

# **Child Protection Policy and Procedures**

-for-

## **St. Matthew's United Methodist Church**

8617 Little River Turnpike  
Annandale, VA 22003  
703-978-3500

Adopted at Church Council on April 24, 2024  
Reviewed by Staff Parish Relations Committee on April 10, 2024

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## **I. Children and Youth Ministries Mission Statement**

St. Matthew's United Methodist Church seeks to be a faith community where all God's children are accepted, invited to follow Christ, and encouraged to experience meaning and purpose for living through joyful worship, fellowship, study, prayer, and service. St. Matthew's UMC strives to provide a safe, welcoming spiritual home in which every infant, child, and youth may come to know Christ and develop a strong spiritual relationship within the Church universal.

*Making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. - Matthew 28:19*

## **II. Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to help St. Matthew's UMC provide a caring and secure environment for children and youth, as well as for the adults involved in ministering to them.

### **Application:**

This policy applies to all activities involving children and youth that take place on premises, whether Church-related or not. The policy also applies to all Church-related activities involving children and youth that take place off-premises. This policy applies to all leaders who work with children and youth, whether paid or voluntary, and whether members of St. Matthew's UMC or not.

Yearly training will be required of all persons volunteering with minors. Volunteers will read and sign this document annually. Volunteers will also be fully background-checked every three years. (Exception: St. Matthew's Weekday School staff are required to abide by the background investigation requirements of the Commonwealth of Virginia.)

Any outside groups utilizing the building with a Child Protection Policy of their own must adhere to this policy regardless of what their own policy states.

The following definitions apply: A leader is any adult 18 years of age or older, who is responsible for or regularly works with St. Matthew's UMC youth and children. Children are newborn through sixth grade. Youth are seventh grade through high school graduates. For purposes of this policy, the terms "child" or "children" refer to anyone under the age of 18, including youth.

This policy will be reviewed annually by the Staff-Parish Relations Committee (SPRC).

## **III. Biblical Foundation**

St. Matthew's UMC seeks to express God's love of children and provide for their personal wholeness. This caring community seeks to prevent child abuse in any form to our children and youth and to be in ministry to families where abuse may occur. Scripture, tradition, experience, and reason are the foundations of our understanding upon which all policies, procedures, and ministries must stand.

*And they were bringing children to him, that He might touch them, and the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it He was indignant, and said to them, "Let the children come to me, do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" And He took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands upon them. --Mark 10:13-16*

Jesus teaches us explicitly that children have the right and the keys to the kingdom of God. Our goal in response to this Biblical mandate is to maintain a safe, secure, and loving place where children and youth may grow and where caregivers, teachers, and leaders (both paid & volunteer) minister appropriately to their needs. St. Matthew's UMC seeks to prevent any form of child abuse to our children and youth and to provide ministry to families where abuse or neglect may occur.

#### **IV. Virginia's Child Abuse Law**

Under Code of Virginia § 63.2-100, an abused child is defined as one who is less than eighteen years of age, whose parents or other persons responsible for his/her care creates or inflicts, or threatens to create or inflict, or allows to be created or inflicted upon such a child a physical or mental injury by other than accidental means, or creates a substantial risk of death or disfigurement or impairment of bodily or mental functions.

This includes the following: failure to provide care necessary for health, abandonment, commission or allowance of sexual exploitation, endangerment or neglect. Child abuse may be physical, sexual, emotional or mental and may be the result of actions or omissions to act (e.g., lack of care for a child).

Code of Virginia§ 63.2-1509 states that, " The following persons who, in their professional or official capacity, have reason to suspect that a child is an abused or neglected child, shall report the matter immediately to the local department of the county or city wherein the child resides or wherein the abuse or neglect is believed to have occurred or to the Department's toll-free child abuse and neglect hotline:

- Any teacher or other person employed in a public or private school, kindergarten, or child day program, as that term is defined in § 22.1-289.02
- Any person 18 years of age or older associated with or employed by any public or private organization responsible for the care, custody or control of children;
- Any minister, priest, rabbi, imam, or duly accredited practitioner of any religious organization or denomination usually referred to as a church, unless the information supporting the suspicion of child abuse or neglect (i) is required by the doctrine of the religious organization or denomination to be kept in a confidential manner or (ii) would be subject to § 8.01-400 or 19.2-271.3 if offered as evidence in court;

Code of Virginia§ 63.2-1509 can be found online at:

<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/pdf/vacode/63.2-1509/>

Everyone should report any known or reasonably suspected child abuse immediately. Any report is confidential, and the person making the report is immune from liability for making such a report, unless it is proven that such a person acted in bad faith or with malicious intent.

#### **V. Protective Orders**

##### **For Domestic Abuse Cases**

A protective order is a legal document issued by a judge or magistrate to protect the health and safety of a person who is alleged to be a victim of any act involving violence, force, or threat that results in bodily injury or places that person in fear of death, sexual

assault or bodily injury. Protective orders prohibit all contact by the respondent with the victim or the victim's family/household members.

Virginia has three types of protective orders:

- Emergency Protective Order (EPO): Expires at the end of the third day following issuance or the next day court is in session, whichever is later.
- Preliminary Protective Order (PPO): Lasts 15 days or until a full hearing
- Protective Order (PO): May last up to two years. A PO can provide for temporary custody or visitation of a minor child.

### **In Cases of Suspected Child Abuse**

If a court should issue a child protective order, or orders removing the child from the parent or guardian, a PPO may be filed, and the child may be removed from the home. The PPO may require the parent or custodian to do certain things (i.e., improve hygiene, provide appropriate housing, get medical attention, or refrain from certain offensive behavior such as physical discipline or exposing the child to inappropriate activity). When the child is in imminent danger, an emergency removal order will be issued. After a hearing, whether or not the court decides that a child is neglected or abused, the child may remain in temporary foster care, and certain services will be ordered. Parents may be required to participate in specific programs designed to remedy the situation that led to removal.

### **What does this mean for St. Matthew's UMC?**

If a staff member, volunteer, or any other individual responsible for the well-being of a minor is made aware of a protective order violation, they must call the local law enforcement immediately. Do not release the child into the custody of an individual in violation of a protective order.

## **VI. Types of Child Abuse**

### **A. Definition**

Child abuse refers to an act committed by a parent, caregiver, or person in a position of trust (even though they may not care for the child on a daily basis) that is not accidental and that harms or threatens to harm a child's physical or mental health or welfare. The following definitions and explanations in this section are from the Virginia Department of Social Services.

### **B. Types & Warning Signs of Abuse**

#### **1. Physical Abuse**

A physical injury, threat of injury, or creation of a real and significant danger of substantial risk of death, disfigurement, or impairment of bodily functions. Such injury or threat of injury, regardless of intent, is inflicted or allowed to be inflicted by non-accidental means. Examples: asphyxiation; bone fracture; brain damage, skull fracture, subdural hematoma; burns, scalding; cuts, bruises, welts, abrasion; internal injuries, poisoning; sprains, dislocations; gunshot, stabbing wounds. The sale of drugs by a caretaker in the presence of a child is also regarded as physical abuse because of the potential danger of such a transaction, as well as the harmful toxins found in the manufacture of drugs.

Warning Signs:

- Questionable bruises on soft tissue of the body including those on face, torso, back, buttocks, and thighs.
- Bruises, welts, cuts, or human bite marks in various stages of healing and clustered together or reflecting the shape of the article used to inflict the injury.
- Questionable burn marks, especially on the soles, palms, back, or buttocks including cigarette burns, rope burns, immersion burns, burns that are patterned.
- Questionable fractures (multiple or spiral fractures especially), lacerations, or abrasions in various stages of healing.

## 2. Physical Neglect

Neglect cases account for more than 56% of all reports of child maltreatment in Virginia. The failure to provide food, clothing, shelter, or supervision for a child if the child's health or safety is endangered. Abandonment, lack of supervision including knowingly leaving a child alone with a convicted sex offender (who is not related by blood or marriage to the child), lack of adequate bathing and good hygiene, lack of adequate nutrition, lack of adequate shelter, and lack of medical or dental care are all examples of physical neglect. Physical neglect may also include multiple occurrences of a one-time critical or severe event that results in a threat to health or safety, such as a toddler being left alone.

Warning Signs:

- Child looks undernourished and is usually hungry or may steal food or hoard food
- Child is often lethargic, as if the child has not slept well
- Child has untreated injuries or maladies, like a badly infected cut or toothache
- Child has chronic injuries that can be attributed to lack of supervision, including being harmed by others
- Child may be inappropriately dressed for the weather or may have noticeably poor hygiene
- Child has many absences from school and is frequently tardy

## 3. Sexual Abuse

Sexual abuse comprises a range of inappropriate sexual behaviors a caregiver may perpetrate on a child. Examples of such abuse are: sexual exploitation (such as child prostitution or pornography), sexual molestation, intercourse/sodomy, incest, rape, indecent exposure, fondling, and other sexual abuses. Although physical indicators of this type of abuse may not be easily identified, behavioral indicators are usually easier to identify.

Warning Signs:

- Expressions of age-inappropriate knowledge of sex and sexually "pseudo-mature" behaviors
- Sexually explicit drawings
- Highly sexualized play
- Expressions of explained fear of a person or place
- Avoiding or attempting to avoid a familiar adult
- Signs of post-traumatic stress disorder
- Nightmares or sleep interruptions

- A child's statement. When a child says that they have been sexually abused, take the statement seriously. Resolve doubt in favor of the child, and err on the side of protection.
- Low self-image, low self-confidence, guilt ("my fault" mentality), shame, depression, mood swings, anxiety

#### **4. Mental Abuse/Neglect (Emotional Maltreatment)**

A pattern of acts or omissions by the caretaker, that result in harm to a child's psychological or emotional health or development. Examples of such abuse are: ridicule, rejection, intimidation, ignoring a child, indifference, withholding love, seeming unconcerned about a child's problems, holding impossible expectations without regard to developmental capability, and bizarre discipline.

Warning Signs:

- Non-organic failure to thrive (infants), characterized by growth failure, signs of severe malnutrition, and variable degrees of developmental retardation
- Speech disorders or developmental delays
- Habit disorders (sucking, biting, rocking)
- Conduct disorders (antisocial, destructive)
- Neurotic traits (sleep disorders, inhibition of play)
- Behavioral extremes (compliant, passive, undemanding, aggressive, demanding, raging)
- Overly adaptive behavior (inappropriately adult, inappropriately infantile and needy)
- Self-destructive behavior and suicide attempts
- Cruelty (seemingly taking pleasure in hurting other people or animals)

## **VII. Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse**

To create the safest possible environment within St. Matthew's UMC, the following abuse prevention measures will be established and enforced:

### **A. Screening of Volunteers and Staff**

The screening process described below applies to any leader of the church (paid or unpaid, clergy, or lay) who will be involved in work with children and youth. Screening is the first step toward the creation of a safe and nurturing environment for both children and volunteers.

Any volunteer serving in a leadership capacity to children or youth must have had continuous active involvement in the church for at least six months. This requirement may be waived if a person transfers from another church and provides references to the appropriate staff member. The verification of these references must be documented by the appropriate staff member before allowing the person to begin to work with children or youth at St. Matthew's UMC.

Before beginning the first year of service, each employee or volunteer children's teacher, child care worker, youth worker, or chaperone will be asked to sign a statement indicating that they have never been convicted of child abuse or neglect nor is the subject of any pending criminal charges within or outside the Commonwealth of Virginia, nor had a founded complaint of child abuse or neglect made against them. [see: Child and Youth Leader Application]

Anyone who has a child abuse or neglect conviction or is the subject of any

pending criminal charges within or outside the Commonwealth of Virginia, or a founded disposition of child abuse or neglect, as well as anyone refusing to sign the statement, will not be permitted to work with children.

Before beginning their position or volunteer roles, all paid and volunteer leaders, child care workers, children and youth Sunday School teachers, chaperones and youth workers will be required to read the church's Child Protection Policy and Procedures, attend a training, and sign a form indicating that they have read and that they understand the policy and agree to abide by it. Anyone failing to do so will not be permitted to serve until the policy has been read and the form signed.

**B. Two-Adult Policy**

Leaders will be assigned in teams of two or more unrelated individuals for all children or youth activities. The two-leader rule applies to all groups that meet at the church or on church premises and involve children and youth. There will be no one-on-one situations with an adult and youth or child alone together, with the exception of a Pastor of SMUMC. If a pastor is in a one-on-one situation with a youth or child, they must offer to have another adult present, and must provide notification to SPRC after the fact. This rule will apply to all classes and activities involving children and youth under 18. If the situation is deemed low risk (group of children as opposed to one-on-one, daylight as opposed to night, on-grounds as opposed to off-grounds - see Appendix A), then it is permissible to have one adult. However, in these instances, where one adult is present, other adults must be on the premises and the Open Visibility Rule must be fully implemented. This situation is intended to be the exception rather than the rule.

If any group stays overnight at the church, or if a church-sponsored group leaves the premises, two or more unrelated leaders, at least five years older than the oldest youth, must be present.

For over-night events that involve mixed-gender groups, at least one male and one female leader (unrelated) must be present.

**C. Open Visibility and Open Classroom Policy**

Open visibility should be maintained for all activities involving children and youth. This means that activities should take place in full view of routine pedestrian traffic throughout the building through either glass window panels or through open doors. All rooms in the church when occupied by children and/or youth may be visited without prior notice by church staff, parents, or other volunteer church workers. During large, church-hosted events, roamers should be assigned to look to make sure youth are safe. Roamers should make routine checks of all areas of the church to ensure that children are accounted for and that no one is in an isolated area without permission.

**D. Children Drop Off/Pick Up Policy**

Parents/guardians or designees are expected to bring children ages birth through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade to the appropriate classrooms or designated drop-off points. Parents/guardians or someone designated by written parental/guardian permission must pick up children ages birth to 2<sup>nd</sup> grade from activities.

Parents will provide transportation to and from church events. No volunteer or staff leader should transport students home. In the event of an emergency, transportation home may be provided by a volunteer or staff with written (including text or email) parental permission.

**E. Building Security**

The SMUMC Security Policy requires that all persons with fob access to the building are required to have a background check. All activities at St. Matthews must also comply with the St. Matthew's UMC Security Policy. Copies of the St. Matthews UMC Security Policy are available on the church website, from the church office, or from the Board of Trustees via email at [trustees@stmatthewsumc.org](mailto:trustees@stmatthewsumc.org).

## **VIII. Plan for Responding to Allegations of Child Abuse**

Should there be an allegation of child abuse at St. Matthew's United Methodist Church, the matter should be reported immediately to the Fairfax Department of Social Services and to the Program Director, Pastor, and the Trustees. Together, these individuals will ensure that the appropriate actions are taken. If the allegation involves the Pastor or other paid staff members, the matter should be reported to Social Services, the Chair of Staff Parish Relations, and the District Superintendent.

1. Every allegation of child abuse will be treated seriously.
2. Pray for the church and all persons affected by the allegation.
3. Immediately begin documenting all procedures observed in the handling of the allegation. Fill out mandatory report. (see the mandatory report form attached below)
4. Immediately notify the Virginia Department of Social Services of the allegation. Recommend an additional staff person is present when contacting social services.
5. Immediately notify the parents if it is not known whether they have previous knowledge. (If the suspected abuser is the parent, they should not be notified.)
6. Immediately notify the church's insurance company.
7. If the accused has assigned duties within the church, that person must be temporarily relieved of his/her duties until the investigation is concluded.
8. It is appropriate to show care and comfort for the alleged victim. This care and comfort should be the pastoral objective from the moment the allegation is received or otherwise made known.
9. Observe confidentiality for both the alleged victim and the accused.

## **IX. Social Media & Text/Phone Policy**

No adult volunteer or staff member may initiate a connection with a child or youth on a social media site except with a child or youth for whom they are a parent or guardian.

No one-on-one text communications should occur between children/youth and adult volunteers or staff members. When communicating via text with a child or youth, adult leaders need to include a parent or staff member from the church. If a child or youth texts an adult leader, that leader should respond by including a parent or staff member in their text message. If a leader receives a text message from a child/youth asking for help, the leader should contact the program director and pastoral staff to determine the appropriate response. Training will be provided to help leaders understand how best to respond in different scenarios.

St. Matthew's UMC views social networking sites, personal websites, and blogs positively, and respects the right of volunteer and paid employees to use them as a medium of self-expression. If a person chooses to identify himself or herself as a leader in St. Matthew's UMC on such venues, some followers may view the individual as a representative of our church. In light of this possibility, our church requires, as a condition of volunteer or paid leadership, that individuals follow the guidelines described below when referring to the church, its programs or activities, its participants, and/or employees and volunteers, in a blog, social networking site, or on a website:

- Leaders must be respectful in all communications and blogs related to or referencing St. Matthew's UMC, its employees, other volunteers, and participants in programs.
- Leaders must not use blogs or their personal website to harass, bully, or intimidate others. Behaviors that constitute harassment and bullying include, but are not limited to, comments that are derogatory with respect to race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, color, national origin, appearance, or disability; sexually suggestive, humiliating, or demeaning comment and threats to stalk, haze, or physically injure another person.
- Leaders must not post pictures of minors, other volunteers or paid staff persons, or any other person without receiving consent. For minors, written consent must be given by a parent/guardian.
- Leaders may post photos that include their own child(ren) at church events and activities and in large group shots where individual minors are not identified. Photos must not be tagged with names or other identifying information. All photos posted must be appropriate and within the spirit of the ministry.
- Adult volunteers (age 18 and over) must not engage with youth in self-deleting social media apps such as Snapchat, Kick, Whisper, etc.

Any person who violates this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

## **X. Gift Policy**

No gift over \$10 in value can be given by an adult to a youth or child without consent of the parent/guardian. This does not include donations toward sponsoring children or youth for church events. Donations toward sponsoring children or youth should all be directed through the church and not given directly to those being sponsored.

## **XI. Sex Offenders as Members of God's Kingdom**

Regarding violence and abuse, the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church indicate that: "... violence and abuse in all its forms - verbal, psychological, physical, sexual-is detrimental to the covenant of the human community. We encourage the Church to provide a safe environment, counsel, and support for the victim. While we deplore the actions of the abuser, we affirm that person to be in need of God's redeeming love."

In order to create a safe environment for all individuals attending St. Matthew's UMC and its programs, conditions must be placed on a convicted sex offender's participation in the life of the church. Such conditions must be faithfully carried out so as to remain true adherents to the Social Principle indicated above.

One of the ways that humans experience God's redeeming love is through Christian fellowship. Thus, the following actions should be considered when engaging with known convicted sex offenders wishing to be a part of the faith community:

- **Intentional Discussion:** Discussions could be held within the Church Council and Staff Parish. Such discussions might include:
  - Ways to effectively incorporate convicted sex offenders into the life of the church without endangering children and youth
  - Requirement of participation in a professional counseling program for the individual for the entire time of membership
  - Areas of the church that are "off-limits" to the individual
  - Restrictions on leadership in or on behalf of the church
- **Covenant Establishment:** A mutually agreed upon covenant could be established detailing the results of the intentional discussions above. The covenant might also include a description of a "covenant partner" group that will accompany the individual while on church property, the strict policy that the individual is to have no role in the church that includes contact with children and youth, and any additional conditions that are deemed necessary for presence or participation. This covenant would be signed by the offender, pastor, and chairperson of the church council. Although this situation should be handled with discretion, the covenant should not be secret. Monitoring the covenant should be the responsibility of all, not just the aforementioned signers.

## **XII. DISCIPLINE GUIDELINES FOR THOSE WORKING WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

When dealing with children and youth it is sometimes necessary to exercise disciplinary action to facilitate learning, maintain order, and carry out planned activities in a safe manner.

Planning ahead for success:

Disruptive behavior is diminished if enough learning opportunities are planned to keep children and youth engaged. It is better to over-plan than under-plan. Incorporate (as age-appropriate) good story-telling techniques, drama, puppets, arts and crafts, cooking, scientific exploration, games, etc. Incorporating a varied learning environments helps all types of learners remain engaged.

- For overnight activities, boys and girls should have separate sleeping areas.
- It is critical that the children, youth and parents know what the behavioral expectations are ahead of time and what the consequence will be for failure to meet the behavioral expectations.

When discipline becomes necessary:

- Volunteers and paid staff are authorized to handle minor discipline problems without need of involving parents or staff.
- Verbal re-direction may and should be exercised as a first response to disruptive behavior. Care must be taken not to embarrass the child/youth. Yelling, shaming, and physical contact are all absolutely forbidden.

- As a second step, leaders may have the child or youth take a break from the group activity to physically redirect their behavior.
- If redirection is not successful and/or the nature of the problem indicates further counseling is necessary, the child /youth should be counseled with two adults present and/or with the parent present. Consequences for continued misbehavior must be outlined.
- If the behavioral expectations are not met at this point, the promised consequences should take place quickly and without fanfare.
- It may be necessary to set up a conference with a parent and a volunteer or paid staff member if behavioral problems are chronic. By working together, it may be possible to develop a plan to modify the misbehavior.
- Restriction of participation privileges may be imposed as the last resort.
- If laws have been broken, it is the responsibility of the volunteer or paid staff to contact the appropriate legal authorities.
- Legal action may be necessary and should take place where appropriate.
- Alert the appropriate staff person of any serious, reoccurring, or chronic behavioral situations.
- Alert Staff Parish Relations Committee (SPRC) of any serious, reoccurring, or chronic behavioral situation involving paid staff.
- Notify appropriate staff person of any serious, reoccurring, or chronic behavioral situation involving groups that use the building but are not fully integrated into the church.

### **XIII. Driver Safety**

All drivers must have a valid driver's license and insurance. In addition to the background-check and signed Child & Youth Leader Application, all drivers will need to show proof of their valid driver's license to the staff person in charge of the event or to church office staff. All drivers are required to read and sign the attached safe driver's pledge. This pledge must be signed by drivers of personal vehicles as well as by drivers of church-owned or rented vehicles. All drivers of church-owned or rented (church insured) vehicles are required to be approved by the church's insurance carrier which does its own driver's license record checks. Contact the Board of Trustees via your program lead, the church office, or the Board of Trustees via email at [trustees@stmatthewsumc.org](mailto:trustees@stmatthewsumc.org) to be added to the list of drivers approved by the church's insurance provider.

Adult volunteers are permitted to drive students to/from church sponsored events/activities after they have signed the safe driver pledge and agree to all safety measures attached to this document. Although it is preferable to have two adults in the vehicle driving students, a single adult is permitted to drive as long as there are two or more unrelated children or youth in the vehicle with the adult driver.

## Appendix A

### Tools for Assessing the Risk/Reducing the Risk

Three areas must be considered when assessing the potential risk of a given situation. Volunteers and paid staff will consider these three areas during the planning of and during actual events that involve children and youth.

1. Degree of Accountability: Assess the degree of accountability.

- Have adult leaders for this activity completed the screening process?
- Have adult leaders for this activity signed a church and youth leader application?
- Have adult leaders for this activity completed Safe Sanctuaries training?
- Is the two-Adult Rule and/or Open Visibility Rule being maintained during this activity?
- If the activity is off church grounds, has parental consent been obtained from all participants?
- When accountability increases, risk decreases. When accountability decreases, risk increases.

2. Degree of isolation: Assess the degree of isolation.

- Is this an overnight activity? (If yes, the opportunity for isolation increases.)
- Is this activity taking place off-grounds?
- Is this activity taking place in remote buildings or in classrooms that are isolated?
- Will adult volunteers or paid staff ever be alone with a child or youth during this activity? (In a car, etc.)
- Will a youth ever be alone with another youth or child, or will a child ever be left alone with a child?
- When isolation increases, risk increases. When isolation decreases, risk decreases

3. Degree of balance of power: Assess the degree of balance of power.

- Will adult volunteers or paid staff ever be alone with a child or youth during this activity? (For instance, in a car, etc.)
- Will an older, bigger, stronger or more "popular" youth or child ever be alone with another youth or child that is younger, weaker, and less "popular"?
- Will children of the same age be able to "buddy" each other to the bathroom etc.? This is preferred over having an older child escort a younger child. When there is a balance of power, risk decreases. When there is an imbalance of power, risk increases.

Low-risk situations include:

- Activities where a group of children or youth are present for an activity (such as Christian Education classes, Bible study, etc.)
- Where the activity takes place on church grounds during daylight hours
- Where open visibility into a classroom situation is maintained at all times
- Where floaters/hall monitors are present during the activity
- In all settings it is always preferable to have two adults. However, in a low-risk setting it is permissible for only one adult to be present as long as all other criteria are strictly maintained.

High-risk situations include:

- Activities where one or fewer children or youth are present for an activity with one adult and the opportunity for one-to-one interaction between adult and youth/child is high, OR
- Where a large group of children or youth are present but the activity is spread out across an area to such an extent that children and youth cannot be adequately supervised by adults
- Where the activity is an overnight activity
- Where the activity takes place off church grounds

- Where visibility is limited due to isolation are deemed high potential risk situations.

Volunteers and paid staff should recognize these situations as potentially high risk and take steps to reduce the risk to themselves and to children and youth. These steps may include: increasing the number of participants or adults present, changing the venue for the activity to a less remote location, or moving the activity on grounds, or changing the time of the activity. If the risk cannot be reduced, the activity should be canceled.

**ST. MATTHEW'S UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
CHILD AND YOUTH LEADER APPLICATION**

After reviewing the foregoing Child Protection Policy and Procedures, please sign, date, detach, and return this portion to indicate that you have read, understood, and accept the Child Protection Policy and Procedures of St. Matthew's United Methodist Church. Please return the form to **St. Matthew's UMC, 8617 Little River Turnpike, Annandale, Virginia 22003.**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read and understand St. Matthew's UMC's Child Protection Policy and Procedures. I agree to abide by those policies and procedures. I have no convictions for child abuse or expungements of such convictions and am not currently the subject of an investigation. I authorize and release any references that I provide to St. Matthew's UMC to provide St. Matthew's with any information (including opinions) that they may have regarding my work with children or youth. I further authorize St. Matthew's UMC to conduct a criminal background investigation.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please provide three references of individuals, not related to you, that St. Matthew's may contact to discuss your experience with children or youth.

|               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| Name          |                |
| Address       | City/State/Zip |
| Primary Phone | Email Address  |

|               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| Name          |                |
| Address       | City/State/Zip |
| Primary Phone | Email Address  |

|               |                |
|---------------|----------------|
| Name          |                |
| Address       | City/State/Zip |
| Primary Phone | Email Address  |

# St. Matthew's United Methodist Church

## Safe Driver's Pledge

As a driver for St. Matthew's United Methodist Church, I understand it is my responsibility to transport youth and children safely to the scheduled activity and back to their parents/guardians. To ensure the safety of those in my care, I pledge that I:

- Am licensed and fully insured
- Am between the ages of 25 years old and 70 years old
- Have not been convicted of more than one moving violation in the past 12 months
- Have not been convicted of driving under the influence or driving while intoxicated in the past 10 years
- Am physically able to undertake the driving assignment, including being rested and not taking any medications that may cause drowsiness
- Understand I am responsible for the safe operation of the vehicle
- Will ensure that all occupants are properly restrained using approved seatbelts before moving
- Have the necessary medical and emergency care forms for the occupants of the vehicle
- Have checked and confirmed that the vehicle has an adequate first aid kit available and accessible
- Will drive within the posted speed limits and obey all other traffic laws
- Will not be on a mobile hand-held device while driving
- Will not drive to the point of fatigue or drowsiness
- Will take regular breaks
- Will use extra caution, employ more frequent breaks, and alternate drivers more frequently when driving at night, in inclement weather, or any time visibility is reduced.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Driver's License Number: \_\_\_\_\_ State Issued: \_\_\_\_\_

Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Secondary Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

I have read, understand, and agree to abide by the above safe driver's pledge of St. Matthew's United Methodist Church.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



# Report of Suspected Incident of Child/Youth Abuse

(Please print all information within **24 hours** of incident and return to Director or Pastoral Staff)

**1. Name of worker (paid or volunteer) observing or receiving disclosure of child abuse:** \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Victim's name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Victim's age/date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

**3. Date/place of initial conversation with/report from victim:** \_\_\_\_\_

**4. Victim's statement (use attachment if necessary):** \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Name of person accused of abuse:** \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Reported to Supervisor/Director (insert name):** \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

*Director Signature:* \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Reported to Pastor (insert name):** \_\_\_\_\_

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

*Pastor Signature:* \_\_\_\_\_

**7. Call to Victim's parent/guardian**

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

**8. Call to local children and family service agency:**

Fairfax Child Protective Services: 703-324-7400

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

**9. Call to local law enforcement agency (call 911):**

Date/time: \_\_\_\_\_

Spoke with: \_\_\_\_\_

Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

**Sign/Print name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Copies of this report sent/given to:**

## Resources Utilized & Additional Information

### Resources Utilized

- Holy Bible, NRSV
- *Safer Sanctuaries: Nurturing Trust within Faith Communities* A Safe Sanctuaries™ Resource Discipleship Resources: 2023
- *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the risk of abuse in the church for children and youth.* Joy Thornburg Melton. Discipleship Resources: 2011.
- Virginia Department of Social Services Website ([www.dss.virginia.gov](http://www.dss.virginia.gov))
- The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church (2016)
- Code of Virginia Title 63.2. Welfare (Social Services) Subtitle III. Social Services Programs Chapter 15. Child Abuse and Neglect Article 2. Complaints (<https://law.lis.virginia.gov/pdf/vacode/63.2-1509/>)

### Additional Information

- Visit The Virginia Department of Social Services website at [www.dss.virginia.gov](http://www.dss.virginia.gov).
- FaithTrust Institute ([www.faithtrustinstitute.org](http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org))
- St. Matthew's UMC Pastoral Staff (703-978-3500)