and one female)

Congregation Response Plan to Suspected Abuse

21. If any individual has reason to suspect abuse of any kind, they should confidentially bring it to the attention of the Pastor, Christian Education Director or Chairperson of the Pastor Parish Committee. This group will meet as quickly as possible to determine if there is additional information that may support or alleviate these concerns. When necessary, they shall advise the individual of current New Hampshire Law and act as support in the decision to report their claim. The number, for Central Intake, in the State of NH is 1-800-894-5533. This group shall also document any action taken and inform all concerned parties when

appropriate. In circumstances where the actions of any of the above named individuals are in question he/she shall be excluded from the process.

22. Should questions arise from law authorities or the media, the Pastor shall speak for the congregation. In circumstances where the Pastor's actions are in question or he/she is unavailable to speak, the District Superintendent shall speak for the congregation.

General Review of Policy

23. This policy is a living document. It should change as the needs of our congregation, The United Methodist Church and the laws of New Hampshire change. Therefore, the Church Council shall review it each year in June. The date and time of this meeting shall be publicized to the entire church community so that all interested parties may attend. If serious questions arise concerning interpretation of this policy, they should be brought before the Church Council for discussion and clarification.

This Policy was Revised and reviewed September, 2008