



# Baldwin Memorial United Methodist Church Safe Sanctuary Policy

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*A Policy for Safe Ministry with Children, Youth, and Vulnerable Adults*

*February 1, 2023*

## **Introduction to Church Policy**

Jesus said, "Whoever welcomes (a) child...welcomes me." Matthew 18:5. Our Christian faith calls us to offer both hospitality and protection to those who cannot protect themselves. In response to this call of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference, we commit ourselves to this policy of safety for children, youth, and vulnerable adults.

## **Purpose**

Our congregation's purpose for establishing this policy and accompanying procedures is to demonstrate a total and unwavering commitment to create within our ministries a "safe sanctuary" that will foster healthy growth and development for all children, youth, and vulnerable adults, and those who work with them.

## **Covenant Statement**

The Baldwin Memorial United Methodist Church hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all our children and youth as well as all of our workers with children and youth. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement appropriate operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with children and youth on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse consistent with State law.

## **Theological Reflection**

We adopt this policy in accordance with the statement we as a congregation make at each Baptism; that we will "nurture children and youth in the Christian faith and life and include them in our care." With this policy, we renew our Baptismal pledge to "live according to the example of Christ" and surround children and youth with a "community of love and forgiveness that they may grow in their trust of God and be thus confirmed and strengthened in the way that leads to life eternal." (Baptismal Covenant II, *United Methodist Book of Worship*, p.96).

## **Statement of Policy**

In the following policy, the phrase vulnerable person(s) shall include infants, children, youth, or adults.

## **Recruitment, screening, and hiring of employees and volunteers**

- Every volunteer working with vulnerable persons shall have been an active member in the life of this congregation for at least 6 months prior to their taking responsibilities in our ministries.
- Volunteers must be at least 18 years old and should be at least 5 years older than the oldest in the group they are supervising. This standard allows persons to be separated by enough years in order to better have perspective and recognition as an authority figure with the group they are serving.
- Paid staff members/lead workers hired to work with children in any position of authority must be at least 21 years of age. However, workers not meeting this requirement may be utilized as an assistant to those in leadership positions.
- Every person working with vulnerable persons shall complete:
  - Volunteer application form and provide 3 references non-related by blood or marriage
  - Participation Covenant
  - Questionnaire on sexual misconduct
- Every person 18 years old or older volunteering with vulnerable persons, e.g., Sunday School teachers, Vacation Bible School leaders, Youth Group Leaders, and all church employees will be required to undergo a criminal background check every 5 years. Results of the criminal background check and volunteer applications will be reviewed by a sub-committee of at least 3 members of the Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee (SPPRC). If needed, a decision concerning a volunteer's service will be made by the Pastor or designee after reviewing all relevant information.
- Individuals who have been convicted of physical or sexual abuse or neglect may not work in any church-sponsored activity or program for preschoolers, youth, or vulnerable adults.
- Youth helpers of at least 12 years old may participate with adult supervision.
- Volunteers will attend Safe Sanctuary Policy Training.
- Volunteer Applications and Safe Sanctuary Policy Training will be renewed after three years.

## **Child Abuse Survivor Applicants**

- Adult survivors of childhood physical or sexual abuse need the love and acceptance of this church family. A person's experience with abuse and their recovery process may be pertinent to their suitability as youth and children's ministry workers.

Applicants who are survivors of abuse should discuss this in confidence with the person who conducts the confidential interview. If an applicant is uncomfortable doing so, he/she may have the interview conducted by a Pastor.

When evaluating candidates, the following factors will be considered if an applicant is a survivor of child abuse:

1. Whether the applicant has previously committed an act of child abuse or molestation (anyone who has maltreated children may not serve in children's or youth ministry).
2. The extent of professional counseling the applicant has received.
3. The opinion of references, especially professional counselors who have served the applicant.
4. The opinion of leaders in other churches or youth organizations in which the applicant has been involved; how closely the church is able to supervise and monitor the position for which the applicant is applying.

### **Confidentiality of Information**

- The church will keep confidential all information received in the applicant selection process. Selection information will be marked as such and stored in a locked location with limited access afforded only to church staff and others with a need to know. The Pastor and the SPPRC are responsible for the implementation of these policies as well as the maintenance of confidential records.

### **Education and training for employees, volunteers, and congregation**

- Information about annual opportunities for training in CPR and First Aid shall be provided to all volunteers and hired workers. Participation in CPR/First Aid shall be encouraged and may be offered by the church to volunteers and the congregation.
- The church will provide regular training opportunities to the congregation, volunteers, and hired workers for the recognition of and response to symptoms of abuse.
- The church shall provide access to the written Safe Sanctuary policy and procedures to all members and friends of the congregation.
- Members and friends of the congregation shall be informed of updates to the policy on a regular basis.
- The complete written policy and procedures shall be available in the church.
- Our church shall offer regular opportunities for the entire congregation to be informed regarding the safety and abuse of vulnerable persons.
- The Safe Sanctuary policy shall be available on the church's website.

## **Procedures for All Programs, Events, or Counseling Involving Children, Youth or Vulnerable Adults**

- SUPERVISION OF CHILDREN – No child shall be left on church property unsupervised.
- TWO UNRELATED ADULTS - Two trained adult leaders should be present at all times during any church-sponsored program, event, ministry, or counseling involving vulnerable persons. These two adults should not be from the same household.
- ROVING SUPERINTENDENT/ EXTRA HELPER/ VOLUNTEER – To further supervise activities, an adult volunteer “roamer” shall move between classes and activity stations to oversee events.
- OPEN DOOR COUNSELING- The activities in the room must be clearly visible through an unobscured window or an open door.
- BATHROOM PROCEDURES - If a vulnerable person requires assistance using restroom facilities, the door will be left ajar at all times while the adult assists. Furthermore, while the volunteer renders assistance, a second volunteer should stand outside the door to monitor the situation.
- PHOTOGRAPHING CHILDREN – No identifying names of children to be displayed in newsletter, website, or publication without parental consent
- ADVANCE NOTICE TO PARENTS WITH EVENT DETAILS - The parent/guardian of vulnerable persons participating in church-sponsored programs will be given advance notice of all expected activities for those programs. Parents/guardians shall be provided with advance notice of variations in usual schedules and activities. Parents/guardians shall be asked to sign a general permission form for planned off-site activities that are part of regular programs. Drivers transporting children or youth must have a valid driver's license and current insurance.
- VEHICLE RULE – Driver's transporting children or youth for any church-sponsored activity must have a valid driver's license and current insurance. All MD laws regarding child safety seats and seat belts must be followed. Drivers shall agree to not drive distracted, nor when over-tired or under the influence of alcohol/drugs.
- OVERNIGHT TRIPS - At least one adult leader responsible for overnight trips with youth shall provide documentation of current certification in First Aid and Basic Cardiopulmonary Life Support for Children and Adults.
- YEARLY REVIEW - Adult leaders in church-sponsored programs for vulnerable persons shall annually review this Policy and a written Participation Covenant to uphold them. Initialing and dating the certification form shall indicate that this review has been completed.
- OUTSIDE ORGANIZATIONS - Sponsors of programs or events involving vulnerable people that use church property, but are not sponsored by the church, shall be asked to sign a form stating they have been advised of and provided a copy of the Safe Sanctuaries policy and they agree to uphold that policy. Outside or tenant organizations conducting events during Church-sponsored events involving children, youth or vulnerable adults must escort their guests and members while on church property and are responsible for their direct supervision.

- NAME TAGS - All leaders and volunteers in the ministry area should wear name tags, with first and last names, or other identifiers.
- ONLINE COMMUNICATIONS - Communications via Email, Texting or other Social Media forms between adults and vulnerable persons shall always include the parent or guardian of the vulnerable person.

### **Procedures Specific to Nursery and Sunday school**

- Children Birth to Grade 2 shall be signed into and out of any activity by an adult, preferably a parent. Parents should sign in on a roster with the Nursery Aides when dropping off children. Parents shall sign in with the Sunday school teacher prior to dismissal to Sunday school.
- Children Birth to Grade 2 may not be released to a sibling less than 18 years old without express parental permission.
- Children in Grades 3-6 may sign themselves into and out of a classroom if the parent or adult guardian is on the premises.
- In all cases, a parent or guardian's phone number shall be requested in case of emergencies.

### **Procedures Specific to Jr. and Sr. UMYF**

- All participants in Jr. and Sr. UMYF shall sign into and out of meetings. A parent's phone number shall be requested in case of emergencies.
- Participants in UMYF meetings shall be requested to sign a yearly Conduct Policy explaining the expectations for behavior and conduct.
- Yearly, all Leaders of UMYF shall collect an information form requesting parent contact information and health concerns for each participant. This information form shall be maintained and kept on hand at all UMYF meetings/events.

### **Procedures Specific to Early Learning Center**

- The Baldwin Early Learning Center shall adhere to all applicable MD State laws regarding the operation of an Early Learning Center or Childcare Center. They shall follow all recommended and required guidelines for the safety of children in their care.

### **Facilities conforming to meet reasonable safety standards**

- Every classroom and office door shall have a window or be kept open providing a view of the interior.
- Age-appropriate equipment shall be maintained in classrooms and playgrounds on the church property.
- Trustees shall regularly check facilities for safety hazards.
- Baldwin Memorial Trustees shall be responsible for maintaining adequate liability insurance for the scope of child and youth ministries both on and off church property.

## **Procedures for reporting allegations of injury, harm, or abuse**

Steps in responding to a reported incident during a church-sponsored event and/or on church property:

The volunteer, worker, or leader shall take the following steps immediately.

- Ensure the privacy and safety of the alleged victim.
- Treat the individuals involved with dignity, honor, and confidentiality.
- Immediately remove and/or separate the accused individual from further involvement with the alleged victim and other vulnerable persons.
- Ensure that confidentiality of all parties is maintained.
- Notify the Pastor and/or chair of the SPPRC.
- Complete a report form (Appendix I) for each alleged incident.

Upon notification, the Pastor, or the Chair of the SPPRC shall take the following steps immediately.

Notify each of the following

- The proper authorities – Police, Child Protective Services\*\*
- The District Superintendent
- The insurance agent shall be notified by the Trustees following notification by SPPRC.
- Keep a written record of each step taken including times and dates.
- At the Pastor's discretion and with SPPRC affirmation, prepare a brief, carefully worded statement to the congregation, telling the truth, but withholding the names of the alleged victim and the accused.
- Cooperate fully with the investigation conducted by proper authorities.

If the Pastor is accused, the SPPRC Chair shall

- Contact the District Superintendent who will initiate Conference Policies for this situation.
- Notify the parents/guardians of the alleged victim.
- Address any needs the vulnerable person may have, including medical.

Steps in responding to suspected abuse outside church events and/or church property.

- Ensure the privacy and safety of the alleged victim.
- Ensure that confidentiality of all parties is maintained.
- Contact appropriate authorities.
- Notify the Pastor and/or the Chair of the SPPRC.

\*\* Proper Authorities in Anne Arundel County are Child Protective Services, 410-269-4500, 7500 Ritchie Highway, Glen Burnie, Maryland 21061-1787, or call the Police at 911.

\*\*You must make an oral and written report within 48 hours of the suspected abuse. This does not require Proof... Anyone who makes a "good faith" report may be immune from civil liability and criminal penalties.

## **Review of Policies and Procedures**

These policies and procedures will be reviewed and updated by the SPPRC at least once every three years.

## **Procedures for Conduct**

Appropriate Discipline – Children and Youth should be made aware that appropriate behavior is expected at all church events. Gentle reminders are always necessary when dealing with children and youth. When these reminders don't work, then discipline may move to the next step. In cases where behavior must be addressed, designated church event leaders shall handle it. In NO case is physical discipline an appropriate measure.

Keeping parents involved is important. They should be kept informed of their child's behavior.

For serious offenses, the appropriate response may be to send the child/youth home.

Appropriate Physical and Emotional Boundaries – Physical boundaries are most important in dealing with children and youth. Persons working with children and youth must understand and respect those boundaries. Obviously, these boundaries change as children grow older. A young child or toddler sitting on an adult leader's lap is appropriate, whereas an older youth sitting on a leader's lap would not be acceptable. Hugs and kisses from a toddler to a leader are entirely different from the same from an older youth.

Emotional boundaries are also important. Adult leaders must maintain appropriate boundaries in relationships with youth. It is important for those adults working with children and youth to not step outside of those lines and allow a younger person to become too attached to them. When an adult leader recognizes there may be an issue with boundaries, great space must be allowed to come between them and the child/youth in question.

Spiritual Boundaries – As we seek to lead young people in their development of faith, it is essential that we guide them and do not manipulate their emotions. This is especially true at extended youth events (such as overnight camps). Children and youth are much more susceptible to emotional manipulation at extended events. It is therefore necessary that we allow each person involved to make their own decisions without stigma, coercion, or pressure in any form. The message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the opportunity to follow Jesus in a life-long journey must be presented as an invitation "with no strings attached".

## **Addendum to Safe Sanctuary Policies**

Maryland, the District of Columbia, and West Virginia all maintain registries of sex offenders, which attempt to list all persons residing anywhere in those jurisdictions who have been convicted by a court of law of any of a very wide variety of sexual offenses. The registry in all three jurisdictions is available for public review and may be searched online at (1) <http://www.dpscs.state.md.us/sorSearch>, for Maryland; (2) <http://sexoffender.dc.gov>, for the District of Columbia; and (3) <https://apps.wv.gov/StatePolice/SexOffender#Basic>, for West Virginia.

Contrary to popular belief, these Sex Offender Registries are not limited to listing convicted “pedophiles,” which, strictly speaking, describes persons with a primary sexual interest in prepubescent children aged 13 or younger. Rather, the Registries include sex offenders whose victims, depending on the crime, may include minors as old as 17 years of age or even adults.

From time to time, a local church Pastor or church leader learns that a member, or any person who regularly frequents church premises for worship or other reasons, is a registered sex offender. When that happens, and even while resolutely affirming every person’s need to be part of a faith community and receive redemption, we hold in balance the imperative to do all we can to keep all our parishioners safe, especially (but not only) our children and youth. To that end, in striving to maintain an environment of love and safety for all, we believe the congregation’s process for responding to such information should include the following components:

1. Maintenance of List: The Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee should establish and maintain a list of registered sex offenders who are both (1) located in the designated geographical area from which the church membership typically draws and (2) on the list of church membership. The Pastor and the Chair of the SPPRC will ensure that this list is updated in the following manner:
  - a. At least twice a year, by making reasonably delineated geographical searches for the names of Registered Sex Offenders through the online version of the registry maintained for the following zip codes: 21108 Millersville, 21032 Crownsville, 21113 Odenton, 21114 Crofton, 21401 Annapolis, 21054 Gambrills, 21035 Davidsonville, 21060, 21061, 21062 Glen Burnie, 21144 Severn, 21146 Severna Park, and any other such Maryland zip codes in which church membership resides; and comparing this with church membership rolls.
  - b. Whenever it is brought to the attention of the Pastor or the SPPRC that another church member or regular visitor (who attends church frequently enough for the Pastor and/or SPPRC Chair to be knowledgeable of the person’s name and address) has become a registered sex offender.
  - c. A current copy of the list of Registered Sex Offenders known to be attending the Church will be delivered to the District Superintendent as soon as it is first prepared and whenever the list is updated.



2. Meeting and Covenant with the Registrant: Upon learning that a member or visitor is a registered sex offender, the Pastor and the Chair of the SPPRC chair, or another member of the SPPRC designated by the Chair, will have an in-person meeting with the registered person (Registrant) and another adult of the Registrant's choosing to discuss the procedures the congregation will follow in order to allow the Registrant to continue to participate in the life of the congregation or visit the church premises for any purpose. During that meeting, the Pastor and SPPRC representative will:
  - a. Indicate that they have been made aware of the person's name on the registry.
  - b. Summarize the congregation's principles and guidelines in such situations, as outlined here and in the attached "Participation Covenant Letter".
  - c. Explain and emphasize the importance of the "Designated Attendant" policy (as described below), both for the safety and well-being of the church community, and the well-being of the Registrant as well.
  - d. Provide the Registrant with a Participation Covenant Letter, signed by the Pastor and the SPPRC Chair, substantially in the form attached hereto.
  - e. Explain that the Participation Covenant Letter must be counter-signed (in front of a witness), dated and returned to the Pastor before the Registrant can be allowed to return to the church premises.
3. "Designated Attendants": Registrants should not be allowed in any church building or anywhere on church grounds unless they are accompanied by an adult member of the congregation that has been approved by the SPPRC to serve as a Designated Attendant for registered sex offenders.
  - a. A list of Designated Attendants for registered sex offenders shall be maintained by the Chair of the SPPRC.
  - b. Each Registrant shall be given the names and telephone numbers of two or more Designated Attendants they can contact to accompany them when they visit the church.
  - c. A Designated Attendant must be present to meet the Registrant in the church parking lot, or at another safe and well-lighted outdoor location when the Registrant arrives at the church's property. The Designated Attendant must physically accompany the Registrant at all times while they are within any church buildings or anywhere on church grounds.
  - d. It is the Registrant's responsibility to arrange to have a Designated Attendant present when they arrive at the church property. If a Designated Attendant does not appear for any reason, the Registrant may not enter any church building and may not stay on the Church grounds.
  - e. The SPPRC will have the responsibility of securing Designated Attendants for Registrants. If a time arises that no Designated Attendant is available, the Registrant may not stay on the Church grounds or in any of the church buildings.
  - f. The Designated Attendant requirement must remain in place for as long as the Registrant remains on the Sex Offenders Registry.

4. Exceptions: There should be no exceptions to these policies and procedures except on a case-by-case basis, and then only if (a) written approval is obtained from both the Pastor and the SPPRC, and (b) advance written notice of the exception, and an explanation of the reasons therefor, is provided to the District Superintendent fourteen (14) days before the proposed exception is to go into effect and the District Superintendent thereafter indicates in writing that there is no objection to allowing the exception.

This Safe Sanctuary Policy has been approved by the Staff Pastor Parish Relations Committee and the Church Council of the Baldwin Memorial United Methodist Church.

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Glen Surles, Chair - SPPRC

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Date

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Julie Reinhart, Chair - Church Council

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Date

# Baldwin Memorial United Methodist Church

## Safe Sanctuary Policy

### APPENDIX I: Incident Report Form

Reason for report: \_\_\_\_\_

Date-of-incident:\_\_\_\_\_Time:\_\_\_\_\_

Place of incident: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of reporter:\_\_\_\_\_Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) of Child(ren)/Youth:\_\_\_\_\_Age(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe what happened:

Were there any witnesses?\_\_\_\_\_Yes No\_\_\_\_\_If Yes, list.

What action did you take?

Has the incident been resolved?\_\_\_\_\_Yes\_\_\_\_\_No Explain:

Have the following people been notified?

Pastor\_\_\_\_\_SPPRC Chair \_\_\_\_\_District Superintendent \_\_\_\_\_

Parent\_\_\_\_\_Police\_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of reporter:\_\_\_\_\_Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Report submitted to: \_\_\_\_\_

# **Baldwin Memorial United Methodist Church**

## **Safe Sanctuary Policy**

### **APPENDIX II: Participation Covenant**

The congregation of Baldwin Memorial United Methodist Church is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for children, youth and vulnerable adults who participate in ministries and activities sponsored by the church. The following policy statements reflect the congregation's commitment to preserving this church as a holy place of safety and protection for all who would enter and as a place in which all people can experience the love of God through relationships with others.

1. All volunteers agree to read and abide by the Safe Sanctuary Policy for Baldwin Memorial United Methodist Church.
2. Adult volunteers in ministries with children, youth, and/or vulnerable adults shall attend training sessions and educational events provided by BMUMC to keep volunteers informed of relevant church policies and state laws.
3. Every volunteer working with vulnerable persons shall have been an active member in the life of this congregation for at least 6 months prior to their taking responsibilities in our ministries.
4. Individuals who have been convicted of sexual, physical, or emotional abuse, may not work with children, youth, or vulnerable adults in any church sponsored activity.
5. Adult volunteers with children and youth shall always observe the "Two Adult Rule" so that no adult is ever left alone with children or youth.
6. Adult volunteers shall immediately report to the person in charge of the event, ministry, or gathering any behavior that seems abusive or inappropriate.
7. Should an incident occur, or the welfare of a child, youth, or vulnerable adult become a concern, the person in charge of the gathering or event is typically the first person to whom such concerns will be reported. However, should the person in charge of any such gathering be an alleged offender, the next level of authority must become the person to whom such concerns and allegations are reported in accordance with the Safe Sanctuary Policy.

Please answer the following questions:

**1.** As a participant in the congregation, do you agree to observe and abide by all church policies regarding working in ministries with children, youth, and vulnerable adults?

**YES            NO**

**2.** As a participant in this congregation, do you agree to always observe the "Two Adult Rule"?

**YES            NO**

**3.** As a participant in this congregation, do you agree to promptly report abusive or inappropriate behavior as well as any concerns regarding the welfare of children, youth, or vulnerable adults to any supervisory personnel other than the alleged offender in accordance with the Safe Sanctuary Policy?

**YES            NO**

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_